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Oral history interview with Marilyn Minter,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marilyn Minter on November 29, 2011. The interview took place in the artist's studio in New York City, and was conducted by Judith Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program.

Marilyn Minter reviewed the transcript in 2015. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Marilyn Minter in her studio in New York City on November 29th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc one.

Marilyn, I'd like to start with asking you about your family background, as far back as you want to go, certainly to grandparents, and especially noting those who you knew personally and talk about their names and their occupations and then your parents, and then we'll go to you.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, that's a big mystery. I met my grandmother on my father's side, but he was such a scoundrel, they all just disinherited him. He was from a moneyed background in Virginia.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you know the grandparents' names?

MARILYN MINTER: Hortense Minter—she was German.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's your grandmother's—

MARILYN MINTER: Grandmother on my father's side. She lived in Point Pleasant Beach—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Pleasant Beach—

MARILYN MINTER: Jersey, yes, she was a Northerner.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And your grandfather's name?

MARILYN MINTER: Never met him. I know he died of a heart attack on a golf course. That's all I know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then your father's name?

MARILYN MINTER: My father is Allan Shelton Minter.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A-L-A-N?

MARILYN MINTER: A-L-L-A-N Shelton—Sheldon?—yes, with a T, I think—Minter. And he was directly related to Patrick Henry. It was a good Virginia family, as they say. But he was like an inveterate gambler, alcoholic, womanizer, so he was a black sheep.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what about your mother's side of the family?

MARILYN MINTER: My mother was born in Indiana, but she was very young when her father moved to Louisiana and became a wildcatter and made a lot of money in the oil business.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was your mother's name?

MARILYN MINTER: She had a long name. She was baptized Catholic, but I only remember two of them—Honora with an H-O-N-O-R-A, Elizabeth Laskey—which was her last name, L-A-S-K-E-Y, Minter.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And her parents' names?

MARILYN MINTER: They were Irish. That's all I know. They were very Irish. I don't know anything about them. Her mother ended up—she was considered senile, which I guess today would be Alzheimer's. And her father probably same thing, died of alcoholism or—it just runs rampantly in my family, alcoholism and drugs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did your mother and father meet?

MARILYN MINTER: They met, I think, in New York City, but I'm not sure. They got married, I think—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What were they doing in New York City?

MARILYN MINTER:—eight weeks later. [Laughs.] I don't know. No, it's a real fog. It's not like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did they live in New York City after they moved there?

MARILYN MINTER: No, they were both—I think—I don't know, they were going to nightclubs. They were going to the Stork Club, a very glamorous—I have pictures of them. They were gorgeous people.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And they were being supported by their families?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know. My mother was for sure. She wanted to be an actress, but they thought it was déclassé and she wasn't allowed, so she was bright in the sense of she was very well read and she spoke French and she was a very well brought up southern belle. But she was racist, sexist—well, she wasn't homophobic. She hated Jews, but some of her best friends were Jews.

It was just—she loved her maids, but she hated black people as a race. And she was wildly attracted to my father, who was very good-looking and a compulsive bad boy. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did either of them go to college?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. My mother went to Tulane. I don't think she graduated—Sophie Newcomb [the women's college of Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana -MM]—and my father went to some school in Virginia, but my brother looked it up in Richmond and he said no, he never graduated either though my father said he graduated with a degree in engineering. And for a minute there, he worked as an engineer for Caterpillar, which was this big heavy equipment company.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where was that?

MARILYN MINTER: In Louisiana. They went back to Louisiana. My mother was older than my father. She says five years, he said seven. I don't know what was true.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were born in Louisiana?

MARILYN MINTER: I was born in Louisiana. One of my brothers—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Exactly when and where?

MARILYN MINTER: Shreveport in 1948, and that's all I know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What date?

MARILYN MINTER: July 19th.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And your brother is older or younger?

MARILYN MINTER: Both of them are older.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, what are their names?

MARILYN MINTER: Allan Shelton—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Like your father?

MARILYN MINTER:—Minter III and Charles Laskey Minter—A-L-L-A-N Shelton—I think it's [S-H-E-L-T-O-N]—it's not with a T; it's with a D, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm sorry, you said they were how much of an age difference?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, five and six years older—enough, yes, a big difference, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you were growing up, do you remember anything about elementary school, what your strongest interests were?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, my dad was a horrible womanizer. I remember being woken up in the middle of the night from them fighting, terrible fights, blood on the walls. And if I walked into the room, they would stop. So I had this burden of having to go into the room to get my dad to stop beating up my mother.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did your brothers do that too?

MARILYN MINTER: They didn't hear it, because they were a room down the hall, but they all tried to always get him to stop. He had a terrible temper. And she used to egg him on. It was almost like that's the only way she could get his attention.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You've done a lot of thinking about this, I'm sure.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I've done a lot, yes. And like it was a pretty dysfunctional childhood. It was as dysfunctional as it gets really. It's Faulkner-esque. I don't know if I want to go into the details though. Yes, that's for therapy. [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But when you were young—

MARILYN MINTER: I remember my dad being a real bad drunk, falling down on top of me, falling downstairs. I knew the word alcoholism, alcoholic, on the wagon, as soon as I was prescient. That table you put in front of couches, I thought it was a cocktail table until I was in my 30s. [Laughs.] I used to sit—he was a scratch golfer, and he would hustle on the golf course, so that's how he made his living, and he gambled. So he worked for Caterpillar for a brief period of time, and then he just made his living hustling people. And everybody loved him because he was so charming. He was gorgeous and charming, and he had affairs with all my mother's friends. And then eventually he had an affair with a woman who he left my mother for. And I was about eight. And then my mother had a nervous breakdown and became a drug addict. And I sort of raised myself from that moment on.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were your brothers still at home?

MARILYN MINTER: They were torn. One of them—my mother pulled him out of high school—he was a senior, he was captain of the football team, president of the class, and made him move up to Fort Lauderdale with her. And he ended up going to this other high school, Catholic high school. He was on their football team, and he used to play his teammates that he had been going to school with since he was about—I don't know—they grew up going to high school—St. Patrick's high school in Miami.

Then my other brother was a football star.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was his name again?

MARILYN MINTER: Allan.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, that's right.

MARILYN MINTER: I mean, there were reporters waiting to interview him when I was a little girl. They would be camped out on the lawn. He was an All-American when he was in high school. And he ended up going to this military academy. But he moved in with my father. He did move in with my father because he wasn't going to leave.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And where did you go?

MARILYN MINTER: I went with my mother because I was too young.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you went with your mother and your older brother.

MARILYN MINTER: I knew better than to go with my father. I knew better. I went with my mother to Fort Lauderdale, and we moved into a condominium, first one on the beach practically. It was beach anywhere you looked for a mile where we lived in Fort Lauderdale. I mean, that's just unheard of now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you remember what it was like—what you were most interested in when you were in elementary school?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I escaped all of this by drawing. I was drawing from the minute I could—I don't know, think, really. And I remember drawing girls—oh, baby girl scouts are called Brownies? And I drew them with two little girls, Vivian Simberg [ph] and Lisa Nelson. And my Brownies were better than theirs, and that was the first time I was ever able to do anything better than anyone else. And I thought, "Wow." And I don't know why I could do this. And then—I must've been five.

And then I got everybody around me to teach me what they knew how to draw. And so then I just copied everything. My mother knew how to draw a woman in a wedding dress with two triangles for feet at the bottom of the dress. And my father knew how to draw a girl walking with all five fingers splayed. And then after that, I just went to the comic books and just copied comic books.

So you never could punish me because I'd just—go to your room, "Eh, I just go draw." I was lost in drawing. People used to have to come over and shake me in class. The teachers would shake me. They would say "Marilyn! Marilyn!" They had been talking to me, and I was just drawing away. [Laughs.] The margins were covered with galloping horses. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you also get recognition by some of those teachers for your talent?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes—no, I was the kid who drew all the signs and the class play backgrounds.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were the class artist.

MARILYN MINTER: No, there was a girl better than me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Better in what way?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, she could draw—she was amazing for being such a young kid. This was in sixth grade. I never went to the Catholic school—we were never religious. My parents made us go to a Catholic school, but they hated Catholicism, and they hated religion. It was my mother that just thought—she was brought up in a Catholic school, so she only knew to send her sons, but she hated Catholicism. So none of us were brought up religious. And I went to school with all the Jewish kids because I lived in Miami Beach. And I would say "Oy vey" and all of these—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you say you lived in Miami Beach, you were in Fort Lauderdale?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, this is before. You asked me how I started drawing. I started drawing way before I moved to Fort Lauderdale, like from five.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were born in Louisiana, then you moved to Miami Beach?

MARILYN MINTER: We moved to Miami Beach because my dad wanted to gamble in Havana. My dad was one of the—well, he might be lying, but he told me he was one of the promoters for the Cassius Clay/Sonny Liston fights. And his partner was found face down in a swimming pool. And I knew all of that was true.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you remember his partner's name?

MARILYN MINTER: McDonald—his last name was McDonald, and we used to go on this guy's yacht.

JUDITH RICHARDS: His first name you don't know?

MARILYN MINTER: No. No. My dad hung around with semi-criminal types—Armand Cerami and Tony Sweet—[laughs]—and my dad was dating a 16-year-old girl when I was 18.

JUDITH RICHARDS: He told you that?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I saw one of his girlfriends, who—I said, "How old are you?" And she started laughing hysterically. And it never occurred to me that she was probably younger than me. I was 19. And it never occurred to me, but no, he told me about how bad he felt picking her up after high school, waiting for her to get out of high school. And I thought, "This is so sick."

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you lived in Miami Beach when you were very young?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Then you moved to Fort Lauderdale?

MARILYN MINTER: Moved to Fort Lauderdale in seventh grade.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that's when your parents split up?

MARILYN MINTER: They split up before. But my mother was in such terrible shape. I remember watching her when I was in fifth or sixth grade coming out of the bathroom, and she had a pink peignoir on, because she wore negligees all the time. And we had this mauve rug, and she walked towards me, gave me this really wan smile and passed out. And there was this trail of diarrhea on the mauve rug. And I was so young, I didn't know what to

do. And I saw in the movies you called the doctor. So I started calling doctors in the phone book.

And finally, a friend of mine's father—I got him, and he said he didn't have a license to treat in Florida, because we were in Florida—but he came over and checked out my mom. And it was just—I was on my own. I was on my own. I was hungry and dirty, and we were from a wealthy family. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Nobody else from your extended family could rescue you in any way?

MARILYN MINTER: There was no extended family. There was none. My mother was isolated because she was crazy at this point. My dad left her for a friend of hers. So, all their mutual friends went to the new couple. And my mother—it drove her over the edge. I mean, she used to wake me up when I was really young, to go through the pockets of my dad's clothes to find evidence of other women. My dad was a very good-looking guy. I think he had an affair with Marilyn Monroe. This is what he told me. Yes, it's probably true. It sounds crazy, but that kind of stuff was probably true. He hung out with a lot of celebrities, because they all came down to Miami.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where did you go to junior high and high school?

MARILYN MINTER: Junior high: I went to Sunrise Elementary School, and then I went to Pompano Beach Junior High. And then I was switched in eighth grade to Sunrise Elementary School and then back to Pompano Beach High School, which doesn't exist anymore.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you got to high school, what was your experience there in terms of—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I was a wild kid. I was a totally rebellious kid. My mother wanted me to be—did you ever see the movie "Dark Victory"?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I think so.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, where Bette Davis had this domineering mother who didn't—yes, Instead of going along with anything, I did the exact opposite. Anything my mother wanted me to do, I would do the opposite, which in some ways was really healthy, because I had to get out of the toxic environment. But in some ways—she said, "Take typing and shorthand so you can get a degree—so you can get a job after college." She told me that in grad school. And I didn't know how to type because I refused to ever work as a secretary, because I was very ambitious, even very, very young. I knew after watching what happened to my mother I was never going to depend on anyone.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean by ambitious?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, that's the only word I can think of, that I was determined to read everything, because I was in this cultural desert of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, raised in this hideous place. I really believed in civil rights. I really didn't believe in religion; I thought it was really dangerous. I mean, I was—you know, I don't know how I started thinking like this. I was born with it, because when I was really young, it used to be colored drinking fountains and white drinking fountains, and I used to drink at the colored drinking fountains to piss people off.

I was always really rebellious.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have teachers who would help encourage you with the reading and the art?

MARILYN MINTER: The opposite. No, I could read really young, too.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In high school?

MARILYN MINTER: But I was not a good student. You know, I was okay. I know I really smart, but I have areas where I'm retarded, and that's math and languages, spelling—it's like I'm retarded. And I think it has something to do with my mother being so high when she was pregnant with me. My cousin told me they were worried that—she shouldn't even have kids because she was walking into walls.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is drugs or alcohol?

MARILYN MINTER: Who knows?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, they're obviously his alcohol syndrome—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes. And I wondered—and I was born on Demerol. I wasn't breast-fed. Excuse—
[audio break].

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, in high school, you said you were rebellious.

MARILYN MINTER: I was rebellious from the time I was in—I was a really good kid, and I worshiped my mother. And then there was a point in time when I ended up hating her. I don't know what that moment was, but from that moment on, I was super rebellious.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were in high school, because you said you were always drawing—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—were there art classes you could take there?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, there—the art teacher was a sign painter.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But did you take the class?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, but she hated me. But, you know, I was like a bad kid. I was in the dean of students' office every day. The dean of students said, "You're not really bad; you're just bored."

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was smart.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and—I didn't know why she was so mad at me, but I was really good in some subjects. And so, they never said, though—I wasn't one of those kids they said "All you have to do is apply yourself," because I was so bad in math and languages and spelling, the basics. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you becoming aware of fine art? You said you were looking at comic books. Were you becoming aware of the fine art world and museums and—

MARILYN MINTER: I was—no, not at all. No, I thought I would be an illustrator. I figured I would be an illustrator.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you looking at illustration in magazines?

MARILYN MINTER: I was in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the 60s. You can't imagine how backward it is, or was. It's a hip place now, but when I was there, it was T-shirts and flip-flops and old people, except during college vacation.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you do something in particular in the summer or have summer jobs when you were older?

MARILYN MINTER: I worked in—oh, what were they called—oh, it was a charity, Easter Seals. And I taught art.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was in the summer?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I taught art.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did you teach? What kind of—

MARILYN MINTER: I taught people with MS. I had a—I don't know, I just sort of gave them setups and helped them. There was all these program things that I just followed that were already there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was in high school?

MARILYN MINTER: In high school, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A paying job?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I was a volunteer—no, I was a volunteer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you enjoy that?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I didn't like it. No. I didn't like it because it scared me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said you—

MARILYN MINTER: I could—this was like a 45-year-old guy, and he had MS, and he couldn't even hold a pencil. And you got it in your 40s and 30s, and it scared me to death. It always did from that time working there. I liked it—I did it in college too. I did it on and off. I didn't really have any kind of real job till after I got out of grad school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So your mother was supporting you?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes, well, I also got scholarships. I got full—University of Florida was \$125 a trimester. In Syracuse, I got a scholarship. I got—I taught.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Going back to high school, were there any friends who had any connection with the kinds of things you were interested in, with art, with drawing, with—

MARILYN MINTER: Not at all, no. I hung out with the rich, bad kids. It's hard for people to understand that, because people that went to Miami and Fort Lauderdale were characters. They were people who—and it was like the land of no adults. And we could do anything. We stayed out all night. Mostly, I partied. And I know I was the first person who smoked dope in junior high. I was a junior in high school—in my school, I know it. And it was just shocking. It's hard to believe that nobody's parents were married; and if they were, you would see—my friends and I would be driving down the street, and we would say, "Hello, Mr. Owens." He'd be making out with some woman in his Volkswagen. And we would just wave at him to make sure he saw us. And we just loved doing this stuff. We stayed out all night. We cut school and went to the beach. Even though we weren't surfing, we pretended we knew how. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So how did you end up deciding, thinking about college?

MARILYN MINTER: I couldn't get into any colleges. I was—my math scores were so low, I couldn't even get into the University of Florida, so I ended up going to a junior college.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which one was that?

MARILYN MINTER: Broward County Junior College.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were living at home while you went to that college?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes, and then from there—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were there for how long?

MARILYN MINTER: Two years. From there, I had good enough grades that I got into the University of Florida. And there was a girl that was in the art department with me, and she—

JUDITH RICHARDS: At Broward?

MARILYN MINTER:—at Broward—and she said, "Let's go to the University of Florida." And I said, "Okay." That's the only reason I went. I was going to join the Peace Corps or VISTA—

JUDITH RICHARDS: VISTA?

MARILYN MINTER: VISTA, yes. That was my plan, to join the Peace Corps or VISTA. But then it occurred to me, "Well, why don't I give this art thing a try?" But I knew I was going to be a commercial artist. And then I got to art school—

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like when you got to this junior college, you got serious, you really started applying yourself.

MARILYN MINTER: I started getting serious, yes—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why do you think that was?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, then I started learning about art history. And I just fell in love. I saw Matisse's *The Studio*, and that was just one of those transcendental moments.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In a book?

MARILYN MINTER: In a book, yes, everything was in a book.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was there a teacher in particular there who—

MARILYN MINTER: There was a couple, couple. That's the first time I ever had teachers that said I was really good, except for—I knew I was good, I mean, enough that I did the posters—the campaign posters for the student body president, stuff like that, and I would draw to amuse boyfriends. And my brother's friends would pay me a hundred bucks to copy a Vargas girl, things like that. I could copy anything.

And when I went to art school—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So—before you went to art school—so you were at Broward—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and you got good enough grades to go to the University of Florida—

MARILYN MINTER: Get into University of Florida, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—which is in Miami.

MARILYN MINTER: No, which is in Gainesville.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ah.

MARILYN MINTER: Then I went to the deep South, and that was the deep South.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you went with that girlfriend.

MARILYN MINTER: That girlfriend of mine. We had a little sports car, and we drove up there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Her car or your car?

MARILYN MINTER: Mine. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of car was it?

MARILYN MINTER: I always had sports cars. I had a—let me think what—Triumph Spitfire. I used to drink a six-pack of beer and just put my foot down on the accelerator all the way to the floor on A1A—[laughs]—late at night. I mean, I was crazy.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Alone in the car?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, you know how I learned how to drive? I just got in the car and drove it. [Laughs.] I was 12, I think. I was crazy. I was a crazy little girl.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So did you share an apartment with her?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, stayed off campus, had a lot of first dates.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And your mother was happy about that?

MARILYN MINTER: She didn't care. She was glad I got into college, because she was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And she was supporting you still.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—well, yes, she was supporting me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, you're living—we know the tuition was very low, but you had to pay rent and buy food and—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and she definitely gave me the rent money. And I think I had about \$50 left over a month. And I cooked, tried to survive, but I never cooked.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you had credit for two years before you went there, so you would be there just for two years and get your degree?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Well, I actually went there longer, because it took me three years to get out.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you went there, did you immediately know you would be an art major?

MARILYN MINTER: I went crazy. Yes, I immediately knew.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A studio art major?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. That was right at the end of the 60s, where there was lots of dope and people grew their hair, and it was time to rebel, and I lived in a commune.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where?

MARILYN MINTER: Off campus.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What were the principles of this commune?

MARILYN MINTER: Nothing—no principles whatsoever—[laughs]—antiwar and that—my boyfriend was in SDS. I didn't even go to class the first semester. I failed classes. I would just party all night. I got ahold of Dexedrine because I was anemic, and so I had a scrip for Dexedrine, and I could stay up for days. You are going to hear this. This is what my life was, you know, trying to get as high as I could as much as I could. I'm genetically loaded. There's nobody with my last name that's not an alcoholic or drug addict. That, you should know right away. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were going through this, were there moments when you said, "I really want to be an artist, I want to learn this, I want to"—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I thought you had to get high to be an artist. This was the general culture gave you the—and I saw Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground. And I saw Lou Reed and Nico, and I was just, "I want to go to New York City."

JUDITH RICHARDS: They came to Fort Lauderdale?

MARILYN MINTER: No. I saw—that was just in magazines—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, I see. I see—

MARILYN MINTER:—yet, and TV. My God, no—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—not actually performing.

MARILYN MINTER: Nobody came to Gainesville, Florida.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, Gainesville.

MARILYN MINTER: But Warhol did, but I was so high, I didn't go see him. And he had this guy that he used to send. And he didn't. He was—actually, Warhol went to Gainesville to give a talk, and I didn't even bother to go. That's one of my big regrets in life.

JUDITH RICHARDS: During those three years that you were there—

MARILYN MINTER: Three years.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—amidst—

MARILYN MINTER: I met a guy who was a Vietnam veteran against the war, and we went on marches. I was really into civil rights. I was very angry that Martin Luther King decided to put all of his energy into getting out of Vietnam when he should have stayed with the civil rights movement. We'd have these huge discussions all the time about the domino theory. [Laughs.] I knew this stuff. Because I was not surrounded by people that thought like this.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What year did you start in Gainesville?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, God, I have no idea.

JUDITH RICHARDS: OK, so you were born in '48. It might have been '68?

MARILYN MINTER: It seems like it's '67, '68. Yes, I don't know. Yes, '68 sounds like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of art classes were you taking? Were you taking painting, sculpture, photography?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes. But I had a very bad painting instructor—not very bad; he was a product of the culture, and he believed if you didn't paint like de Kooning, you were a bad artist. So he just said—he never gave us still lifes or anything—we never knew anything about oil paint. I knew nothing. And I met my future husband

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were painting in acrylic then?

MARILYN MINTER: No, oil. But we didn't know what oil did. I didn't know how it worked, nothing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: He didn't teach you the techniques?

MARILYN MINTER: Nothing. So I got a C in his class, and I got an A in photography, so I majored in photography. I was self-taught because when I was a junior, I had to take one more painting class to graduate, and that's when I got a teacher that put out still lifes, and I had to learn how to paint from things. And then—I could always draw, so I could copy it. And I was pretty good at it. And then I went, "Wow, I really like this." And then I was hooked. So I had a double major: painting and photography.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In those days, what kind of art were you looking at? Did you have images on your bedroom wall—I mean, on your apartment walls?

MARILYN MINTER: I was into pop art. And that's why—the teacher, if you weren't in expressionist painter—which I wasn't; I needed a source from day one, I always needed a source, I needed a subject matter, something from a magazine—I used to paint from my own photographs. And then I got things out of magazines, too. And I just put things together like a film still. Those are my first things—they're in my book actually; there's a couple of reproductions.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I was going to ask you about that, but—so when you first started taking art classes, you never had any other formal art training?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, my classes in Fort Lauderdale in that high school—I mean, she was just pretty—she taught us lettering. [Laughs.] She really didn't know what to do with us. And she didn't help me at all. She put me in—she gave me 13 U's in citizenship over the year.

JUDITH RICHARDS: She gave you what?

MARILYN MINTER: We had citizenship grades back in those days, where satisfactory, unsatisfactory—I always got an unsatisfactory in her class. Yes, I don't understand why she disliked me so much, because I was never mean, I just was bored by her. But I took as many art classes as I could. But I never was her prized student. There were other people who were her prizes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So by the time you had gotten to college, you had painted?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I haven't—not really—yes, a little bit, that's true.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You had used a camera?

MARILYN MINTER: No, camera was strictly at college—never touched it. I did paint for my neighbor. He had a painting class on Saturdays, and he taught me a little bit. I learned a little. I have one—there's a painting somewhere my niece has—it's pretty awful—of a southern belle. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: There are these books you can get on how to paint—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—a series of pamphlets.

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know if I ever used those. I don't know, but I never—I just know I was going to be an artist by the time—I mean, I took a commercial class, and I hated it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where?

MARILYN MINTER: At University of Florida. And then I instantly switched to fine arts.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, you said that—

MARILYN MINTER: I never even—I went through that class—I was there for maybe a week, not two sessions, not even, and then I switched over to fine arts.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was there a moment when you were there in classes, when whether because you were meeting other students who you related to who wanted to be an artist—or your—or your teachers, where you, as you said, felt like you were—

MARILYN MINTER: I found other people who were anti-Vietnam and—well, I married a guy who was a Vietnam veteran, Vietnam veteran against the war. And I had a boyfriend who was in SDS. I met people that thought like me politically. Plus, only 114 black students at the entire University of Florida. And I just wanted a different world.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did you get married? In college?

MARILYN MINTER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: All right. We'll get back to that, then. So you said you took photography and you immediately changed from painting to photography as a focus.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because I was told I wasn't any good. I got a C. I got an A in photography. I wasn't thinking of the larger picture. I never thought large at all for years.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean, you didn't—

MARILYN MINTER: I just sort of went from one thing to another. I wasn't thinking in terms of future. I was really thinking I wouldn't live past 30. [Laughs.] It never occurred to me that I was going to actually grow up and live. I just wanted to have fun.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you close at all to your brothers by the time you got to college?

MARILYN MINTER: No, my mother was a drug addict. I mean, she managed us by pitting us against one another, because we were the worst kids in the world to have if you were a drug addict. Although my brothers were way successful, presidents of everything, very successful all their lives. But I was not. I was a real fuck-up.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So she pitted you against each other and you didn't really see them much when you were in college?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I hated them, and they hated me. We all hated each other. We don't anymore. We know exactly what happened to us. And one of our brothers, the one that used to beat us up so bad, he is always trying to get us to hang out. And we try.

JUDITH RICHARDS: He used to beat you up?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes, my brother too. I don't even want to go into it, truthfully.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. So when you first started this photography class, what kind of camera were you taught to use?

MARILYN MINTER: A Mamiya, a double-lens reflex.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were taught to use it, or you—

MARILYN MINTER: Taught to use it, develop your film, develop your prints, dry mount them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This was in black and white?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, you did it all—frame them, cut and mat.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have a choice of the subject matter, or were the things assigned to you, but you made—

MARILYN MINTER: No assignments, but I was in a very romantic school with someone who developed this technique where you would use two negatives and one shot. And his name was Jerry Uelsmann.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And this is an interesting part of being in that class. I went home one weekend when I was a junior and took pictures of my mother. And I brought them back to share with the class, and I wasn't a graduate—I was an undergraduate. And everybody in the class was going, "Oh, my God, that's your mother?"

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was this Uelsmann's class?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. "That's your mother?" And that's the first time I felt waves of shame come over me because I never realized, "Oh, yes, this is"—I mean, I have friends now who tell me when they see me, they said, "I never saw your mother dressed," and I took her car to school every single day. I mean, it was like no parental anything. I could do whatever I wanted—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So if you took her car, you knew she couldn't get anywhere?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she didn't want to go anywhere. She was lying in bed, high as a kite, watching television, soap operas. [Laughs.] I laugh about it, but that's all I knew. My brothers and I looked at the pictures I took in 1969, and they wonder what everyone else sees. They don't understand it. We don't know what you see that we

don't, because that's all we knew. And my mother wore a wig because she pulled out her hair. It was all this fucked-up glamour. Her nails would get funguses because she didn't clean them out. There were acrylic—she was still very glamorous, but it was just wrong. She would go buy a purse at Woolworth's thinking it looks like a leather purse—she thought she was getting over on her friends, a plastic purse. It was just all wrong and off.

I couldn't eat her food because I thought she'd poison me by accident.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you said that you were basically taking care of yourself.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does that mean that you bought food and you cooked?

MARILYN MINTER: No, she bought it, but I went to the restaurant. She would cook it. I had to force her to cook for me at one point because everyone made fun of me because there was this delivery service, and they felt sorry for me, and I couldn't stand it. I mean, I had these horror stories, though. I've gone through a lot of therapy, but you want to hear this, right?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, only what you want to share.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I mean—OK, at one point, my dad gave my mother—she was trying to take him to court to get child support. He didn't pay anything, because she had money from her father, her family; she inherited money. And so at one point, she got \$300 a week to take care of me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A week?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. So she just gave to me. I'm 11 years old. It was—no, it was \$80 or something. I don't know, it was a lot of money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Maybe \$300 a month.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, all I know is that I had \$300 saved in a jar, and that's a lot of money for an 11-year-old in the '60s. And I would just ride my bike to the different restaurants—Howard Johnson's, the drugstore—but the waitresses would start feeling sorry for me. And then I would leave that restaurant because I couldn't stand it when people felt sorry for me. So I would go to a different one.

And at one point, she realized, "Oh, I probably should do something to take care of this kid." So she ordered this food service then called Chez Ray. And my friends and I—because we lived in this very fancy apartment building—they were coming over to go swimming in the pool, because we were right on the ocean. And we ran upstairs one day, and they saw the cans. And I was used to eating this every night. And they would drop it off at 3:00, and then you heated it up in the oven, and they said, "That's your dinner?" And they made horrible sounds. And so then I went on a hunger strike. I said, "I'm not going to eat it anymore unless you cook for me." That was in eighth grade.

So she ended up starting to cook for me, but she was so out of it, I thought I was going to die. But I didn't even know. All of a sudden, I couldn't eat her food anymore, so I would just go to the restaurant. In the place we lived, there was a restaurant. I would order stuff in all the time. That's how I survived—and school lunches.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, at least when you were on your own in college, you knew how to cook.

MARILYN MINTER: I was very skinny, so I modeled, so—[laughs]—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did you do that?

MARILYN MINTER: In high school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: For pay?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, no—well \$5 an hour.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's not that bad in those days—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I guess that was a lot, yet.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—more than minimum wage.

MARILYN MINTER: I was skinny and tall, so they said, "Oh, you should be a model." So I did it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Going back to the photographs that you took of your mother, that was 1969, so you took them, you had this response, and you put them away.

MARILYN MINTER: Put them away 'til 1995.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We'll get to that, but you put them away and—did you think of yourself as a photographer at that point?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Beyond that, what kind of photographs were you taking?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I took a lot of pictures of my friends. I took a lot of pictures of windows and mirrors—a lot of windows, a lot of glass.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the reflections?

MARILYN MINTER: The reflections, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I saw images of paintings you did. You mentioned that—where there were models' heads, two models' heads—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that was from magazines, yes. I didn't take those.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and with cars which looked like—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I just did these collages, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, those are photographs you took?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I didn't start painting from my own photographs until I got to graduate school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, those are collages of photographs?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: They looked like, actually, paintings.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, they were cut out of magazines, and I collaged them, and then I made paintings of them. I was trying to teach myself how to paint from sources. I was learning about oil paint. I didn't really know how to paint at all because the painting teacher that I had was also an abstract painter, but he knew to set you off working from still lifes and—I never work from a model; I worked from still lifes, and then I went right from that to references.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were in college and had that photography class or other photography classes—

MARILYN MINTER: No, I stayed in photography all the way through.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were studying photography and you did this series about your mother, were there photographers, contemporary or even older, whose work you admired, who you are particularly attracted to, possibly influenced?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, everybody loved Ansel Adams because that was the god of the school, Ansel Adams, who was Jerry Uelsmann's god. But Diane Arbus visited the school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Had you seen her work before she visited?

MARILYN MINTER: No, and I didn't see it after either. I was an undergrad.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did he invite her?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: To speak to his class?

MARILYN MINTER: To speak to the graduate students. And I was an undergraduate. And she didn't like anything. She was looking through all these romantic pictures—I mean, they were so romantic. The people would do his method of compositing these negatives in the same—and you'd print one and block it off and then you'd dodge

so you could fake it. This was his genius. And they would do these really romantic things, which I was never into doing.

And when he saw me walk down the hall, he said, "Oh, Marilyn, go get your negatives and show Diane." And so I just showed them to her, and she loved them. That's the only thing she liked. But I never looked her up or anything. I didn't even care. I didn't know who she was. She was a graduate teacher, and it didn't mean anything to me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were studying photography, though, were there other photographers besides Ansel Adams whose work you looked at?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, no, we only looked at people historical. We weren't looking at anything—this was a very romantic kind of isolated school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So, there weren't any photographers who you really admired and loved?

MARILYN MINTER: I never saw William Eggleston or any of that until I came upstate, up North. I never saw snow, remember. [Laughs.] So, I mean, it was like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You weren't aware of Robert Frank?

MARILYN MINTER: Not at all. Who was the guy who did something of man?

JUDITH RICHARDS: *The Family of Man*?

MARILYN MINTER: *The Family of Man*, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was an exhibition at MoMA.

MARILYN MINTER: And it also made a book—was that Robert Frank?

JUDITH RICHARDS: No.

MARILYN MINTER: There was this book, *The Family of Man*, everybody loves—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But it had photographs by hundreds of—many photographers.

MARILYN MINTER: Hundreds of photographs—no, it was one guy. He was famous. Maybe it wasn't called *The Family of Man*—something "of man." That's about as contemporary as I got. The graduate students might have known about it, but remember, I'm a beginning photographer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. So when you graduated, you knew that you wanted to go to graduate school?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and I got rejected.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was your ambition? Why did you want to go to graduate school?

MARILYN MINTER: I didn't know. I didn't know. I mean, I talked to this guy who—I wanted to get out of the South. It was just my way out. And I talked to this teacher who was from the North, and he told me what schools to apply to, and I applied to all of them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who was that teacher? Do you remember?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't remember his name.

And there was also someone down there from Yale. But he's not there anymore. And I just wanted to—I knew there was more out there. I read—even when I was in high school, I read Time magazine cover to cover. And then I switched to Newsweek when I was in college because it was more liberal. I still read it. [Laughs.]

And I knew there was a big world out there, but I knew about Warhol—that's all I could think of, was Warhol and the Velvet Underground. I didn't know anything really about photography.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you think about going to graduate school in New York City?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but I thought it was—I couldn't handle it. I had a thick southern accent, talked like this and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean you couldn't handle it?

MARILYN MINTER: I knew I wasn't ready. I hadn't seen a big city like this. When I first came here, I was afraid to go anywhere, it was terrifying. When I was in graduate school, I came down here for a visit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were accepted and you picked Syracuse?

MARILYN MINTER: Syracuse, yes, because I got money there, and I got into Pratt, too. And then I think I got into one other place, and I got rejected everywhere else.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So Pratt could have given you—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but Pratt was way too close to the Big Apple. I wasn't emotionally, physically—I wasn't ready. I couldn't handle moving to New York City. I was too sheltered.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you go to Syracuse by yourself or did you have friends who are also going?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I took this poor guy hostage and he ended up being my husband.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was his name?

MARILYN MINTER: George Harris.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean, you took him hostage?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, he was in love with me, so I said, let's go up to Syracuse.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was he a student?

MARILYN MINTER: He graduated with me, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In art?

MARILYN MINTER: In commercial art, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And he went to the University of Syracuse, too?

MARILYN MINTER: He didn't go to Syracuse. He worked on the equivalency of the *Village Voice* up there. He was the art director of the *Village Voice* for the area of Syracuse.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you got married in Florida?

MARILYN MINTER: No, we got married after graduate school. It was either one of those things will either break up or get married, so we got married. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you both went to Syracuse, you live together there, some place off campus?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. We lived together in undergraduate school. That was kind of shocking at the time, yes. But I love doing things like that, anything to get attention. I always did a lot of things what you'd consider negative, but at least I got attention, because I was virtually ignored my whole life. When I'm still around my brothers and my family, I get real quiet. And my husband doesn't even know who I am because I get so quiet, because you just can't compete with my brothers; they were the winners and everything. And they still are. They're very successful.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do they do?

MARILYN MINTER: One is—was a stockbroker, who is retired, semiretired; the other one developed Plantation. He was a football player. He was a really successful football player, and he did color for—you call it color—he did broadcasting. And then he ended up being a real estate guy, but everyone knew them because he was a real big star football player for the University of Miami until he got hurt.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did you mean by "plantation"?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, it's this place—this is an area of Florida that wasn't developed, and my brother developed it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, I see, Plantation, Florida.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I've heard of that.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, Gulf Stream Realty. So they were highly successful, and I was this big loser as far as they were concerned.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Going back to graduate school, when you went up to Syracuse, that must have been a huge culture shock.

MARILYN MINTER: "Huge" is not the word. I'd never seen weather below 45. I didn't have a clue that I was going into the snow belt. It started snowing October 15th. I couldn't believe it. It was my first snow.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you basically have a good experience in graduate school and at Syracuse?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I had a great time, yes. I was the only female. So I was in heaven.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In your whole class?

MARILYN MINTER: Whole class, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that strange, or was it usual for there?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, even back then, I was one of the few in graduate school—I mean undergraduate school—senior. There were all boys in those days.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Even in the art department?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, in those days. Yes. And in graduate school, I was the only female. And then they brought another one up from the University of Florida, and then there were two of us. [Laughs.] She ended up—the first person I knew that died. She was only 29 years old; she died of liver cancer. Her name was Marilyn also.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was her last name?

MARILYN MINTER: Don't remember.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So tell me about the experience of being in graduate school there, the teachers you studied with, and what was your work like.

MARILYN MINTER: I started making paintings—hard-edge paintings of people watching television. I took pictures.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, you had been a photographer. But now you're making paintings.

MARILYN MINTER: And I'm—

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did you make the transition?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, only when I got to Syracuse. I started cutting them up, trying to make collages. And I just couldn't get what I wanted, so I started asking my fellow graduate students to pose for me. And I photographed all these guys watching television—they're all boys—and I photographed them all watching television. And then I transferred it into acrylic hard edge.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you transfer it?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I just drew it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You didn't project slides onto the canvas?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I did project it, but it was—I projected my photos.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Slides.

MARILYN MINTER: Not slides; I used real—I used an opaque projector from the minute I saw one.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And were you working in acrylics then?

MARILYN MINTER: Acrylic, yes—oil and acrylic. I used both. The TV was acrylic because it was hard-edge. And whenever I had to render something, it was oil. I could show you catalogs.

And then I got offered a show at the Everson Museum when I was at grad school. That was the first—I was like a

star there. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what were the—so did you have that show?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and the catalog.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what were the paintings that you did?

MARILYN MINTER: I'll show you.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Good. [Audio break.] So I'm looking at now—

MARILYN MINTER: So I just shot all these images.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what we're looking at are pieces of clothing—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and telephone cords laying on the floor—toys.

MARILYN MINTER: Right. I was really teaching myself how to paint. That's all I was doing, teaching myself how to paint with oil. Now it's oil only.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, this show was all oil on canvas.

MARILYN MINTER: My first semester my first year at Syracuse, I won the regional—all the grad students would submit their work—well, this is a few things. I forgot to tell you this too. I won something, too, at the University of Florida. Lee Bonteceau was the judge. I won the Mademoiselle magazine art award. Like, there was this thing—you submitted it, and I was one of the winners.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did you submit?

MARILYN MINTER: Paintings like the ones that I did in undergraduate school of the heads—the real pop art things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You had—now I'm misunderstanding maybe. You had said that they were photo collages.

MARILYN MINTER: But that I made paintings of the collages, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, I see. Right. Right. Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And so—they're pretty loaded imagery, underwear and toys.

JUDITH RICHARDS: On the floor—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, and the hardwood floor—the grain of the floor—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the wood, yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—the hardwood painted carefully.

MARILYN MINTER: So I went from the TV sets, people watching television, to things on the floor. And then I went from the things on the floor to—weird things on the floor.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, staying for this with this for a second—so you had the show at the Everson—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—which was an incredible accomplishment.

MARILYN MINTER: An amazing—I've been downhill ever since—well, not till recently. But up until the last 10 years—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So obviously you were—

MARILYN MINTER:—it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you were very accomplished, you were recognized with that show.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, in graduate school, I was a star.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you feel that you were confident then in the sense that you'd be a painter—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, that's what I learned—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—that you'd be an artist?

MARILYN MINTER: I learned everything from this other artist. His name was Tom DeSchmidt. And he was my mentor.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Tell me his name again—Tom—

MARILYN MINTER: Tom DeSchmidt—I can't find him anywhere—D-E-S-C-H-M-I-D-T. He was from Minneapolis.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And he was a teacher or a fellow student?

MARILYN MINTER: He was a fellow student. But he was older than me. And he taught me how to rip wood and build my own stretchers. He taught me how to be a boy in the art world. Because for that, I was a southern belle. And he knew I was really good. And he was probably the first—there was a couple of people in undergraduate who saw I was really good. I shouldn't say that. People knew I was good. But in graduate school, I stood out.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were making these paintings of the clothing on the floor that were projected from a photograph you took—these paintings—were they colored paintings and this is just a black-and-white catalog?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, they were in color. Yes, they didn't have any money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. [Laughs.] Of course.

MARILYN MINTER: I still have them rolled up.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you looking at other—oh, that's great.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I read art magazines voraciously.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: At this point and in undergraduate school, I started looking in art magazines, oh, yes. I read Artforum every month cover to cover.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were making trips to Manhattan to see—

MARILYN MINTER: Only when I went to graduate school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. So when you were in Syracuse, you made trips to New York.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there any things you saw that you particularly remember were—made an impact?

MARILYN MINTER: OK Harris.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Makes sense looking at these paintings.

MARILYN MINTER: I remember going to—yes, OK Harris. But at that point he wasn't just—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The photorealist—

MARILYN MINTER: It was Ivan Karp, and he had just left Castelli. So I mean I went to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you saw the photorealists?

MARILYN MINTER: And I thought, "Oh, I can do this." But at that point, I was making really boring paintings for them because I wasn't making shiny objects. I wasn't making toys anymore. I was making marbles and dust and pieces of plywood.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're talking about after you graduated.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because after I graduated I moved here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you—

MARILYN MINTER: They just said, "Yes, you're a photorealist, but"—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—what was in your graduate show? Is it the same as this catalog?

MARILYN MINTER: This is—yes, graduate started in—I didn't really—we didn't have graduate shows.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: My graduate show was the Everson Museum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Let me see the date of this. This was—

MARILYN MINTER: '70s.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—'73.

MARILYN MINTER: '73? Yes, I had already graduated.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, you graduated in '72.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So I was going to ask you this. After you graduated in '72, you stayed in Syracuse for a period of time?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, to raise money to come here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what were you doing to raise money?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I worked as a display girl.

JUDITH RICHARDS: For a department store?

MARILYN MINTER: Department stores. And then from there, I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you were also still painting.

MARILYN MINTER: All the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were painting in your apartment?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, in my basement. It was really cold. The basement of my apartment building. And then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were working in this department store.

MARILYN MINTER: Worked in this department store as a display girl. And then I had to get some kind of a degree to teach. So I wasn't getting any college jobs. I was sending out—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, you were trying to get a teaching job.

MARILYN MINTER: Teaching job. And the only one that got one out of our whole department was Tom. And he got —

JUDITH RICHARDS: DeSchmidt.

MARILYN MINTER:—a job teaching at VCU, Virginia Commonwealth University. And when I moved to New York, he would come to stay with us.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Before you got to New York, though, you stayed in Syracuse. Did you do any other jobs besides—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I taught in a Catholic—and I taught in a K through sixth grade. I was a substitute teacher.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you said you were getting some kind of certificate or—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I had to get a certificate. I went and got a certificate so I could teach. I had a master's, but you need 12 more hours or something. So I got my certificate, and then I started teaching at K through sixth grade. But before that, I was a substitute teacher for—

JUDITH RICHARDS: In the public schools in Syracuse?

MARILYN MINTER: The public schools, yes, really tough schools. But I went wherever they told me to go. They would call me at 6:40, and I'd get up and go. I didn't do something that made me not graduate on time. I did things all fucked up because I was high all the time. But I don't remember what it was that I did. I had to prove that I took these classes. So that's why everything got screwed up.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The time, the dates.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because I didn't turn something in or—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but I don't know what it was now. I don't remember at all. I just remember, "Oh yes, this is really fucking me up all over everywhere." Plus, they signed my name—they turned my name into Marilyn Harris. Yes. Yes. I couldn't believe that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who did that?

MARILYN MINTER: The school, all by itself. But I married this guy, George Harris. They changed my name to Marilyn Harris. It's unbelievable. They changed my name—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was Syracuse?

MARILYN MINTER: No, that was the University of Florida. That was the days where nobody—kept their last names.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what year did you get married?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: I thought you didn't get married until you get to Syracuse.

MARILYN MINTER: I didn't, but when I changed—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Then Florida on its own changed the record?

MARILYN MINTER: On its own changed my name to Marilyn Harris, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I could see why that took some time to get resolved.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh my God, it was like constant. This was that era when they just automatically did it everywhere. My driver's license said Marilyn Harris. Yes, Social Security number—everything automatically. I never changed my name once, not for a second. Isn't that something? Yes, I was right on the cusp where everything changed. Like "Ms." was a big deal to use "Ms." and I was "Ms." And it was a big deal to say "one-woman show." It was "one-man show." And so I just said one-person show. Yes, and then that's what it ended up being. I remember saying at a lecture "I was a really good drafts person," and these guys in the audience go, "there's no draftspersons; it's draftsmen." [Laughs.] Mail carrier—"no, it's mailman." It was the turn of the culture, right at the cusp of the turn of the culture.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Were you involved in any consciousness raising groups?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh God, yes. I was in all of those things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, at those days, *Ms.* Magazine came out, and I was a big supporter. And it wasn't an official, but I was super feminist immediately. And my husband sort of was too. Like, he started doing the dishes because I was literally working all day, and he didn't have a job. And I was working, and I was cooking. And then one night, he said, "I'll start doing the dishes."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me go back to when you went down to the city to those museums while you were a graduate student.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh yes, he would come with me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You want to museums and galleries, and you mentioned OK Harries.

MARILYN MINTER: I remember OK Harris being the big, hot gallery. And so was Paula Cooper. That was a big, hot gallery. I remember John Gibson was on West Broadway. They were all in West Broadway. And then Sonnabend opened there, and then Castelli. It was, like, so exciting. And I knew I wanted to come to SoHo.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you drive down frequently?

MARILYN MINTER: I took a bus or a train.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And stayed overnight somewhere?

MARILYN MINTER: Stayed overnight at my husband's sister's house in Jersey. And then we would meet on Houston Street. [Laughter.] But then there were a lot of galleries uptown, so we would go uptown all the time first—French and Company and Emmerich [ph]—Castelli at that point was uptown. Yes, and Xavier Fourcade—these were the hot galleries.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but I remember Saturday, OK Harris and this girl Caroline Clonorides ran OK Harris. And she was somebody I knew because she was a student of Tom's at Virginia Commonwealth University.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you graduated, you said you stayed in Syracuse to save up money with a specific goal to move to New York.

MARILYN MINTER: To come here, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how long did it take you to accomplish that goal? When did you actually move—with George, I guess?

MARILYN MINTER: '76.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it took four years?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes. God, were we in Syracuse for four years? Yes, that makes sense.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, four years after graduation you were there two other years as well.

MARILYN MINTER: OK, yes, four years—yes, right. Four years? It doesn't seem like it was four, but it must have been. Maybe we got here earlier.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said you moved in '76.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, you know what it is? We signed our lease in '76. We were here looking from '75. I quit my job in '75.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you say you were here looking, what does that mean? You lived here?

MARILYN MINTER: We—no, I guess we were going back and forth all the time. He was up there because he still had his job. And I was coming down here looking for a place to live, looking for lofts. And it took a while.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you end up finding the loft you found?

MARILYN MINTER: It was just a miracle. But you know how when you look for something, you know it as soon as you walk in? That's what happened.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you remember if you knew any of the other people in the building?

MARILYN MINTER: I knew somebody else in the building—exactly. This girl and her husband moved down here from Syracuse before me. She was in the graduate school the second year they brought—I think they had three girls—

[End of Track.]

MARILYN MINTER: [In progress]—was one, myself was one—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm sorry, Lou—

MARILYN MINTER: Lou Berliner—none of them are artists anymore—Pauline somebody-or-other. So there were three of us, and Marilyn who died. Four of us—five, counting me.

So the second year, they brought—because it was in the culture. Because the head of the department the year I came up retired. And the new dean came in. He was a young guy from Miami. But I don't remember his name or anything.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So—

MARILYN MINTER: Although we did occupy his office and that shut down the school—[laughs]—Vietnam war—shut down the Pentagon—I did all the marches. You know what I'm talking about?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, of course.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I did do a lot of marches for—but that out in graduate school. There wasn't any consciousness raising because there was only a handful of people that thought like I did. It was in Syracuse. I did real consciousness raising only when I got to Manhattan—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER:—where I joined groups where we had discussions. Yes. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you found this loft that you did through the other student—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it was through the other student. It was in her building, but it was on the other side of the building, and it was a long time before I could get in that side because they weren't thinking they were going to rent it out. So I must have looked at 40 different—

JUDITH RICHARDS: "They" meaning the owners of the buildings?

MARILYN MINTER: The owner of the building, because I was looking at—I must have looked at 40 spaces.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were looking to rent a space you could live in and work in—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and that your husband could also—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but we were illegal. Yes, we were illegal. So my husband held down the fort in Syracuse. But '76, I think we signed a lease—it must have been '76—maybe it was October '75 or something like that. So I think of myself as being here in '76.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you moved into the loft, did it have a kitchen and bathroom? Was it set up?

MARILYN MINTER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No?

MARILYN MINTER: No, it took us months.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the two of you did all that work?

MARILYN MINTER: All of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you learn how to do that kind of construction?

MARILYN MINTER: I knew how to do it from building stretchers.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] That's a big gap between stretchers and kitchens and bathrooms.

MARILYN MINTER: Not really. Not really, because you had to use—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was Tom good at that?

MARILYN MINTER: Tom was excellent.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean George. Sorry.

MARILYN MINTER: George—no, he didn't know how to do it either, but we learned really quick. I built my whole bathroom by myself. And everyone was really impressed. And then I got a job—my plumber hired me to work for him, because he could see I could build things. And everyone loved having a female on their crew.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: So I built Elizabeth Bernie's [ph] bathroom. Yes. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you got to New York, did both you and George or one of you have a paying job?

MARILYN MINTER: No. We had \$300 when he got a job. We had \$300 left.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what was his job?

MARILYN MINTER: Working in an ad agency. He was an art director. He ended up being an art director for Grey Advertising. He was working in all the agencies. He made a lot of money. And I was a plumber's assistant.

And then from there, I worked for [Kenneth Snelson] because I knew how to sweat pipe. And as a plumber's assistant, the plumber would write—[Union T]—a red line and a blue line. And I would just follow it. And I would do the copper and some PVC. And then mostly we'd get stoned at lunch, and then I was wasted for the day. I was so tired after doing this, but I wanted to do it as a feminist. And then I started working for sculptors.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You were also painting still.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you have time to be exhausted from the construction and also—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, weekends; weekends and drugs. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When I look at the images of the paintings you did in '76 and '77, they're a clear transition from the works that were in the Everson, of floors, paintings.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And mostly linoleum floors.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I built—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But those were based on photographs that you took?

MARILYN MINTER: I took, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Of—

MARILYN MINTER: I put linoleum down on my wooden floor, and I would tape it down.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I was going to say, it doesn't look like a loft floor.

MARILYN MINTER: I taped it down. I wanted it to be linoleum. I taped it down. And then one of the paintings is of the paper curl with the double-sided tape.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. What were you most influenced by, would you say, artistically at that point when you were painting those floor images with the pieces of paper and aluminum foil and—

MARILYN MINTER: No, I don't think anybody, yes. The only one I liked was Chuck Close and Richard Estes. But I wasn't interested at all in Audrey Flack or any of those people—the real shiny gumball things—not at all. I liked Robert Bechtle. But I didn't like him till years later. I like him now, but I didn't like him then. And I didn't like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what about Sylvia Mangold? She did the series of floors.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, God, that was one of my nightmares. She opened her show, and I had mine open at James Yu, and hers was exactly like mine, but hers was real smart. Mine was photorealism. Hers was rulers on a wooden floor. I had no idea she existed, no idea. And I just, you know, was humiliated. Sylvia Plimack Mangold, right; forgot about her. I don't understand what happened to her because she made—those paintings were so good.

JUDITH RICHARDS: She's still painting?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she is. She ended up doing something else, nothing to do with floors or rulers or—I don't remember what she ended up doing. Is it possible she did cityscapes?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I've seen landscapes.

MARILYN MINTER: Landscapes—that's it, yes. And I thought she was great. But I didn't see her until—I mean, that's the collective unconscious. And I thought my life was ruined. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Really?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. And then from then, I said, okay, don't touch floors anymore. And then I ended up going to sinks and things that are—I started painting black-and-white photographs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And then sinks and then black-and-white photographs, and then I actually painted the sink, too, and then I'd combine them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Now, I know that you talked in previous interviews about a period of time around—starting 1978, maybe right after you did those sinks, when you really stopped—

MARILYN MINTER: Making good work.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—making work.

MARILYN MINTER: Good work. Yes, because I started getting high so much.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What if anything—

MARILYN MINTER: I divorced my husband, started having affairs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, okay. So I was going to say, how long were you married? So you were divorced.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that was—

MARILYN MINTER: I was split up. We weren't divorced yet. Started dating guys and had a lot of drugs, got really heavy into the drug scene. And then I was in the East Village—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And when you say you were in the East Village, you still lived in your studio on Mercer.

MARILYN MINTER: I still lived in my loft. I got a really good rent. My rent was only \$500. So I rented out the front of the space, so that paid for my rent. I taught in a Catholic boys school. That's where I ate. I would get high all the time and come in crashing and teaching this Catholic boys school from freebasing and just drink Diet Coke and smoke cigarettes all through class. And then I would take a nap after school, and then I would go out again at 1:00 in the morning or whatever and then just do the circle.

JUDITH RICHARDS: To clubs.

MARILYN MINTER: Clubs, yes. I had a very good time, and I made really bad art because I was trying to be an expressionist. I've destroyed it all, all of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why did you suddenly want to be an expressionist?

MARILYN MINTER: Because that's what was the dialogue. The dialogue was everywhere. Julian Schnabel and all the Germans were here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And I found myself with German expressionists, and we started doing collaborations together. And then—just took off. When I started first working with him—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, you're talking about whom?

MARILYN MINTER: His name was Christophe Kohlhoffer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how did you meet him?

[Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. So I asked you where you met.

MARILYN MINTER: I split up with my husband. I met Christophe—he was the god of the East Village. He was editor of the East Village Eye. He was an art director. And he was president of Co-Lab, which was this art group. And we ended up starting an affair. And I was still teaching in a Catholic boys school. But before that, I had a drug smuggler boyfriend from Holland. So I would go to Holland all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Carrying drugs with you?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—no, no, he would come here carrying drugs. His passport would go—well, he was trained as a horticulturist. So his passport would go Amsterdam, New York, Miami, Bogota. And so he was just, like a 6'3" blonde guy. And he was just so clearly a drug smuggler or dealer that—and he would come to my house, as his island—yes. That was a really bad relationship. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you met Christophe.

MARILYN MINTER: And I met Christophe right about the time when he left to go back to Holland, to Amsterdam. And he was married to Ule Rimkus, the—oh, she was actually—this gets so complicated—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sorry, Ule who?

MARILYN MINTER: He wasn't married to Ule Rimkus. He was married to Ingrid Palermo, Blinky's ex-wife. But he lived with Ule Rimkus, who owned a bar. She was a bartender in those days at Tin Pan Alley, but she owned a bar called Max Fish that closed just recently.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Max Fish?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but it's not like I was the girl that broke up the relationship. There was a girlfriend right before me, Kiki Smith, which maybe I shouldn't say. So I won't say who—[laughs]—take that out. Blah, blah. And so I stole him from Kiki. So we didn't talk to each other for years. Now we're good friends.

So anyway, getting involved with this guy, I had so much guilt, so I really started getting high much more. And we were together working for a few years. I don't even know how long—he says it was three, but it doesn't seem like it could have been that long. We had two shows with Gracie Mansion and numerous group shows.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Those shows were in '94 and '96.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean '84 and '86.

MARILYN MINTER: '84 and '86. So I did have them, yes. I don't remember the dates. Yes, and it was two.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was the work that you were doing together, and how did that collaboration work?

MARILYN MINTER: I would make an image, and then he would paint on top of me. So we made these image sandwiches.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Could you describe that in a little more detail? And did this work survive?

MARILYN MINTER: I'd have to show it—yes, I have it. It's not bad actually. I wanted to be part of the dialogue. And being an anal-retentive photo realist, people would say to me, "Loosen up. Loosen up." And I was just—like, that was the most painful thing in the world you could say to someone like me.

So that's when I tried to be an expressionist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see.

MARILYN MINTER: And I was terrible at it. So I thought if I got high enough maybe I could loosen up. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: But I never could.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said you destroyed most of the work.

MARILYN MINTER: I destroyed all of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So did you destroy the work that you did with Christophe?

MARILYN MINTER: No. No, that's pretty good. That work got kept. Someday someone's going to look at it and say, "We should show this." But he's still doing drugs, so he's not exactly in the best shape. I don't even know if he's still alive. But he was a very successful artist. Barbara Gladstone wanted to show him. He showed at Max Protetch. He was this big hot guy—hotshot artist that came over here from Germany. He used to work with Sigmar Polke. But what ended up happening—what I didn't know at the time he at the time he ripped off Sigmar Polke. And he came here doing those kind of image sandwiches.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: And nobody had heard of Polke, and they thought he was God here. He was really kind of interesting, but he was just high all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So maybe you want to take the break now—

MARILYN MINTER: Okay. [Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: We were talking about your work with Christophe Kohlhoffer. And I wanted to ask you how that—I know that that ended in '85, around '86 when you had a second show—

MARILYN MINTER: It ended when I got clean and sober, 1985 [broke up 1986 -MM].

JUDITH RICHARDS:—when you had the second show at Gracie Mansion.

MARILYN MINTER: No—yes, I was clean and sober.

JUDITH RICHARDS: During the '80s, I think that's when your mother died, the early '80s.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, '83. Oh, I'm not sure—'82 maybe. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that part of what you were going through?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I got some money. That's what that was. I got some money, so I could quit my job—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see.

MARILYN MINTER:—teaching in a Catholic boys school.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And so—

MARILYN MINTER: I didn't get any money from her up until that point. So it was the first—so I'd never had any money before. So I went from being poverty-stricken to rich—rich-ish. I went right through it. [Laughs.] And I got clean and sober in the middle.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What prompted that important moment when you got sober and clean?

MARILYN MINTER: It's just one of those really—I couldn't get high anymore basically. And that happens to a lot of addicts, where no matter how much they do or how much they drink or what they mix together, they don't get the effect they got at 16 or 18 or 25. They just get stupid, fall over.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were there friends of yours who helped you get to rehab?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, there were people at that point in '85—people were starting to go to rehab. And that was the first time up until that point. You've got to remember, nobody knew cocaine—when I was doing it, no one knew that it was addictive. I actually said, "It's not addictive at all!" [Laughs.] That was in the—yes, that was in the vernacular. Heroin everyone knew was addictive, but coke wasn't because you don't have withdrawal like you have with heroin. I mean, you do, but you don't have—you don't go into a—well, it's not like—everything has a withdrawal. I shouldn't say that. Everything does—everything. But it's more psychological than physical.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So some people helped you get into the rehab or—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—actually physically?

MARILYN MINTER: I've been in two of them. I don't talk about names or anything, but I did get clean and sober in 1985; September 17th, 1985. I haven't had a drug or a drink since then.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Congratulations.

MARILYN MINTER: Thank you. Well, I lost so much time. There was a 10-year period I was in a coma. So if you ask me dates or anything that happened, I don't know. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you came out of rehab and you were sober, you were still living in the loft?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you started to work again on your artwork?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and I broke up the collaboration.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What were the works that you first did at that point?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, the first works I did were pretty terrible, and I destroyed them, but the first one that I liked was *Big Girls*—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: The one that was in the show at Team Gallery.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that became a series? [Phone rings.]

MARILYN MINTER: Sorry.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you think of it in advance as a series, the *Big Girls*, *Little Girls* series?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I did them together. The *Big Girls* were on one side of the room, and the *Little Girls* were on the other.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you—at that point, what medium, painting medium were you using?

MARILYN MINTER: They were enamel. I wanted to make art—

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you come to using enamel?

MARILYN MINTER: Will just take a pause. What is it? [Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So we were talking about enamel.

MARILYN MINTER: Enamel.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you—

MARILYN MINTER: I had to make something that didn't look like the collaborations. So I was thinking I had to make something that didn't look like anything we did together. And I worked in oil paint with him. And I just didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to make.

So I knew I had to work from images that already existed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why did you know that?

MARILYN MINTER: Because I don't know how to work with something just empty.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But, I mean, you had worked with your own photographs in graduate school.

MARILYN MINTER: No, I think that I have to restate that. I only could work with references. I didn't know what to work from. And from that point in time, I didn't learn any—I only knew black and white photography, so I didn't think I was equipped to shoot color. I didn't think I had the training. I misread—I thought you had to go to school. And I wasn't going to go back to school.

And it took me a while to feel confident enough just to start shooting on my own. It took me, I don't know, from 1985 to 1995, really 10 years.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So in '85, where did you get the images for the *Little Girls*—

MARILYN MINTER: I found them in an encyclopedia from the '50s. Yes, and I just worked from found imagery.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What prompted you to focus on those images of the little girls and the big girls?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, like everything, it just strikes me as something that I have to do something with. And it's not that linear. Later, there's a thread, and it's so clear. But when I'm in the middle of it, I go with the flow. Somewhere I learned that working with Christophe. Before, I used to think that everything had to be planned and you had to be an expert; you couldn't do things without being an expert. And working with Christophe, I saw how erratic and crazy he worked, and I thought—and it was also pretty good at that point. And he really did teach me that I could do anything; I could make something out of anything. And at that point, I really thought I was much more limited to something that was built, constructed; I had to make a collage or—I always knew I had to work from a resource, couldn't work from just a blank canvas, you know. And that was a real revelation. So I got a lot out of working in that collaboration.

But when I got clean and he didn't, I had to get out of that as soon as possible. It was just too dangerous.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you started—

MARILYN MINTER: I tried to get him sober. He wasn't going to have anything to do with that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you started this new series, did you plan the works as a series, or did you just do—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, excuse me—be quiet—[audio break]—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—or did you just do a painting and then the next one—

MARILYN MINTER: I did and then it fed other ones, exactly. I just kept getting ideas. The way I always work now—and I don't have a clue where I'm going. I just know what I don't want to do. So I don't have the intent before investigation now. If somebody throw something out—like just recently, someone said, "Do you want to make a bitmap?" And I said, "Sure." I didn't think I could do it, but then I ended up doing it, and it worked really well and they used it—what I did is I poured that silver liquid on top of the New Museum, and they—I poured it on top of a plastic replica of the New Museum. And then they projected it onto the museum, and it looked amazing. And it took me half an hour. [Laughs.] It was one of the funnest jobs. But I just go and do things now, even though I don't—and that's what I learned from Christophe, to just go and do it.

Excuse me one second. [Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So in 1985 when you began the series, did you feel that you were part of the art world since you—

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, no, no. The East Village was -- there was this thing that happened in the middle of the whole movement, where the neo-geo artists came in—the minute I saw Jeff Koons and Meyer Vaisman's work, I knew it was over, with that crazy exploding dog insanity of the East Village. Openings would go to 3:30 in the morning, and everybody was doing drugs all the time. I knew that was over, and the intellectualizing of art came and basically wiped it out because the artists were not that good in the early East Village. They were really pretty awful. And there was a handful that were really interesting. And there are that really important handful, and they still are regarded that way. But there were so many hours and so many artists. And you've never heard of any of them now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you recall who you were close friends with at that time? Maybe there were other women artists or—in the '80s, in—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I was really close friends with Elise Goldberg. Yes, she was like my [only] normal friend. [Laughs.] And I had a—let's see, I had a number of friends—I became really close friends with Mary Heilmann [ph].

JUDITH RICHARDS: In the mid-'80s or earlier?

MARILYN MINTER: In the mid-'80s, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you recall how you met her?

MARILYN MINTER: Just through friends. And she introduced me to my husband.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A few years later or around now?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, in the '90s.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, okay.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Let's see, who did I hang out with, though? People I hung out with in the art world—well, Jerry Saltz. He and I have known each other since our 20s. And people that are really gone now—Freya Hansell—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—you know, they're just gone. They were my best friends—oh, let's see—people that moved out of town, a girl named Leslie Fuller—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was she an artist?

MARILYN MINTER: Writer for "Saturday Night Live." Let's see—people I hung out with—well Elise, I was really tight with—that I'm still friends with from those—see, I had to really do—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, Elise, who worked with—

MARILYN MINTER: And I've known her since she worked with Susan Caldwell. I've known her since '82. So we always stayed friends. And then I became friends with Jack Pierson.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you remember when and where you met him? It was the East Village scene time?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, it was, like—East Village scene, yes, that I stayed friends with. There was a lot of people in and out. I was really tight with Gracie, because she was my dealer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: But then when I got clean and sober, everything changed. I was still going out to clubs, but I was always going home. [Laughs.] There was—I had a lot of friends that I see but I just—we're still friends; we're just tangential friends—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—like Christine—I can't remember her last name now [Christine Zounek -MM]. I see her all the time. She's married to J.D. Daugherty [ph], so maybe it's Christina Daugherty [ph]. I'm on the spot now. She exhibited with me for a while. [She killed herself last year—2014 -MM].

JUDITH RICHARDS: You'll remember it later.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, of course.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's fine. So going back to these paintings, you said that you wanted to not use oils because that's what you had used with Christophe.

MARILYN MINTER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But how did you find enamel?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I started playing around with it early on when I was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Had you known another artist using it?

MARILYN MINTER: No. No. The minute I touched it, I loved it. And so I went right to it. I did this billboard right before the collaborations. And I painted the whole thing in enamel.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you talking about before Christophe?

MARILYN MINTER: Before Christophe, yes, in the East Village. And I still have them. And it was just a really easy way to cover a section of—and oil, it took too long to dry.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you first started using enamel, you were using it on canvas.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and then I saw the Richter—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you put gesso on—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you sealed it—

MARILYN MINTER: Right. And then I saw the Gerhard Richter show at Barbara Gladstone of the paint swatches. And they were cracked. And I realized I got to go paint on metal. They were, like, 20 years old, and they were cracked like crazy. They've been restored since then. But they were really cracked, and I realized—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you know anyone else who was using enamel that you could compare notes with?

MARILYN MINTER: No one—nope, nobody. I used Envirotex, too, this really toxic material.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sorry, what did you say, Virotext?

MARILYN MINTER: It's stuff called Envirotex.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Enviro?

MARILYN MINTER: Envirotex. It was hardener and a catalyst. And it was a plastic coating, just really toxic things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were doing these images, there's one that has Jayne Mansfield in it—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that was the *Big Girls*.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The *Big Girls*. So you first—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, that's what I learned also from Christophe. I learned about taking the projector and moving it at angles to change the distortion, to get distortion. So I distorted a lot of images.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: I mean, he did that all the time. And he worked in acrylic.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You also used a kind of grainy texture—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I changed everything. This is also what I learned from—I could take an image and change it by turning it into a dot screen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: You still got the image. And he learned that from Polke. And I learned that from Christophe. I didn't really realize that Polke was the first one that invented it because he acted like he invented it. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were doing that series and you have the little girls and then movie stars, did you think when you were finished with that series—I should say, what made you decide to stop that series? Did you have new ideas for something else?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, exactly. I just went in other directions. I trusted it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have a good response to those paintings from your friends and—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, like I said, I was in the East Village, which crashed and burned. And then it all moved back over to SoHo. And the people from my generation of the East Village were looked down on. And so if I would have said I was in the collaboration team I showed at Gracie Mansion, there was a real—but I also knew that David Wonovich [ph] was a great artist and someday I'd be proud of it. But I knew I had to disassociate myself.

And I started inviting people over to my studio, and there was a point in time where everybody that came over offered me a show. I had a really hot career started.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is when you were doing *Little Girls/Big Girls*.

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative] And Bill Arning offered me a show—offered me the entire gallery of White Columns, which didn't happen in those days. There were white rooms, and then there was the entire gallery. And he did it with a couple of artists. He did it with Meyer Vaisman and me. And that was a big thing. And then I got my very first review in—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, this is the show you had in '89, right?

MARILYN MINTER: '89, yes, White Columns.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me—

MARILYN MINTER: Was that—'89?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, actually I read one place it was '88 and one place it was '89.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I don't even know. Yes, so it could have been either one of those.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Maybe we can figure that out for the record when you're going over this transcript.

You also did—and I don't know if this is a series, but I saw reference to a painting *Money #3*.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I did a whole—I did what I thought of as food—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And food too.

MARILYN MINTER:—the essentials of life: food, money, sleep, sex. And what was the last one? What are the essentials?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Water?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—no, that was in food.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it was—yes, the things that were essential to live. And I did the food piece and the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Some kind of spiritual or entertainment—

MARILYN MINTER: No, not a—no, I wasn't even thinking of that at all. I was just thinking about making images of the times I lived in and the things that were interesting to me. I was a vegetarian at that point, and then I saw this ground up meat and it made me so sick I decided I had to paint it. And I did—and then I think there was a money one, and it was all about commerce.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, the money—I saw a reference to a show you had at Tony Shafrazi's.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that was the *Money* series.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then that was just for that year, I think. And then you did the *Food* series.

MARILYN MINTER: *Food*, right. And he also showed that. And he was one of the galleries that pursued me. I had a lot of galleries that I could have shown with.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why did you say no to them? Well, you actually had the show at Tony Shafrazi. You had quite a number of shows—

MARILYN MINTER: Not a one-person show. They were always group shows. It just felt right to go to Max Protetch because he had gravitas at that point.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Right.

MARILYN MINTER: He was showing Scott Burton, and I thought he was a great artist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Before you got there, though—and that was, I think, 1990—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—I want to look at 1989—

MARILYN MINTER: '89.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—because that was a very important year.

MARILYN MINTER: I had a show in England before my show at White Columns, I think, or right after.

[audio break]

JUDITH RICHARDS: We're talking about the show. I saw two references again, '89 or '90, Nicola Jacobs.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, Nicola Jacobs—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it was either '89 or '90.

MARILYN MINTER: And that was before White Columns, because you weren't allowed to have a show in the United States and show at White Columns, because it was all brand-new artists.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see. Going back to—

MARILYN MINTER: And Barry Schwabsky wrote my catalog essay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: For which catalog?

MARILYN MINTER: The Nicola Jacobs catalog.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you meet him?

MARILYN MINTER: He was the editor of *Arts Magazine*, and he—and he put me in *Arts* all the time. No, I had a very burgeoning career. I mean, that show with Tony Shafrazi—it was myself, Katie Noland, Jessica Stockholder. We all became friends. We were all in a show together—Michael Jenkins—very good artist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Wow, interesting.

MARILYN MINTER: And so I became friends with all of these people. I hung out with Katie. I didn't hang out with Jessica so much, but I liked her a lot. I thought she was a really good artist. I hung out with Jan Avgikos. She was one of my best friends. I loved her. Deborah Drier—this is when I was in—she used to write for Artforum or she was an editor at Artforum. Do you remember her?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sure.

MARILYN MINTER: Wow. And you've been around a long time too.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We're not that old.

MARILYN MINTER: I know. Yes, we are. [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But in '89, you started doing what you called your *Food Porn* paintings as a series.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, same time as I did the M&Ms too.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: I wanted to make a TV commercial.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And there was also the food—

MARILYN MINTER: This is all mixed up because of Jerry Saltz. Because I know Jerry, and he thinks he knows things, and he just wrote them down. But the *Food Porn* was a year before—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER:—a year and a half before the porn.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes. I was going to say—I mean, I've read references that you worked on both of them at the same time.

MARILYN MINTER: And everyone quotes him all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you did the *Food Porn*, as you said, thinking of the essentials, the money—of course you did the *Little Girls*, then the *Money*, then the *Food*.

MARILYN MINTER: And that's how the *Food Porn* started, from doing the food. Then I started looking in cookbooks.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were doing—ah hah.

MARILYN MINTER: For images.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why cookbooks?

MARILYN MINTER: Because they had all these hands pulling things apart.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why were you attracted to that kind of image?

MARILYN MINTER: Because I was making food.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But why did you like the hands pulling things apart?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, it was how I could do a consistent body of work—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see.

MARILYN MINTER:—using the hands to prepare.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the consistent will always be the hands—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—male hands, female hands—didn't matter.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the hands were preparing the food.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you had the lobsters being torn apart and—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Right. Right. And I also had shish kabobs being threaded—I mean, the thing is, everybody bought the good ones right away, so they dispersed, and I only had, like—I have about 20 of them left.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How big was this series? How many images—

MARILYN MINTER: Hundred—109.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did that have to do with the commercially made, which was a hundred?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I was trying to make enough so I could trade with everybody.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Hundred *Food Porn*.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, a lot of—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you actually did 109?

MARILYN MINTER: 109. A lot of them were fillers, because the whole thing for me was about making the commercial.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the commercial drove the works—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—rather than the other way around.

MARILYN MINTER: The other way around. I wanted to make the first TV commercial that advertised a show. And we took the money that you usually use to spend on ads in *Artforum*. And nobody knew this, but 30 seconds on *David Letterman* was only \$1,800. So I bought three spots. Now, an ad in *Artforum* back in those days was, like, \$5,000.

JUDITH RICHARDS: More than now? Or you're talking about a full-color page?

MARILYN MINTER: This is—yes—well, I don't know what it is now. What is it now? Eight [thousand dollars]? Ten [thousand dollars]?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm not sure.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. We took all that budget, because all the galleries would put ads in *Artforum*, *Art in America* and *Arts*, all three magazines. So I took the budget, and I didn't advertise anywhere.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did your friends see those ads?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I sort of told them all about it, and I got a lot of press about it too because it was the first time anyone had done it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're saying that people started buying them—

MARILYN MINTER: They didn't buy them from the ad.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, but when you had the show.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You said the best ones—

MARILYN MINTER: Best ones were gone immediately.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Gone immediately.

MARILYN MINTER: I don't even know who has them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have a hope—

MARILYN MINTER: It wasn't like Simon Watson did the best records. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you don't know where those paintings are?

MARILYN MINTER: No idea. I know Vera List bought one. [Laughs.] Yes, she bought one of the nastiest ones.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's interesting.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that's all I remember.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have the—

MARILYN MINTER: Susan Hort bought five of them. Yes, and also somebody else had bought a lot of them—Jake Bloom bought a bunch of them. I showed them here at Simon Watson, which was a collaboration between two galleries, Simon and Max. I showed them at St. Louis at [Jeanne Greenberg's] dad's gallery, Ron Greenberg. And I showed them at a gallery called Meyers/Bloom in L.A.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was Jeanne Meyers [ph], right?

MARILYN MINTER: Jeanne Meyers [ph], yes, a sweet girl, sweetheart.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, I just saw her recently.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you hope that you could keep a number of these paintings together and form a kind of a grid with them?

MARILYN MINTER: I did, but they got dispersed, because I had to support myself. Yes, I [had] gone right through the money I had inherited. I have no idea—I have nothing to show for it, but I had a Fendi bag and an air conditioner. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Somewhere I read that there was some kind of six-part work in this show. Is that correct?

MARILYN MINTER: Which one?

JUDITH RICHARDS: In the *Food Porn* paintings. Was there a six-part work?

MARILYN MINTER: No. It was just—oh, there were—sometimes there were groups of four, like, where there was the short wall, then I'd put four to go together.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Well, I read something about a six-part.

MARILYN MINTER: That was probably a grid somewhere, because every so often, somebody'd take a bunch of them and put them together. And then I'd be in a show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thinking about that TV commercial, which is really terrific—30 seconds—was that the first video production that you had done?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, very first.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you learn how to do that?

MARILYN MINTER: I didn't know anything. I paid these people that knew. I paid them with art because I had no money. So I traded art with them, and I knew the guy, my director, and he knew how to do all of that because he worked for MTV.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you told him that you wanted images of the studio, images of you—

MARILYN MINTER: No, I let him come up with the idea even. He told me what it was, and we talked about it. And I said, no, this is a great way to end it. Yes. I came up with the idea. He did it all. I had the idea; he made it happen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And basically there was—

MARILYN MINTER: But we argued a lot about editing

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you felt that it was effective? You thought it was—

MARILYN MINTER: But I was very good at arguing with him. I never told him he was wrong. I just said, "Well, why don't we try this?" So I finally got him—it was perfect, and then he added all this stuff. We were editing all night. Then I made him take one thing out at a time, and I was so proud of myself that we didn't have this screaming fight. Very, very slowly, I got him to take it all out, do exactly what I wanted.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you were happy with it and the results?

MARILYN MINTER: I loved it. I was so proud of it. But no one seemed to get it. [Laughs.] They love it now, but at the time, only a handful of people got it, thought it was interesting. They thought it was too commercial. People thought it was just terrible that I was combining high and low culture like that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was it right after that then that you did the *Porn Grids*?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was the genesis of that series, as it came from the *Food Porn*?

MARILYN MINTER: I did a couple of porn paintings before I did the *Food Porn*—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: Because I saw the Mike Kelley show at Metro Pictures.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, I—mm-hmm. [Affermative.]

MARILYN MINTER: And I thought, wow, this is sort of genius, because he's really—and that show had bureau drawers—they were decouped with eyes and mouths. Then there was a glass cover on top. And then underneath the glass was a picture of Mike Kelley. And this is the kind of thing I did, where I had a crush on a boy; I'd put his picture underneath the glass of the bureau. And then he had underneath that—he taped a how-to sex manual. And you could see it because it was a mirror on the floor reflecting at the bottom. Then there was all these stuffed animal sculptures and stuffed animal paintings. And I thought, this is genius; he's making images of what it's like to be an adolescent girl, an adolescent teenage girl. Maybe that's not what his ideas was, but that's what it looked like to me.

And then if a woman artist had made stuffed animal sculptures, stuffed animal paintings, decouped bureau drawers, felt banners, would anyone pay any attention to her at all? And then it occurred to me, no, they wouldn't. So I thought, well, what is its subject matter—and I really just thought about this—what subject matter male—women never touched. And I thought, well, they don't really paint porn. They don't work with porn. And I thought, No, they do because they do softcore, because I knew Judith Bernstein. So I said, no, it has to be hardcore, cumshots. And then I just said, "Okay, I'm going to do it." It never occurred to me it was, like—I was, like, violating a lot of people's ideas of what women should behave like. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were setting out to do something provocative?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I wasn't thinking of it in terms of provocation. I never did for a second think of it as provocation. I thought of it as I want to explore a subject matter that females never touch, just like males never touched adolescent girlhood; mall culture and glitter and unicorns and all the stuff that he was mining. I thought I wanted to mine something that women artists never touched. Does it change the meaning? I was asking questions. But I didn't have the answers because I didn't know what the answers were. And at the time, I did believe in—there's 180 because I went as a first-wave feminist as a child basically to believing in pro-sex feminism and believing that women should have images for their own pleasure and that nobody has politically correct fantasies. And I actually coined that because nobody had even said that out loud before that.

And there was just a handful of people that thought like I did, but I thought we were legion. I thought everyone thought like this, like Susie Bright and all these women that wanted women to own sexual imagery. And I thought all feminists would want to do that. And I forgot about the abusive history, and reclaiming that was going to cause a lot of trouble. And I don't know if I would have done it if I would have known the repercussions.

But at that point I probably would have because I really was one of those people at that point in my life where I just had to do what I had to do. It's not like I could stop myself. It's like the art world didn't mean anything to me as much as the creative process. And this is where I was being tugged and pulled, and I didn't have any choice but to follow it. And the repercussions were terrible for my career. But in the long run, it was a good thing. I got all this credibility because I did that.

And I think that—I mean, it's embarrassing to say this, but showing the photos of my mother also gave me credibility because people want that romantic vision of other artists coming from severe dysfunction because it gives them some kind of gravitas.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you started doing the works that became the *Porn Grid* series—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—a grid implies an installation like a grid.

MARILYN MINTER: No, it was a thing. I did a four-panel one and a 14-panel one.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And after you did them, you realized you would put them in a grid, or did you create them to be—

MARILYN MINTER: No, I made them to go in the grid.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why a grid form?

MARILYN MINTER: Because I wasn't working that big at that point. I was just working on metal. And I'd just done some of the *Food Porn*. I don't even know if I did the *Food Porn* at that—yes, I'd done the *Food Porn* show. So I was invested in painting on these metal surfaces. And at that point, I only knew how to get 4-by-8; that's the largest—no, 3-by-4—that was the largest I could go.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, you're talking about getting a piece of metal in that size.

MARILYN MINTER: Metal, yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where did the idea of painting on metal—when did that start?

MARILYN MINTER: When I saw the Richters. And then I had to find a fabricator who would fabricate these surfaces for me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was entailed in fabrication?

MARILYN MINTER: Basically putting a channel on the back of a piece of aluminum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A channel to hang it?

MARILYN MINTER: To hang it, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Otherwise it was just a—

MARILYN MINTER: Flat to the wall.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—flat piece of aluminum.

MARILYN MINTER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you said the largest you could get was 3-by-4.

MARILYN MINTER: At that point, yes, 3-by-4. I didn't have the money or wherewithal to get a real heavy-duty—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the reason why—I think what I'm hearing you say—the reason why you made the grid was because you wanted to—

MARILYN MINTER: I wanted to work big, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—have a huge image fill the wall—

MARILYN MINTER: Have a huge image, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—to have the impact.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And so you combined these 3-by-4 panels.

MARILYN MINTER: Right. And I did it floor to ceiling. When I did the 100 *Food Porn*, I did it floor to ceiling. When I did the porn, I did a grid of 14, and I think they were in three rows. But I don't remember, because it's numbers. That—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Three rows—14 doesn't divide into three evenly.

MARILYN MINTER: It doesn't. Maybe I didn't show two of them. That's what happened.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's 12?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, 12. But I made 14. But I didn't show two because I couldn't do the grid. [They laugh.] I was making them until—and then I played around with hanging them, and then it just worked out to be 12.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I've read stories about where you got the pornographic images. Do you want to talk about that?

MARILYN MINTER: I got a whole bunch of them from Bill Arning. [They laugh.] I don't think he'd mind. He was getting rid of a lot of it. But most of the times I went to porn stores with Mike Ballou because he was too scared to go without me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And he wanted to go for his own work.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because he was making imagery using pornography too. And he was so terrified to go in these places. It was so funny. And I was fearless.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is what part of town?

MARILYN MINTER: We went to 42nd Street, you know, at Times Square or—everywhere—they were everywhere, Wall Street, on Ann Street—there was a huge shop—on Canal Street, all over town. And he would buy—there was no computers at this point, and there was no way to reproduce something really well, so he would buy multiple copies. And he was just so horrified to be explaining while he was buying the same magazine about five times. [Laughs.] He would actually try and explain it to the clerks. So I would end up always going and paying for everything, because I terrified everybody. I had no idea that was going to happen. I would walk down—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean you terrified everybody?

MARILYN MINTER: I was a female dressed nicely walking into a porn store. And I just freaked everybody out every time I'd go into—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Made them self-conscious?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, they would flee. I would walk down an aisle, and that aisle was empty within two minutes. [Laughs.] Isn't that funny?

JUDITH RICHARDS: You felt real power.

MARILYN MINTER: Totally—totally. I was so powerful. I felt like all those women against porn—I thought, all you've got to do is walk into the porn stores; you'll freak them out so bad. Isn't that something?

JUDITH RICHARDS: So technically, how did you create those paintings?

MARILYN MINTER: I just got the images, and I turned them into veloxes. And I was trying to find things that weren't sexy. I was looking for—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And projected them?

MARILYN MINTER: Projected and then painted underneath and then painted dot screen on top.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Enamel on metal?

MARILYN MINTER: Enamel. I developed the system doing the *Food Porn*, where I let the paint drip, and then I would try and control it or make this dot screen that would hold it into place. So the dot screen was this fake—[audio break]—so it'd be this fake expressionism because the enamel just dripped normally. And then also this fake mechanization—because it was hand-painted, even though it looked like it was screened. So I would have the projector on while I was painting it. I learned that from Christophe too, because he painted everything—he painted with the projection being on. And I didn't because I worked from oil, and I drew it out, and then I'd paint it with the lights on.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it was about this time after you—well, we talked—so you finished the *Grid* series, and you had the show at Max Protetch.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It must have been the 1990 show.

MARILYN MINTER: The *Porn* show was 1992.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We're talking about the *Porn* show. I see.

MARILYN MINTER: But I started making them in '89.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then what did you have when you had the *White Column* show in '89? What was on view there?

MARILYN MINTER: It was the beginning of the *Food Porn*. They were really bad ones, but they were the beginning, and then it's really stupid because I had the *Big Girls* and the *Little Girls*. I didn't put any of those in. I put in the nascent grids of the *Food Porn*. And they just weren't very well done yet. I didn't know how to do it yet. They were like the beginnings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you keep working on them to—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it took a while to learn how to actually paint with the projector on and making a dot screen and—it took a while to learn how to do that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm sure.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And so they were just—I'm trying to think what else was in that show. I also did these drawings. I refused to draw anymore, because I thought it was my *bête noire*—is that the word, *bête noire*? Yes, because I had the skill level, and I couldn't figure out how to make it work for me. I wasn't coming up with a system like Chuck Close. I just had—I thought—the ability to copy something was hurting me. So I had to pretend I didn't have it. And so I felt like I wanted to have a—I wanted to be in the dialogue. And I figured a way just—I said, "Okay, I'm not going to draw anymore."

So all of my drawings were blueprints. I used to go and copy everything in blueprint machines. And I spent a lot of time in blueprint places.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Explain that. You would do the drawing and then put it through the blueprint?

MARILYN MINTER: I wouldn't draw. I would just take images and put it in the blueprint machine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Photographic images—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—of something you found.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I would turn, like, splashes of coffee—I would turn it into a dot screen, and then I'd print it

on a blueprint machine. And then I'd spray the blueprint with this plastic that kept it intact. It kept it from fading—because all blueprints fade—because this old, old, old guy who owned a blueprint place told me about this lubricant, and I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where was this blueprint place?

MARILYN MINTER: On 14th Street and Union Square South.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you consider those drawings?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, those were my drawings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And those were in that show at White Columns.

MARILYN MINTER: They were in my show at White Columns, and one of them the Modern bought. And Peter Halley bought one.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What were the images in those? You've mentioned a splash. Is that—

MARILYN MINTER: Some of them were splashes. Some of them were—the sleep image, which was a mattress, a striped mattress, in a repeat; and it went all the way down and curled under the floor. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So this was an instance where the blueprint paper just—would just keep going.

MARILYN MINTER: I printed it on—instead of paper I used vinyl because they had it in the blueprint place. I lived in the blueprint place.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And who did you say bought—

MARILYN MINTER: Peter Halley was the first person that ever bought anything of mine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, you had mentioned previously—

MARILYN MINTER: I had a very, very hot career at one point.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You talked about, though, Susan Hort and other people buying—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes, the *Food Porn*. I had a very—

JUDITH RICHARDS: But Peter Halley bought before that?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I had 10 different galleries making me offers, 10 different galleries. I can't even remember their names, but they were legitimate, good galleries. And I ended up going with Max Protetch. I was the belle of the ball for a minute.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So going on then, you started the *Food Porn*, you did the *Porn Grid* in '89, and you kept doing those images, had the show. And then finally in '92, you had the show at Max Protetch, the infamous—

MARILYN MINTER: I had the porn—yes, infamous porn show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you kept doing that work until '92?

MARILYN MINTER: I think I—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—or '91?

MARILYN MINTER:—was doing—yes, I was using the blueprints all the way up to '95.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But—I'm sorry, I'm—when I said "that work," I meant the *Porn* series.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, the *Porn*—well, and after I had this first *Porn* show—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which was—

MARILYN MINTER:—in '92, and I got excoriating reviews—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So talk—focusing on that show—

MARILYN MINTER: That show.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you started the *Porn* work in '89, you kept working on it 'til that show.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And I've read so much and even recall—

MARILYN MINTER: I know, you poor thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—about the response to that show. I'm sure I saw that show—and of course I don't remember it as vividly as you would. [They laugh.] Could you talk about what you thought of the show before the reviews, what Max thought of the show?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I had a critic come to my studio right before. And I had some really—color pictures—

[End of Disc]

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Marilyn Minter in her studio in New York City on November 29th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc two.

We were talking about that show, and you were saying that a critic came to your studio.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, a very well-known critic. You'd know him. He said, "You can't show this." That's the first time I got a whiff that it was salacious to anybody.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You don't want to say who that was?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't want to, because he's been a real supporter of mine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Isn't that good that he kind of was prescient in a way about—I mean not that it stopped you from having the show but he recognized—

MARILYN MINTER: Barry Schwabsky. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. So he recognized—he cared about your work. He had written—

MARILYN MINTER: And he said, "You can't show this."

JUDITH RICHARDS:—he had written that catalog for you.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: He respected your work.

MARILYN MINTER: He said, "You can't show this." And that was the first whiff that I got—of how naïve I was. And then my girlfriend Debbie Kass, who was a good friend, said, "This work really—I hate this work. You can't show this. It's an affront to feminism." And she made me cry in my studio. And I was so surprised.

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is at the point where you had created a body of work, you had a show scheduled—

MARILYN MINTER: And I was showing it to friends, yes. I had a show scheduled. I was all ready to show it. I thought everyone would come over and love it. And they hated it. Jan Avgikos was always supportive of Debbie Drier, Pat Hearn—there was a handful—Katie Nolan loved it—a handful of people. That's how I got through, knowing that people who I admired liked it.

But the times were so politically correct. Nobody could really defend me. Although Jan was someone who did an arts magazine, and she really featured me prominently, one of the nastiest paintings. And I was all over that magazine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what did Max think about this body of work?

MARILYN MINTER: Max shut the show a week early.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But had he seen the work when he agreed to do the show?

MARILYN MINTER: He hated it, but Larry liked it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So he knew—he asked you to do a show of work that he knew.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I pulled—after Barry's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And Larry—what was his—

MARILYN MINTER: After Barry's comment, I pulled back and I stopped doing things in color. I turned everything into metallic paint and white and pink, because I figured, Okay, if I take the color out, it won't be so crazy to people. So I pulled back.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mentioned Larry. That was the gallery director?

MARILYN MINTER: Larry Shopmaker.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, that's right. So you had the show, and it was reviewed.

MARILYN MINTER: Betsy Hess [ph]—naming names—compared me to Cindy Sherman. And Cindy's work was filled with demons, and mine was just empty. That's like comparing somebody to their idol. She was my idol. And I came up empty. And, every place I got critiqued—I don't even remember them all.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you tolerate—how did you survive that period of time when—I mean, artistically when you were so—

MARILYN MINTER: I was inconsolable. I didn't realize I wasn't communicating. And then I got really, "Well, if you think this is bad, I'll do it twice as bad," because I was still the rebellious kid that I always was, because I was—I'm going to make them 10 times worse. And I started making the nastiest things I could. And of course nobody wanted to show them.

And so then I started going from that—segued into makeup. I was done with it at that point. I didn't care. It was like, "You think this is bad? I'm going to be 10 times worse."

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you went back to color, because you had said you—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I went back to color.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When your friends saw these paintings and you got this sense of what the reaction would be, you—

MARILYN MINTER: But I had a real support system, too. And it was usually—it's from the lesbian community, and it was pro-sex feminists. And I met with a whole lot of them, and then I—the girls, the women that did—I gave it to Crissy Isles [ph] or I'd have lost it. It was all—there was this whole bunch of pro-sex feminists. They were almost all lesbians. Holly Hughes was one who I adore to this day. They got thrown out of their respective worlds. Betty Gordon made the film "Variety." I mean, we started a reading group—Jan Avgikos was on—[inaudible]—Pat Hearn, like I said. Pat Heard started showing Lutz Bacher, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm sorry, who?

MARILYN MINTER: Lutz Bacher—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—who did the same thing, and the Vargas girls—same kind of results. Marsha Tucker, who everybody loves, came to my studio and said my work was too bad for the bad girl show. Yes, that kind of stuff.

It's just like—I wasn't communicating. It was just like nobody was paying any attention. I lucked out because Roberta Smith didn't do me in. If she would have done me in, I probably would have left the art world. But she didn't say anything. She just ignored it. And Jerry Saltz told me he liked it to my face, but nobody was going to defend me. It was just like nobody defended Pruitt-Early—we got kicked out the same time for different reasons, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was when they were kicked out of Sonnabend, you're talking about?

MARILYN MINTER: They got kicked out of the art world on that—yes, they totally got kicked out of the art world, just like I did. But they had a bigger impact because they were showing at Castelli, and mine was at Max Protetch—big difference.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: But we both got kicked out—that's why I love talking to Rob.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But—

MARILYN MINTER: Rob and I talk about this.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Rob—

MARILYN MINTER: —Pruitt.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, yes. While the show was very badly reviewed, you kept showing with Max Protetch. He didn't—

MARILYN MINTER: He gave me another—no, he didn't drop me—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—drop you.

MARILYN MINTER:—because Larry loved me. He thought I was a good artist. And Larry loved me. And then the new director—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I guess they didn't sell anything.

MARILYN MINTER: No. No. And then the new director, Xavier LaBoulbenne, loved that I did porn, loved that I did it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Tell me his name again.

MARILYN MINTER: Xavier, X-A-V-I—I don't know how to spell—la, L-A, and then capital B—la Boul, B-O-U-L-B-E-N-N-E. He was the director at Max Protetch.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, yes, he created his own gallery.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, XL.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, absolutely. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So he loved it, so I did one more show. But it was way milder, because I did all these porn—really nasty ones, but no one would show them. And then I got a review in *Art in America* that was pretty bad. But it was good and bad. She said that I really was very good at painting certain really very salacious, provocative paintings. But then she didn't like other things. So she was—Faye Hirsch wrote a good/bad review, mixed review.

And then I got this excoriating review from Pepe Karmel, who wrote in the *New York Times*, but he was so stupid, I didn't even care.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean "stupid"?

MARILYN MINTER: He said that, who did I think I was, Camille Paglia? You know who she is? She was this feminist academic. She's really a dumbass, I think. I've always hated her. And he compared my work—I can quote this stuff. He said that—I worked on those metal supports, so he said that my work was something tantamount to Robert Ryman, except his is much sexier—[laughs]—because I worked on metal supports. I mean, it just felt—it started off being almost good because he was talking about—he was a good writer, and he wrote this really good description that sounded like it was really, like, luscious and interesting, "laid out on an operating table of metal," and then he just went in for the kill.

But at that point I didn't care because he was stupid. What killed me was being compared to Cindy Sherman.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, that was the first show you're talking about, the '92?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the first one. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes. Since we're—

MARILYN MINTER: I got thrown out of shows. People would say I was going to be in a show, and then I wouldn't be in it. Things like that would happen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's still immediately post the Max Protetch show, yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Post—right after. "Well, you're not in it anymore." Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You talked about criticism, and I wanted to ask you about that in a more general way, but since we're starting to talk about it, we can do that. Obviously it affected you then. Does it continue to affect you if—and I haven't read any negative press, but—

MARILYN MINTER: I've been in this really amazing place that everyone's afraid to criticize me now. [Laughs.] It's like I've got this quarantine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you feel that really?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't get criticized.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you think that's because they're afraid?

MARILYN MINTER: I think so. I think it's because they were wrong then. What if they're wrong again? I've got this quarantine. I don't think it would last much longer. Maybe this show will get criticized.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you want to have criticism?

MARILYN MINTER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you interested in what they could find that was—

MARILYN MINTER: I want to be constantly admired and loved. No, it's the artist disease, the gaping maw of need of approval. But I think—I'm really philosophical about it, that was really good for me because I lived through it, and I didn't believe it. And now that I'm told I'm so great, I don't believe that either. So I just know they're both very destructive to the creative process: a lot of praise and a lot of—the opposite of praise—[laughs]—criticism.

It's bound to happen. And I still don't get in shows, but now I don't get in them because I'm so juicy, or too close to fashion or too good looking. There's always some reason that makes sense in the eyes of curators. But then some curators want to go in towards this—I'm in this show called *Riotous Baroque* at the Kunsthhaus in Zurich. And they wanted to use me—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now?

MARILYN MINTER:—no, it opens in May—and they want to use me as their poster child. So it's—I mean, my subject nowadays is—on some levels, people think it's so superficial and vapid. And that's the critique. But everything I do, I think, is the exact opposite of superficial in the sense that pornography—there would be no Internet without pornography. And the fashion world is a gazillion-billion-dollar industry, and it operates on levels you can't even—I can't even name. And to call this so shallow and superficial and if you don't take a look at it and use it and make something out of it and examine it and shine a light on it, then I think you're missing on the big picture.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When thinking about criticism, is there something that critics have said—not that it was a criticism, but where they're looking at your work and interpreting it wrongly or talking about it in such a way that you think is wrong that you'd like to correct for the record?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, all the porn. But I also wouldn't be bothered. I mean, I really have gotten over it. It took a long time, but I really have gotten over it. Now I get a lot of praise, but I have to be really careful not to believe it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But do you think some of it misrepresents your intentions?

MARILYN MINTER: All the time. But that happens all the time to everybody. Even this is a recorded event that we're doing right now, but if someone was writing about what I said, they could make all kinds of mistakes. I'm used to them showing my work upside-down. Everyone thinks when they have their first review in *Artforum* or *Art in America* or *Arts* or whatever—or *Flash* or whenever all those magazines were reviewing all the shows. They think they're the only ones that turned it sideways.

Or—and everyone gets it all the time. It's just constant miscommunication. I don't even bother correcting things. That's why there's so much stuff out there that's wrong that I don't even—and for years people said, oh, I got “influenced by, or I was a student of Diane Arbus and I was influenced by her. And do I bother to correct it? Do I care? Somebody wrote recently and in the latest catalog that I painted with my tongue and my lips. [Laughs.] Can you believe that?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow.

MARILYN MINTER: That I painted with my tongue and my lips. I can show it to you. Then I thought, this is not a

stupid woman; she's got a Ph.D.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's no end to these kinds of things and you feel you might as well just—

MARILYN MINTER: I don't even care, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—ignore it?

MARILYN MINTER: Ignore it, yes. It's too much trouble to try and get it right. You never get it right anyway. Everyone's doing the best they can. I'm not mad at anyone. She was a terrific curator. She's a wonderful girl. She's the head of the Deichtorhallen. She works for Dirk Luckow. And she loves me and loves my work—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where is the Deichtorhallen?

MARILYN MINTER: In Hamburg. But my catalog says I painted with my lips and my tongue. She's a super supported. I just sort of don't want to shame her. [Laughs.]—she knew about it or knew—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—thought about it or—wonder if all the people in Germany think I do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you found that—and I think this is usual, though, when people are writing about your work, they're not coming to you to check facts, they're not—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, they think they are. But usually it's, like—people that think they know stuff, they just—like Jerry. And they just write it. Like, the *Food Porn* was the culmination of—after the *Porn*. That wasn't it; it was the other way around. I think they really did believe it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So they're not checking because it's—

MARILYN MINTER: No. Plus I don't think people care that much. Why would they.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes. I'm going to go back to your work but just want to ask you, when did you start teaching at SVA?

MARILYN MINTER: '86.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, so let's talk about teaching then because that's happening right now. '86—that's quite early. How did you get that job, and when did you start?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, they hire you at the School of Visual Arts if you're a showing artist who's getting any attention. And so the collaboration team was getting a lot of attention, because we were in all the magazines. And we didn't sell anything because we fought so much. People thought we were going to break up.

And we did. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who at SVA hired you?

MARILYN MINTER: Jeanne Siegel.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what were you hired to teach?

MARILYN MINTER: Freshman painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In 1986.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you've continued teaching there ever since, is that right?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you continue.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I love it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And obviously you were doing it in part—

MARILYN MINTER: To live. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS:—to live. If you don't need it so much to live anymore, you continue doing it nevertheless.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because I don't need it at all. It's a real pain in the ass. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you—do you enjoy the teaching?

MARILYN MINTER: I love it. Well, now I'm teaching graduate students. I teach at Yale in the spring, three times this spring.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did that start?

MARILYN MINTER: I've been doing that on and off. I don't want to teach anywhere—like, I could do Yale three times, I could do Columbia once, but I wouldn't want to go there every week. And that's—SVA—I can be there in 12 minutes. And then after class, I go look at art with my students.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sounds good.

MARILYN MINTER: It's a wonderful job.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there were a number of years when you taught undergraduate?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, many—20-something years.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it's relatively recent that you switched to graduate?

MARILYN MINTER: Since probably 2005.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what were you—

MARILYN MINTER: 2004.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—what classes have you taught?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, when you're teaching fourth year, you're teaching Pluralism I, so everything.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are these painting students or photography students?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, everything—photography, painting, sculpture—they're all in the same department. I've got—this is really interesting because this is the first year I've had real painters again. But they're really good at—really, really good, but they're just nothing to do with painting as we know it, but they're still painters. And they're really, really good. They're just working out of—oh, no, [if] Jessica Stockholder had a baby with Maurizio Cattelan. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: As if. [They laugh.]

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and there are like three or four of them working in the same collective unconscious. This is one of the best classes I've ever had.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you were teaching undergraduates, you were teaching painting—

MARILYN MINTER: There were a lot of famous people there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there any—who would you say were your most promising students?

MARILYN MINTER: The first one—the first one got famous—or the one that was the most promising was always Mika Rottenberg.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ah.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. She was my best student.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that a painting class?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Well, I was, like I said, it's fourth year—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, she was in your graduate class?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, in undergraduate. I had all the people that are famous now, and I had them as undergraduates. Barnaby Furnas.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean Matthew Barney?

MARILYN MINTER: No, Barnaby Furnas. He shows at—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Boesky.

MARILYN MINTER: Marilyn Boesky. Yes. Robert Melee. Let's see—Lucia Rutter was the first one that got famous.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What would you say is your approach to teaching?

MARILYN MINTER: Very different than the way I was taught—the exact opposite, as a matter of fact. I think by the time you get them in graduate school or even as seniors they have special gifts. And they sometimes don't know it, just like I didn't know it; like, I threw away my ability to copy things. And I created a system—which we'll get to later, I guess—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And so I encourage everyone to go where their gifts are and expand it, instead of making things that will -- part of the dialogue in the art world right now—I say, no, you don't want to make things that look like art; you want to make things that look like you.

And I really don't have any privilege—video or photography or painting—I treat them all equally, and I just look for the best examples of those people in each medium, in each practice. And so it's really just a fun way to spend an afternoon. And I teach with a whole group all the time. We do it in a group unless someone needs to talk to me alone, I take the whole class because I believe in consensus. And I believe that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what do you mean by that?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, we can convince each other—convince me that this is a good idea. And then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that doing a group critique?

MARILYN MINTER: And the kids are more—group—yes, well, there's only 12 of us; so it's not that big.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you're still talking about each other's work.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, we talk about the work, and we try and work in terms of teams—like, how would we make this artist better. We go in there as a team. And they'll say things with me and the whole group that they wouldn't do on one-on-one because they have the courage.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It can be devastating.

MARILYN MINTER: And we sometimes were devastating. Sometimes I'm devastating. But when they come out the other side, they thank me for it. But I'm known as really tough on them—a teacher. But also don't do anything except out of pure—I'm on their side. I have people that never wanted to learn anything; they would just teach me stuff. Like, Banks [Banks Violette] would just tell me what he was reading. He didn't want to talk about his work. So I just talk about what they're doing and thinking.

But a lot of people, it was real give-and-take. I mean, most of the time it's a huge give-and-take. But I try to point them in a direction where I think their gifts lie. And I'm really good at it. And if I know I'm good at it, I know I'm good at two things: making art and teaching art. So you do things that are—I like to know where it's warm. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it sounds like it's gratifying.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I love it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has it affected your own work?

MARILYN MINTER: No. Well, other than the fact that they let me know—I know exactly what's going on, because I have to go look at art all the time. So I look at artists that I wouldn't—if I didn't have to teach that day, I might not go see. I don't have time because I have to work all the time. I'm sort of a workaholic.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you get involved in any kind of administrative or departmental issues?

MARILYN MINTER: That's why I love SVA; there isn't any. No, there's no faculty meetings—heaven! [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you gotten to know other teachers, become friends with other people whom you met at

SVA?

MARILYN MINTER: I do, yes. Really—one of my best friends is Andrea Belag. And she's a teacher at SVA. We talk about teaching all the time. Mary Heilmann—she taught till just recently. People—Jerry is a good teacher; he loves to teach.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Saltz?

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmation.] I talk to him about it a lot. But people that love it, really love it. I think that David Humphrey loves it and he's really good at it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I wanted to ask you about a group of paintings that you did in the early '90s. I guess they weren't in the Max Protetch show.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, he wouldn't show me again. I did a group of paintings that didn't get shown. I mean, he would have shown me maybe, but Xavier decided to open a gallery and took me with him. Max probably would have shown me; he's loyal like that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You did some paintings with gray bands on the top and the bottom—

MARILYN MINTER: Gray?

JUDITH RICHARDS:—in 1992. Yes, they were maybe the *Porn*—there was white cotton panties, and there was a kind of pearls—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, no, they weren't gray bands. It was the metal.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. Well, they were—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—there were areas that were not painted.

MARILYN MINTER: They were located in the center of the shiny metal.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: And when they—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Almost like a TV screen.

MARILYN MINTER: And when they shot it, the photographers all took out the hotspots, which was—made it look good to me and which showed that it was metal. And it looked like gray bands to you, because they were a really shiny metal. But they took out the hotspots.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But they are parts of the surface that were not painted.

MARILYN MINTER: That was parts that were not painted, but it's just metal.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right, was just the raw metal.

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. And that was in my show in '92—*Chiaroscuro*. That's what—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right, but all the other—there's a whole group of them that I saw, images, maybe five or six—

MARILYN MINTER: They were all on metal, and the photographer shot it so you couldn't tell. I was very upset about it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But why did you decide to make those images, leaving metal surrounds?

MARILYN MINTER: Because I liked the way it looked. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that a way of emphasizing the fact that these were just paintings on a structure—on a surface? Were you referencing some other kind of idea about distancing?

MARILYN MINTER: I think something about distancing and having—I think I liked the idea there were, like, really juicy images on these really cold, hard surfaces. And I wouldn't clean up the metal at all; I'd let it be.

And then when I started getting criticized so much, I started ripping it up with sanders and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And acid.

MARILYN MINTER: Acid, yes. That's the gray band because it would eat into the metal. And I would just take—I would paint the painting, and then I'd just rip it apart, because I felt like I was being ripped apart.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you think of it that way at the time or only later?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I don't know what I thought of at the time, but right at the time, I just felt like pouring acid on my paintings. And it sure does make sense. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: That didn't last too long though.

MARILYN MINTER: No. I was painting metallic paint on the metal, the dot screen. And I liked the way they looked. They still look pretty good. I think they're all sold—Jeanne sold them all.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sounds good.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. So she's an ATM machine. [They laugh.] God.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Going through after the Max Protetch show, I think it was in mid-'90s, but if you remember the date, that would be great—when you started taking images from fashion magazines.

MARILYN MINTER: Mid-'90s—

JUDITH RICHARDS: '95, something like that?

MARILYN MINTER: '93, '94, '95—yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What prompted you to do that, if you recall?

MARILYN MINTER: I had this idea of doing it surrealistically, taking the images and then elongating the neck or combining them into collage or taking a collage and just painting it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you moved from the pornographic images—

MARILYN MINTER: Porn, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you just felt you were finished with that?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I was tired of it. I didn't know what else I could do with it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you were still interested in the body and in how women are perceived.

MARILYN MINTER: I was interested in details of the body. And I couldn't—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which you have been for—

MARILYN MINTER: Forever. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, and the close-up.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, close-ups.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you think draws you to that, as a frame of reference?

MARILYN MINTER: Because it eliminates the narrative. If you get close enough, you don't know what—you can't really tell what the circumstances are. I mean, you just paint the hair underneath the nose; I've painted every one of those. [Laughs.] When was it painted? What year. I thought that I was creating a universality. Is that the word?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So people could bring their own interpretations—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, exactly.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—their own narratives.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes. And I like the idea of painting things that nobody looks at, like, when you pull your socks down and there are those lines around the legs. I've always been interested in that thing or, does your nose run. Or, you know, do your eyes tear up in cold weather—things like that—so then what happens? Your mascara starts to run.

They're just things that everybody knows about but nobody makes a picture of it: drag queens with scars and lipstick.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you started using fashion magazines, you could have picked images from other sources. Why fashion magazines?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I was going through all kinds of magazines, everything that showed close-ups of anything. And then I would—this is when computers happened. And then I would take it and scan it, and then I'd zero in on some sections. And if the information was there, I could make a painting of it.

And then I started playing around with Photoshop. And then the big change for me was when I started taking my own pictures again.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. But in '95, you were using images from fashion magazines.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Also in '95, you printed—

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know when the change. Well, it wasn't *Solo* and those—those were '94. I think I started—I'm not sure—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which painting do you think started?

MARILYN MINTER: *Mouth of braces*.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. *Solo* was '99 but—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Hold on—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I don't see it. Oh, wait—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Also—'95, that was the year that you printed the series of black-and-white photographs—

MARILYN MINTER: Of my mother—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—that you had taken in 1969 of your mother.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why in '95 did you do that? What prompted you—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I was asked to—like, one of the few times anyone asked me to do anything was Linda Yablonsky, who was always on my side even when I did the *Porn*. She would do these readings at The Drawing Center with different authors. And then she'd ask artists to do the backdrops. But the owner of The Drawing Center was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The director.

MARILYN MINTER: Director, rather—the director—I'm getting tired—the director of the drawing center was—she's this dynamo. And now she's at the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, Annie Philbin.

MARILYN MINTER: Annie Philbin. She said you can't put anything on the walls that's going to cover up the—because I'm not taking the drawings down. So I thought, Okay, I'm going to make these giant photos. So, Okay, what will I use? So I thought, well, I literally printed them at my blueprint place; they weren't even photos. And I printed them, like, huge.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean the images of your mother.

MARILYN MINTER: Images of our mother. And I tacked them on the wall with tacks—pushpins—so it wouldn't disturb the drawings that are hanging. And the reaction I got to those photos was amazing.

And then this guy from California—like, very few people would come see my work or ask me to do anything. [Inaudible]—named Rory Devine—he asked to do a show of them. And Max did—

JUDITH RICHARDS: He had only seen them as blueprints?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I didn't have his blueprints. I actually—they could do it—oh, no, maybe I did get them printed. I don't remember how I got them printed. Maybe I did get them printed really big, because they were in my show in '95, the picture of my mother. One of them was in the show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean, "really big"?

MARILYN MINTER: Like, as big as I could get it. At that point, it's bigger than paper was. I didn't even measure it because I didn't know I was going to do anything with it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you first did these 12 images, which was one roll of film, and Diane Arbus saw them, had you printed them, or did she just see—

MARILYN MINTER: Just had a proof sheet.

JUDITH RICHARDS: A proof sheet.

MARILYN MINTER: Just had a proof sheet.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you had never printed them, and when you started—

MARILYN MINTER: I played around with a couple of them, but I never really did—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You started, and you printed the giant—

MARILYN MINTER: Giant.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you ever think about printing them smaller?

MARILYN MINTER: I did end up printing them small for Rory's show. I printed 12-by-16s probably or 11-by—I don't know what the sizes are anymore, because they don't make that paper anymore, 11-by-14s.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were answering my question when I asked what prompted you to do this. It was Linda Yablonsky—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And then all these people saw it, said, "Jesus, those are amazing photos." I hadn't had praise in so long. Oh, my God, it was like watering a desert.

So then Magda from—oh, my dealer, Max Protetch, didn't want to show them. Well, I knew he didn't, but I figured I'd offer it to him first. And Magda loved them and said, yes, I'll show them in a minute.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you had known her.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she was always—also, we were talking about friends. She's been a real support system to the *Porn*. She totally believed in what I was doing.

I always tell this story, too, about—I try to tell it anyway—about Jessica Stockholder, who I hardly knew at all. And when I did the *Porn* work, she actually came to one of the openings and said, "Can I have your number," and called me up and said, "Let's go have lunch." I only knew—she was a big star at this point. And she came over to my studio for lunch, and I kept thinking she wanted me to get her a job at SVA. And what ended up happening is she told me she—we had the whole lunch until she told me, "I'm a real prude, and your work really disturbs me, and I think it's really important work. What can I do to help you?"

I almost fell over. This is one of those stories you should hear. And anyway, we ended up trading. She took one of the nastiest pieces I ever made and put it up in her bedroom—on a bedroom in her house in Yale, where she's teaching in Yale in Connecticut. Wasn't that a cool story?

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what did you get of hers?

MARILYN MINTER: I got a beautiful piece. It's up now in my living room.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there anyone else who—well, you've talked about a lot of people who were supportive, including—you said Linda Yablonsky.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, Mary Heilmann and Larry Clark and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So once these photographs were shown in the gallery in L.A.—

MARILYN MINTER: Then I asked Magda if she wanted to do a show. And she said, "Yes." And that's when I started getting let back in to the art world.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you printed them several times in different sizes?

MARILYN MINTER: There were 11-by-14s and then 30-by-40s, two sizes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And which size did she show, Magda?

MARILYN MINTER: 30-by-40. And Nan Goldin bought one. And Jack Bankowsky bought one. So it was like, oh my God. And I got a review in Frieze. So it was like all of a sudden I was getting attention again.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: [Eileen] Cohen bought two.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Eileen Cohen?

MARILYN MINTER: Eileen Cohen, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sounds like they were all bought.

MARILYN MINTER: They weren't. That was just a few. Now, this guy Bill Bartman bought a set.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So they were—it was an edition—you made it an edition.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, an edition.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How big an edition?

MARILYN MINTER: I think there were seven small and four large.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wow. So that was a new turning point.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that was the beginning of being let back in. And then I could call people and ask them over to my studio, and they wouldn't hang up on me. [Laughs.]

[End of Disc]

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Marilyn Minter in her home in New York City on November 30th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and this is continuing disc two.

Marilyn, yesterday we got to something around the mid-90s, but I realized there's a couple of things I wanted to go back and ask you about.

MARILYN MINTER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I don't know if there is much to say about this, but I read somewhere that you worked for a little bit of time for Kenneth Snelson.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'd love to hear about that and how that happened—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that was great.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—what you did, what was your impression of him.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he was a great—he was great to work for. This was in the '70s, and that's how I got out of plumbing, because I knew how to sweat pipe. So he needed somebody to work with heat to—I did plumbing for a

friend of his. And he said "Can I ask you on as an assistant?" So I was basically—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who did you say needs an assistant?

MARILYN MINTER: Kenneth Snelson.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: He was showing at Sonnabend. He was a big-deal artist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that was his studio in SoHo.

MARILYN MINTER: Studio in SoHo. And I worked for a friend of his, doing his plumbing. And he said, "Oh, Kenneth needs somebody who knows how to weld," which I didn't know how to do, because he was using a very complex machine that welded with radio waves. But he taught me how to do it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The assistant or Kenneth?

MARILYN MINTER: Kenneth. Yes, I was his assistant. And I made a lot of money, given the times. I think I made almost 12 bucks an hour. Because—and I worked for him for a long time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How long would you say?

MARILYN MINTER: About maybe a year. But then I went back to teaching because his work was inconsistent.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what you were doing for him was working on the construction aspects, not as an art assistant?

MARILYN MINTER: I was his art assistant.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, so you weren't just working in plumbing; you were working on the construction of his pieces.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I went from plumbing to being Kenneth Snelson's artist's assistant and another artist too, but I can't remember his name. Who was it—I worked for Carl [sp] somebody or other. On a project for Wall Street. And that was, like, really fun because I went down there in overalls, and I built all this stuff. I was like a master carpenter. The other carpenters were all Irish and union, and they really made the scaffolding—[Irish enunciation]—for the girl. [Laughs.]

They made it really tight; they'd never seen a girl doing this. And when I was in the office and I was sawing things and installing, all the secretaries had never seen anybody do this. And she—and this woman came over and said, "God, this is so cool that you can do this." And it's like—because they didn't even know how to use a screw driver or anything. And I was sort of proud. And I wasn't, like, next to 90 percent of the guys working with carpentry; I was merely adequate. I wasn't special at all. I was not strong enough to lift sheetrock. But I could do these really fine OCD-type things for this sculptor because I had to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The sculptor named Carl [sp]—

MARILYN MINTER: Carl [ph]—can't remember his last name, but he was one of those sculptors that did commissions for Wall Street firms for their walls. And he made a lot of money. And I worked for \$5 an hour. And we built it and installed it. We worked on site because the building was under construction. I think it ought to even be there. I don't know—probably has fallen apart.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And is there anything you want to say about working for Kenneth Snelson?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, he was the best boss. He was just great. And I did a lot—we did everything. I mean, he was at that point doing 360 film cameras for Civil War.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right, mm-hmm. [Affirmative]

MARILYN MINTER: So I was his assistant. And it was so funny. We'd go everywhere and say, "We work for the Port Authority." And then they let us in because the cameras were really huge. And we'd be taking it everywhere. We shot the marathon right when it—and then he would make me go stand in different places so I was in all the photos when he turned around.

And—let's see—I worked for him, I don't know, maybe a year. And then from there, I went into teaching. Yes, because he wasn't consistent. It was a lot of work and then no work—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER:—because he had shows in Europe all the time. And his whole body of work was based on tensegrity, which he invented—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER: And he made sculptures with it. Buckminster Fuller took it and made the geodesic dome.

So Kenneth was a little miffed that he discovered it at Black Mountain College with Bucky and all those other people—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—but Bucky went on to big success, and he made these sculptures. I can show you—well, I guess it won't do you any good, but I can show you what I did for him, because I kept a couple as souvenirs.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Love to see—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Now?

JUDITH RICHARDS: No.

MARILYN MINTER: Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When we're done.

MARILYN MINTER: Okay.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. Now, then moving up—back to the '90s—

MARILYN MINTER: You have done your homework.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thank you. [Laughs.] You started taking your own photographs. We talked about you taking photographs from fashion magazines, but—

MARILYN MINTER: But I changed them.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—I think slightly before that, you started taking your own photographs and—

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, I was taking photos from fashion magazines and then changing them in Photoshop before I started taking my own photos, because I thought I couldn't take shots as good as the fashion photographers. And then I hired Johan, who's right there, who was a photo assistant for 16 years.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's Johan's last name?

MARILYN MINTER: Olander—who is my right hand. And he worked for me since 1997 full-time, but he started in 1992. And he convinced me that he could help me do it. He knew how to do it, and he did. And because I had his skill of lining up the shots and the lights and everything, I got the confidence to go ahead and just start shooting. But I was just shooting to make paintings. I wasn't showing the photos until '99.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I was going to ask you about that. So it looks like you—right, around 1999, 2000, I see the first instance—I haven't seen everything, but—where I see a C print, as a work of art—

MARILYN MINTER: That's right.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—not just enamel on metal.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. At that point, I actually painted from a photo, and I didn't alter it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What made you decide to do that?

MARILYN MINTER: Taking the photos and showing them basically—an editor from a magazine. And he thought my photos were just so good. He said, "You really should shoot." And I think the reason I started showing them in art galleries was because I couldn't fill the gallery. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because the paintings—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, the paintings were so time consuming that I would fill up the walls with photos. And I thought they looked really good together, because I was one of the few people that showed photos and paintings in the same room. The only one know is Chuck Close that did it also.

And at that point, it really was me painting from a photo without altering it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: Because I didn't know what I was doing. I was just practicing. And I was just—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So all the paintings from the late '90s—

MARILYN MINTER: They were—

JUDITH RICHARDS: [*Shiner*] one is from '98.

MARILYN MINTER: Not all of them. It was like four—no—one was from not my photo. *Swan* was from—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that's the long neck.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the long neck and—all those stuff. But the first one—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So those were photos not altered, painting from a photo that you didn't alter.

MARILYN MINTER: The altered things were from the magazines. And then when I shot it myself, I didn't alter it. But what I did do is I thought the photo was really good, and I thought, oh, I'll make a painting from that. I wasn't selling the photos until after. It was one of these confusing things. Nobody was buying them. So I was printing them, but nobody was buying them. And then all of a sudden, people started buying them. And then I thought, oh, I can't do that anymore.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why do you think that happened, was it a moment because of general interest in photography?

MARILYN MINTER: I'm not sure why.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have any trepidations about changing your practice to include photography?

MARILYN MINTER: None. None. I was so happy that I could shoot what I wanted. I was so happy. I looked through so many magazines, looking for something that I could alter in Photoshop to make work. Then all of a sudden I could do it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because of Johan.

MARILYN MINTER: Because of Johan, yes. I really didn't think that technically I was—and this has been a consistent story all the way through my career—I assumed that because it's so technically and since I'm a mass retard that I would never be able to learn it or do color photography. I still never printed anything in color. But what I didn't honor was that I have a vision until only the last 10 years or so, but I know I see things really in a way that communicates to people so that technically I go in all the time. And when I first started, I would get these assistants who would just try and—really just couldn't help themselves, but tried to shame me out of—I didn't know anything. And they wanted me to do it their way.

And I remember right—being in the middle of a job, and I said, "Okay, I'm going to move now." And he said, "What do you mean? I spent hours setting up these lights." And he literally walked off the job and went up to the roof and smoked cigarettes, and I had a huge fight with him. And I asked him not to come back.

But there was that whole thing about—and I know a lot of female photographers get it—male photographers too. I know a lot of guys who don't know anything technical either. But now there's real technicians that are just—we just hired them. They know that like the back of their hand, because it's so technical now working with—well, digital, for instance. And what I do is I shoot digital now; I shoot it until I get what I like, and then I immediately change cameras to film.

But back in those days, there was no digital.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're using a digital camera as you might have in the past used a Polaroid—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—to check—

MARILYN MINTER: I never used Polaroids. I didn't want to know what was there. That was always what was different about me than regular photographers. I didn't want to know what was there; I wanted to be surprised. And I've always had that. I've had it ever since—I'd put all the elements together, and then I—let's see what happens. And I trust the gods of surprise.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Off mic]—surprise.

MARILYN MINTER: Because things that happen—what I've learned is that if I try and design it to happen, it's never as good as what happens just by letting things happen. Trying to control spontaneity, so to speak, or create the illusion of it kills it. And I like to go into this zone when I'm shooting, and I don't even remember shooting things until I get the negatives back. That's how far gone I am. I don't—wow, I shot that? When did I do that? [Laughs.] And it is like going into the zone; it's like an athlete.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How long are you in the zone?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know. I don't know, but when I'm there, I know it. And digitally, you constantly have to be pulled away and look at the card. Fuck that. You know, I want to just keep shooting. And I don't want to know—I just want to know if the light's right. And then I want to, like I work so much with drips and spills and splashes and sweat and water. And I just want it to happen without having to stop and look at it.

And the minute you stop, you lose things, the minute you pull back. But you need to get some perspective at the beginning of the shoot. Usually it's just—that's a real cliché, the best shots are the last ones. And at this point, a shoot for me is a big deal. It's like people say, "Why are you always piggybacking?" Because they're expensive.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you talked about spontaneity, I'm thinking now, recently, or maybe going back a few years, you've been using liquids and sweat—

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] From the beginning.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and things that are going to move.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, exactly.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And if—that just respond to spontaneity in a very positive way—

MARILYN MINTER: I—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and make two things.

MARILYN MINTER:—actually make it work for me. Yes. And I think it drives really technical people crazy because they want to know exactly what's going to happen. They know exactly when they're shooting—of course they're commercial photographers. They know exactly what every single square inch is going to be, whereas I go for—I've shut my eyes when I've shot.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, thinking about this—

MARILYN MINTER: Could you imagine that?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, I'm going to ask you a question that kind of relates to that.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are you thinking about the composition in terms of the—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I set it up in a general way.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In other words, do you anticipate that you're going to be cropping?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I never crop. Never.

JUDITH RICHARDS: OK. So you are framing—you are finding exactly what you want.

MARILYN MINTER: Right. I've got one photo I've cropped in all of those pictures. I've got a gift. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you're using not a digital camera.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, right now I have been using digital pictures. First time, I'd say—the last four [shoots - MM] I did are digital. Yes, it's hard; it was really hard. But they're so good I had to use them. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what you're doing doesn't ever involve any preliminary sketches or—

MARILYN MINTER: No, not at all, nothing. As a matter of fact, I made a big mistake. I learned a lesson, because when I shot my last video for the Whitney, I thought I'd shot all the letters. And I actually didn't shoot an H. I only shot a small H, because I didn't have a set list. And I'm not going to ever do that again. That was a big mistake.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you say "set list," what do you mean?

MARILYN MINTER: Like, Okay, mostly when people are going in to do a job, they have a set list, like they know they're going to do this, this, this and this. And then they just check it off. I never had a set list—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ever or for that project?

MARILYN MINTER: Ever. You know, I had it in my head—I took notes. I knew when I was going to do notes. I never even referred to them. I already knew what I was going to do. And I thought that I had shot an H, W-H-I-T-N-E-Y. I had shot a small H, which didn't really work. And so—because I thought I shot it.

We had to take an H from the word "why." I did shoot W-H-Y. And we had to CGI it. [Laughs.] I went to special effects, which is something nobody knew I had to do in my editing room. We had to send it out.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So have you given up permanently the 35-millimeter camera?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, no, I love using it because that's—I can carry it. It's really light next to my medium format. And I'm pretty strong because I have to lift weights, because I have to lift 15-pound cameras, because the lenses I use are very heavy, because I use macro lenses. And with the 35-millimeter, I can really get close, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: To do the close-ups.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, closer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Speaking of close-ups, I'm intrigued by—when I look at the photographs of the feet splashing in heels—

MARILYN MINTER: These aren't photos at all; they're references. Those are all paintings, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, the original photos that were made—

MARILYN MINTER: Those are photos.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: Those are C-prints [ph] right there. Those are the only things in here. Everything else is—was —

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, in your past work, all the paintings and photos you've done of high heels splashing, how do you technically get in that position?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I'm covered in paint, and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're lying down on the ground?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I'm closed up on the table because I put them up high.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ah hah, secrets!

MARILYN MINTER: They're on these pedestals.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And it's some kind of tray of liquid.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, that I built. But the last one I did—oh, I think I used my tray even then. I built a tray, and I used that a lot. But now I'm much more sophisticated; I have set builders to build things, because the places that pay for these shoots hire them. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And I'm going to get to those paid shoots in a second.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, Photoshop—you have learned how to use Photoshop, or you rely on other people to use it?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I learned how to use it basically, but I have someone—Johan, who is a master. But then sometimes we can't even go too far, and then we send it out to someone who all they do is Photoshop.

Most people who do Photoshop can't draw. They're doing it technically—and we can draw, so we're better, because we can draw—it's easy for us to draw.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Now, the technique that you're—the method you're using now to build up the surface, the many, many layers of enamel, can you talk about how you discovered that method, how that—

MARILYN MINTER: I discovered it by just painting—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—the genesis of it and how it evolved?

MARILYN MINTER:—I had no assistants; I was just painting. And I knew that I had to paint on top of dried paint. I've always known that. I've always known that's a trick of oil paint. Paint is made to paint in layers, oil paint. People that work fast and spontaneously don't need to do this. Someone like Jenny Saville can have it go all the way to the canvas, whereas I'm a builder. I construct paintings.

So I had to put a cartoon down basically in oil paint, just like in the Renaissance. And when I worked with enamel, it's the same thing; you have to put down a cartoon. So that, I just use brushes. Then from the very beginning—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Referring to a photograph that you've taken or that you're using?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, like in the commercial, I'm painting with my finger already, in the TV commercial. I've already started doing it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, that's right, in the 1989—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I started right away. I started right away. And then I got to do it so much that I had to wear gloves except for these two fingers.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you remember when you first started using your fingers and why?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, about '92. I saw that I could soften it. I saw that I could—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Wait, '92—but we saw you doing it in the '89 commercial.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I know, but I wasn't trying—I was just blending a little bit. I wasn't actually making a replication of a two-dimensional image. I was just blending it slightly. But it's—I thought I did it already, but it was just an organic thing. I didn't think about it at all. But I—you know, I was thinking about somebody like Chuck Close, who's severely dyslexic. And there's something really wrong with me when it comes to a lot of things; I'm really bad, bad, bad at them. And so that was one of those things that I had to invent my own system. So I invented this system, and I invented it really crudely at first. And when I was doing it, I worked with enamel colors, which were kind of limited in those days. There's a lot more now; there's a lot more variation.

And I hired people to—I taught them the system. I taught Johan, and then Johan got better than me. Then I tried to catch up to him. And then we got Agata in here, and she was better than both of us.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's Agata's name?

MARILYN MINTER: Agata Bebecka.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Spell that, please.

MARILYN MINTER: A-G-A-T-A, B-E-C-C-A [sic]. And then people just that I hired started getting better than me. And she actually changed the whole method of painting because she added colors that we didn't even think about. So she changed—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What brand of enamel do you use, and has that always—

MARILYN MINTER: One Shot. One Shot.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that the brand you've always used?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. It was sign painters paint, but I wonder how many sign painters there are anymore, because you can only really get this paint in art supply stores, yes. Now it's like the artists are the only ones that use it. It's really wonderful paint.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you gradually refined the system and—

MARILYN MINTER: But then when she got so much better—now we use her as a specialization. We don't even let her—we don't want her to paint a whole painting anymore because she's a little—she's so OCD that she'll paint everything over, and we just want her to go to, like, really juicy areas.

That's what I stopped doing. I stopped being a finisher. And when I stopped being a finisher, I got to be a better artist, because it was really hard for me to destroy six months worth of work, whereas I could destroy—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why would you destroy it? How would you—

MARILYN MINTER: Because I wanted to change it; I didn't like it. Like, I would put a drip on top of it, or I'd say, "No, take it out; it doesn't work." I can do that with other people. I can't do it when it's me. [Laughs.] Well, I can, but it hurts.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what are the other roles besides finisher?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, that I do?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or anybody. Are there other assigned—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes, there's [blockers] that block it in.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's the first step.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And that could be anybody, pretty much any OCD person.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Using the photograph.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, using the reference, which I blow up really big so it's like at a small image. And they use windows.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In other words you're making a grid.

MARILYN MINTER: No, not a grid. They move the window over the image. It's not in a grid, though.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, it's a similar concept, though. You're creating details from the whole—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and taking the detail and referencing it too, blowing it up.

MARILYN MINTER: We say to everybody that comes in that the reference is God. God is in the details; they cannot veer from it, and do not lose the drawing. That's all we care about, because once you're doing the second and third coat, the finishers will hate you forever if you lose the drawing, because they're looking at it, and then—they're looking and they're painting and they're trying to concentrate, and then all of a sudden it's not there. Wait a minute, that's not even in here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the first stage are the blockers.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what comes after that.

MARILYN MINTER: The second and third coaters.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you're determining what colors go into the first and second coats. So—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes. Yes, I determine everything. I'm—as much as I'm not painting it, I am painting every stroke. They know that. It's like I'm there—like you saw yesterday, Agata said, "Who did this?" And I said, "I did it," because I know exactly how to do all the levels, but not everybody really knows how, but they're learning. It's a real—like, a Renaissance studio. It takes three years to learn how to do this. I don't hire anybody unless they give me three years. I didn't tell you that. One person it took four.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's second and third, but there's many, many more in addition.

MARILYN MINTER: And then there's the finishers.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there's only three coats?

MARILYN MINTER: No, there's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: There's many coats in the second and third.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, we don't even know—I mean, when I say "second coater," it really could be a fourth coater. It's just however long it takes to get it to look—the way this works is that if it doesn't work, you'd never try and fix it; you just leave it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean it doesn't work?

MARILYN MINTER: It's not working; it's too hard, the edges aren't softened.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The image isn't what you envisioned?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it doesn't look like the reference. At this point it doesn't look like the reference. We don't try and fix that. We just let it dry and then start over again the next day. And the difference between oil paintings is you can fix it. You really can't fix it when you're painting with your fingers because you'll just pull off the paint. You'll pull it off because it's too dry and it starts drying. It just doesn't work. You leave it alone and then paint it the next day as if you never touched it. And that's a trick.

And then at the end, the finishers don't paint from up close. The second coaters—they paint from very close. The finishers really paint from about 15 feet away or 10 or however big—if the painting is really big, it's 15 feet. If it's really small, it's five feet. But you're going for the intensity, the same exact intensity that's in the reference. You never go with what the reference looks like anymore. The finishers learn that—all of a sudden you don't care about the reference; you just take it off. Sometimes you don't even look at it, the finishers, because you're going for the intensity; you're not going for the details.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, I saw yesterday in the studio that there were tacked up on the wall next to each painting, a list, a signup sheet—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—that each person—who has worked on it and how many hours. Why do you keep track of that?

MARILYN MINTER: Because—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Other than for their pay.

MARILYN MINTER: Because of their—no, it wasn't because of the pay; it's because my dealers have to pay for half my production. I'm like a sculptor. And it's really hard for some of them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which eventually gets taken out of your share of—

MARILYN MINTER: Exactly.

JUDITH RICHARDS: They're advancing you, in other words.

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmation.] I pay half; they pay half. So we say, "Okay, how much did it cost to make this?" And then we add that into the sale price.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm interested in going further about that after we finish the techniques because that's—

MARILYN MINTER: It would take me too long—see, that's why we moved, because I was making no—I was making five paintings a year. Then we moved to this space, and I could make 15 paintings. That's the difference. And so I could be one of those people that are—I don't know if there are any. There used to be—I remember—Vija Clemons—used to have one. She made three things, and they were very expensive. That's what I would have been. I could have been that. I could have done that. It could have just been me and Johan because that's what we did for years, just passing them back and forth.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It took a lot of trust on your part to give over this work to other people.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I train them, and I'm smart enough to know who to hire, because I've been teaching for so long. I know who can do it or not. Just like I know how to help a student, I know who to hire. It's really a gift.

JUDITH RICHARDS: If you build up enough reserve fund in any way, would it be preferable to not have the gallery paying for half—in other words, receive the entire amount in the sale?

MARILYN MINTER: It would be great, but it's not going to happen, because I'm a female artist. I don't make the kind of money boys do. As long as I can keep going, I don't care about money. It's a terrible thing to say, but I want to be able to do it. And I want to be able to buy a car, and I want my kids to work and have enough money and have a good life. And I want Johan's family to have a good life.

JUDITH RICHARDS: By "your kids," you mean the assistants.

MARILYN MINTER: The kids that work for me, yes. And nobody's—it's not a bad job. As long as I can work—wake up in the morning and know I'm doing a hundred percent every day, I'm really happy. And it would be really great to be a millionaire, a real millionaire, because I could say I'm a millionaire in some ways. I have a house that if I sold it—and I have a lot of really good art—that if I sold it I'm a millionaire. I am the 1 percent. I'm newly part of the 1 percent. And I totally believe in Occupy Wall Street.

I still believe that I'm not—I don't take advantage of anyone. And as long as I can stay there and we have a good system and since—if anyone's pissed off or mad, we just talk about it; we just thrash it out. So nobody's ever quit. We try and have this island of sanity in an insane art world. And we just—if we stay—and so far so good. I can't complain. I've got these wonderful people work for me.

And we don't have health insurance, but when my kid got run over by a car—she was hit and run—otherwise she would have died, because the state pays for you if you're a victim of a crime. She has no insurance. That was—she had \$500,000 worth of hospital bills. But I still paid her half her salary, because it's just the right thing to do. If she had cancer, though, I couldn't do it, you know. I'm trying to get them insurance. I want to do the best I can. I don't take advantage of anyone. And because I don't take advantage of them, they don't take advantage of me. So and when somebody has to work for a fair or a show, they take off. So, so far that's working.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you compared notes with other artists about how to run a studio?

MARILYN MINTER: No, because they think I'm crazy. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: I've talked to other artists who have very much a similar approach as you do.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, they do? Yes, I have one friend—the only one I know of that's like me is Wangechi—Wangechi Mutu. She wants a good group around her, but she doesn't—but she doesn't need—nobody needs as many people as I do, except for sculptors.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And they don't have this. They don't have this, like, cottage industry. They get fined if they do things. I know people like that—they're all sculptors—everybody I know who has a staff are sculptors except me. And I don't know Jeff Koons. I mean, not personally. I think he's a great artist, but I've never seen his studio or how it works. But I already know from others it's not like this. And I do know some really sick situations. So I know the bad things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. You said you hired people who had been your students.

MARILYN MINTER: Right.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Obviously, you knew their work and you could tell if they had the—

MARILYN MINTER: I could tell if they were OCD enough.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. [Laughs.]

MARILYN MINTER: Because they don't have to be painters. I have sculptors. I have only one realist painter, and she had the hardest time learning. She had the hardest time of anybody because she had her own technique, her own method.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, do they work with you a limited amount of time that gives them time to work on their own work?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, everybody works—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you consider that.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, hopefully six hours, but I have some—I have one girl who's a finisher who comes in three days a week; that's all. But she's been trained, so I'll take what she gives me. She's got a burgeoning career. She's in Miami now. She's got a gallery. She sells everything. And she's got a job doing illustrations. So she's the one realist painter. So she's sort of easing her way out the door because she wants to—but she doesn't want to cut the umbilical cord. [Laughs.] Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you have to deal with that?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I feel like once they're trained, if they want to leave for a year and they want to come back, it's fine with me—I'm trying to teach everybody to be a finisher, but right now we don't have—we only have three altogether, because I'm not one anymore.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me go back to another piece of your methods—

MARILYN MINTER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—which is the models. Tell me about the evolution of your selection of the models. Who did you use—this is when you were taking your own photographs—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and obviously when you were taking photographs not for a commission, where you have to bring in your own models.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I always use mixed-race people. Is that written anywhere?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, it is.

MARILYN MINTER: It is, yes. Yes, I'm not interested in certain people.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But I'd love to hear more about it.

MARILYN MINTER: I'm just not interested in the models that are perfectly featured, blonde, blue-eyed beauties. There's nothing wrong with that, but I want models with character.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're talking about professional models.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are those the only people you hire?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, no. I hire people on the street that have freckles. I look for anybody with freckles.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's the fascination with freckles?

MARILYN MINTER: Because when you see an image with freckles, there's something wrong with it, and you don't know what it is. But it looks off.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why is that?

MARILYN MINTER: Because everyone—most of the time, they get Photoshopped out. So I can take the most ordinary picture—just a standard commercial shot of anything. And let's say just a hand pouring water into a glass. And if the arm and hand are covered in freckles, it's going to look weird, and you don't know why. [Laughs.] So that was my first—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you find people on the street literally?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I had a card made out. Do we have any of those cards, Johan?

JOHAN OLANDER: [Off mic.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did it say?

MR. OLANDER: No, that's just the old—the regular one.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. What did those cards say? Just my phone number?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—we had cards that—we took a picture of one of my paintings or one of—I found this one model through one of my assistants being on—at Central Park, and she saw her. So we shot her. And then when I was really looking for them, and I was looking for them for the Tom Ford campaign like crazy.

Then I found this one model in the fashion world, who's pretty successful. I sort of feel like I'm—whenever you see freckles now, I'm responsible for that. [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, there has been a trend toward mixed-race models in the fashion world for a while.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And I tried to do it in 2000, and I was told that we would not put this girl on the cover or this was—I'm not going to name the magazine—because mixed-race people—she looked black, but she had blonde hair—don't sell; it's only the blonde, blue-eyed girls that sell.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you seen that attitude changing?

MARILYN MINTER: I don't know. I thought it might change when that—Meisel did all black models for an Italian Vogue, but nothing changed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Steven Meisel?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. But I don't just use black and white. I'll use anybody. I'll use Chinese and Irish. My model that I love—my favorite model is Brazilian and Scottish. And she's this beautiful redhead covered in freckles. And I think they just look so—I couldn't take my eyes off of them. People that glow in the dark—they do for me. So when the model agencies ask me—they want to give me their stars, I don't want them. [Laughs.] I just want the people I want. And that sort of throws them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thinking about your process here, do you want to have past works posted up or images—do you want to see those images in the studio, or do you get rid of those before you start a new work?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I get rid of them. They're out; they're gone. They're gone. Sometimes when I go to see, like, surveys or something, I go, "Wow, that was pretty good." Once I saw one and I said, "Whoa, that's not very good. Why did I think that was so good?"

JUDITH RICHARDS: Your past work?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, this happened last summer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So—but before you start a new body of work, is there something you're consciously taking from the past work, some questions still lingering that you're going to continue—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, they usually feed each other. Like, one thing, right now, shooting everything behind glass—that came from shooting everything behind glass for *Green Pink Caviar*. So I haven't shot anything or worked with anything or made a painting that wasn't behind glass in three years now.

But I have another idea, which I'm going to start, which is totally different. I have two things I'm really working on in my head that I'm going to do eventually.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me get to that. Do you ever get to the point where you don't know what you want to do? And if that happens, what do you do?

MARILYN MINTER: So far no. Thank God, right?

JUDITH RICHARDS: So one body—one painting leads to the next?

MARILYN MINTER: Usually it leads—my job is to be the head of everybody. That's why I'm here now, is we're making paintings for the next year. My job is to be a year and a half ahead.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're spontaneous in some sense, but in the other sense you have to plan far ahead.

MARILYN MINTER: A year and a half ahead. The paintings that went into my show, I was so far past those. I've already been on these babies for so long now. But I couldn't grab images off of them because I was making a video. So the video took two months, two straight months every day practically, because I had to make one for the Whitney and one for myself. And so I couldn't take any of the images off the mags. And this is the first time—I'm working with this Phantom camera so I get enough resolution.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's a Phantom camera?

MARILYN MINTER: It's 25—it's a slow-mo camera. And it's a technical camera, totally technical. It's not even—it has nothing to do with—Mac—it's all PC.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How do you spell it, Phantom?

MARILYN MINTER: Phantom, P-H-A-N—how do you spell Phantom?

MR. OLANDER: Just like Phantom.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, P-H-A-N-T-O-M.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And it's a digital video?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but it's 2,500 frames per second. So it's got such high resolution that I can actually use these images to make paintings. That's what we're doing now. Those are from Phantom.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In a way it's intuitive, but if some—if a mistake happens, you can't, given the process—I would say you can't turn that into some other kind of work.

MARILYN MINTER: I can, though. I can. I can. Sometimes the more limitations I have, the better my imagination is. So if a mistake happens—and that did happen on a project, I find a way to make it work. Although there was one thing that—a mistake happened because of an assistant who didn't—who set it up all wrong. That I had to throw out. That was useless, and it was a waste, very waste—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Does it ever happen that you actually have a painting progress to completion and then decide you don't like it, you don't want it?

MARILYN MINTER: Less—about two months ago. But that's the first time it's happened in 10 years. Yes, about two months ago.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What happens? You're suddenly slightly troubled and you gradually realize, or does it hit you?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I was teaching myself—I was teaching myself how to paint something, because I'd never painted before. And I thought, Okay, it's not very interesting in the photo that I was using, but it might be really good in the painting, but it wasn't. And so I have to teach myself—every time you start a new painting, one has to teach themselves how to paint it. See, I do that—I'm the starter all the time. And I'm not the finisher anymore, because the starter doesn't really have to think that hard. And I want to just have the pleasure of painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Actually, it sounds like the starter has the hardest job. You have to set everything up.

MARILYN MINTER: No, that's the easiest job, easiest. Yes, it's totally the easier. The finisher has the hardest part.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you were saying, though, you have to figure out how to paint something you haven't painted before.

MARILYN MINTER: Paint every single new thing—I know how to paint silver. I know how to paint skin. But then when I start with something else entirely, which is what I was doing, I had to teach myself how to paint it, and I didn't know how yet.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you did teach yourself how to paint it, but in the end—

MARILYN MINTER: I hated it.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—you didn't think it was that interesting?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I didn't get very far. I maybe spent, like, I don't know, 50 hours on it, like eight hours here, eight hours there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, it's good to know that you can take those risks and then live with—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—no, I always do that. I have no problem with taking risks.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like your—besides the fact you have assistants to make the whole process move along more quickly, you yourself are working more quickly.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I am.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're trusting your instincts.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, the kids are better. Like, they weren't so good when we started. We started—we had six people for a long, long time. Then we just hired four. And yes, we were—well, we moved—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you have 10 people?

MARILYN MINTER: Ten. And four of them are not very good yet. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what do they do?

MARILYN MINTER: They're learning. They've been working a year now. But the people that—I had one person that wasn't getting anywhere. He smoked too much pot. And he stopped smoking pot, and so maybe he'll be able to be a finisher. But he wasn't there. He just wasn't there. And he'd been there four years. So he was driving me crazy. I really like him, too. And so he just has a hard time concentrating. And to be a finisher, you have to really be able to concentrate. That's why I can't do it because I keep getting pulled off. And it's so frustrating; I make too many mistakes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, you have to really block out everything else.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about titling? The titles are pretty straightforward, but some of them—

MARILYN MINTER: We have fun titles.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—are fun. Do you think of a title always after you do the painting or ever—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Not before?

MARILYN MINTER: Once in a while in the middle—no, all the paintings for the show I just had—those titles just flowed. One day I came in and someone said, "We should call this *Heavy Metal*." And I went, "Of course." And then *Glisterine* was from—we used a lot of glycerin in that one. And then *Meltdown*, because it looked like a painting that's melting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it's a collaborative effort sometimes, the titles?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, we—yes, everybody—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has it always been—I mean, last 10 years—been that way?

MARILYN MINTER: It used to be just me and Johan. What was the one we had the hardest time finding a title on? It took days. It was a simple painting.

MR. OLANDER: I don't remember. Like, from now you mean?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, like in the last six months, we were just struggling.

MARILYN MINTER: I don't remember which one it—

MR. OLANDER: *Long Rain* took a long time.

MARILYN MINTER: *Long Rain*? I think it was *Long Rain*.

MR. OLANDER: No, maybe it wasn't.

MARILYN MINTER: I don't remember what it was. But I'm really straightforward, but I try and be funny and goofy because I hate that people don't—I hate when people think art is like saving people's lives. I think that it shines a light on life, but it's a luxurious activity. It's for the elite.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Speaking of elite, do you—

MARILYN MINTER: I always say we are the servants—we're the elite of the servant class. That's what I'm pretty sure we are. Some people cross over into the elite, but no women artists do, not even Cindy. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Cindy Sherman.

MARILYN MINTER: Marina Abramovic maybe.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she's about on the edge. She'll be the first woman.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me go to that issue of women in the art world. Can you reflect on how you think that's changed and what it is like for you today?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I had to stop reading the Joan Mitchell book because it was so depressing. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: The new biography.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes. I mean, she just was up against the wall all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you ever hear about those kinds of things when you were, let's say, in the '70s, talking to artists who were in their 50s and 60s then?

MARILYN MINTER: I had people say to me, "Women are never going to be good artists." My teacher—my head of my painting department—I don't know what I thought I was.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In graduate school?

MARILYN MINTER: In graduate school. I remember never studying any women, except Mary Cassatt and Beverly Pepper, the only two women—at one time. I mean, I don't know what—and I used to pretend Joan Miro was a woman—[laughs]—in my head. I literally told myself that Joan Miro—and then right at that moment, then there were all these women—Eva Hess and—right when the '60s—all of a sudden there was an explosion of women artists, Helen Frankenthaler started painting on canvas without gesso, and it soaked in.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was in the '50s.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but I didn't—she wasn't in the vernacular until the—only in the art magazines that I learned this. And then there was Marisol, who was, like—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—had a piece up at—in the Buffalo museum—I forget the name of the museum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The Albright-Knox?

MARILYN MINTER: Albright-Knox. And then I saw—and then there was Marisol as a pop artist, and then I saw Audrey Flack, and then I saw women artists. And then—I didn't know anything about Joan Mitchell, which—she's one of my favorite painters.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or Lee Krasner.

MARILYN MINTER: I knew about Lee Krasner, but I thought she was mediocre. And I didn't—and I realized how much she gave Pollock years later. Women were only photographers. But there was all of a sudden an explosion of people that were female.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Like in the '70s, you mean.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, late '60s in the magazines and the '70s, which gave me permission. I had an argument with a fellow graduate student who said that he was—that women will never be better artists than men. And I said, "Well, I'm a lot better than you are," just—I was, like, very feisty. Maybe that's why I've been able to tolerate so much rejection. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But what about in the '80s when the Guerilla Girls were active and there was a lot of conversation in the art world about the struggles of—

MARILYN MINTER: I even thought I was a Guerilla Girl. Yes, I wish I was. I wanted to be one, but they never asked me. But I know one, and she's not at all who'd you think—you know, she's an abstract painter. Nobody would ever recognize that she was a Guerilla Girl. The only reason I found out is I've got really good intuition, and I knew it. It was one of those things I just knew. She was stunned that I found out—that I asked her. I said, "I know you are." She was stunned. And I don't know how I know. There was no reason, other than when she asked me if—did I invite the Guerilla Girls to something, and I knew immediately she was a Guerilla Girl. And she finally admitted it. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you feel that you were struggling more than men who were your equals in terms of

galleries and reviews?

MARILYN MINTER: Of course, absolutely. You could not be mediocre. Yes, you had to be better than average just to get any attention at all. The idea of—you just couldn't—there really aren't to this day any—as many mediocre females. You have to be better. And it's always been that way.

And that's why women artists get famous after they're dead or after menopause, you know, because no one gives them due until somehow they're not threatening anymore. You know, like, all these women that get attention after 50—they're everywhere.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: I look at Anne Truitt. I saw that Matthew Marks gave Anne Truitt a show. So—well, it would have been nice if she was alive—[laughs]—Lee Lozano, you know—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—Lee Bontecou—

JUDITH RICHARDS: She's still alive.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I know. I know. I mean, that list is endless. Now, Ida Applebroog—what do you have to be, 70 or dead? The new artists are the dead women—[laughs]—or almost dead women.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: But it's been that way since Nevelson and Georgia O'Keefe—and poor Louise Bourgeois—I remember this drawing she made called *Whitney Murders*, because she wasn't in the Whitney Biennial that year. I mean, but it's like—it just makes you hungry. And it's—I think—and this is a terrible thing to say—it makes you always hungry so you don't get satisfied. So women artists are really good when they're old because they're never in the white heat, so they're always hungry. Now is the first time I've ever had any money. I mean, but there's—I tell this to my students that the best years of my life have been my sixties. Aren't the best years of your life your sixties? Are they better than your high school?

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] Yes, I think so.

MARILYN MINTER: Are they better than college?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I think that it's an interesting questions.

MARILYN MINTER: Are they better than your forties?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you think that men have then—they peak earlier?

MARILYN MINTER: They definitely do. There's only a handful that aren't parodies of themselves by the time they're 40, only a handful. Most of them are just parodies.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you get any negative response from collectors when you were younger? I mean, one artist told me that a collector said he wouldn't buy any woman—anything by a woman artist before she was 40 because she was just going to quit and have a family.

MARILYN MINTER: Babies. I never had that, because I was so clearly a feminist. Nobody would ever say anything like that to me. What I did have was I was cute, so guys would come on to me all the time that were coming over to buy things. And I knew not to do that. I knew not to fuck dealers either. I had two dealers hit on me. I knew not to do that.

But I still looked like someone who didn't have a thought in her head, and I was a party animal. So I really was easily stereotyped. So that—Hannah Wilke once told me, "You're too good looking."

JUDITH RICHARDS: She should know.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, "You're too good looking to get famous." She actually said that to me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how did that affect you?

MARILYN MINTER: I was very flattered because I thought she was gorgeous. And but I knew I was another generation and it was different. And it is different. My students—the real players could easily be boys or girls. They're pretty interchangeable.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And yet if you look at an art magazine—

MARILYN MINTER: Now it's pretty—well, art magazines are really—they're way behind.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you look at the gallery listings or group exhibitions or art fairs and you just scan down and you might find a few women—

MARILYN MINTER: That's all—yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—in this long list of men.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes. No, it's prevalent. And what I wish more than anything is—this is the painful, painful part—is the competition between women. And I think the only way—I think it's in our DNA—I think the guys learn how to work as teams. They work in teams. There's always Julian and David or Nate and Adam, or the boys work in teams and they dash and run—they work in teams to get to the top, and then they try and kill each other off. The women start trying to kill each other off at the—I have three artists that I'm really promoting, young girls. I love their work—all of them—and they hate each other. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you think that it's really counterproductive for them to do that?

MARILYN MINTER: It's so counterproductive.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But you can't convince them.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, just acknowledge it. And they'll say, "No, they're not good," you know. I said, "Just acknowledge it. If you acknowledge it"—this is my trick because I'm old and I can do this—when I see somebody I like, I go tell them immediately. And if I like somebody, that means they're good, because I have a good eye. And I know that. And I go and tell them, and the act of saying it—this is female artists—the act of saying it means the animosity goes away. So I fight the urge to hate them and want to kill them, because that's my first urge. Males too—anybody good. Other artists don't—they might say that—I mean, on some levels, you want to— if they're older than you or you see somebody's art who's transcendental—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Like, who comes to mind if you think—

MARILYN MINTER: Bob Gober. I mean, transcendental—Bruce Nauman, Cindy Sherman. I mean, and they've been good all along. They don't become parodies of themselves, but they're not in the white heat. See, how do you escape? You become Damien Hirst or Julian Schnabel, you know. How do you escape it? So this is the good thing—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or Jeff Koons.

MARILYN MINTER:—about getting famous old, because you don't get told you're a genius when you're 35 and 30 and 25 ever if you're female. So you don't rest on your laurels, or you don't get the chance to believe it. Because one of my best friends is Mary Heilmann. Do you think anyone thought she was a genius at 25? I think she kicks ass on Bryce Martin. Do you think the art historians are going to find out—when she's dead. I mean, he's been making the same painting forever, and she's just so out there, and always have been.

And that's why I know I have a good eye. I bought two of her paintings for a thousand dollars. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: A long time ago.

MARILYN MINTER: And they're worth about 500,000 [dollars] now, the pair of them—maybe more. People offered me a fortune for them, yes. I mean, that's just that. I bought a lot of things. I have a Cady Noland for \$800. When I could afford it and get things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: I bought a Richter for—that was \$400, that Richter. [Laughs.] Oh, it's not up. Okay, it's still wrapped up. I'm sorry. We're in the middle of—everything's wrapped up; all my art is wrapped up because we're in the middle of moving things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because you've taken your studio out of this space.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, we're trying to make it—yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It's evolving.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Evolving, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Let me go back to—speaking of your space—the studio. Tell me about the decision to—I know you wanted to expand your production on—add new assistants—but was it—since you've been working where you live for so many years—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I love working where I live.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—that must have—

MARILYN MINTER: Killed me. Killed me.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—been difficult.

MARILYN MINTER: Because I look at the paintings when nobody's there. Yes, but I still do. I go in there all the time and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So how did you decide where to have your studio. It's a separate studio that's now on 36th Street.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it's the same thing I do with everything: It felt right. We looked at a place in Brooklyn that was \$3,000 less than where we are now, but it didn't feel right. And I'm really glad I didn't take it because it was a real pain to get there, because—yes, the subway's like a 20-minute walk; whereas, where I am now, the subway is a five-minute walk—less than.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Does it interest you that there are a lot of other artists who have studios in that vicinity, where you are in the 30s, the West 30s?

MARILYN MINTER: I didn't know there were.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, dozens and dozens.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—dozens now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, obviously, artists who are more established because the rent is much higher than it is in Brooklyn.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So there are.

MARILYN MINTER: It's not much higher. My building's not much higher at all. And now—it's really funny because he's got three really nice artists in there; he's got Robert Melee, myself and Matthew Ritchie. And he thinks all artists are really [nice] artists. And he keeps saying, "I want all these garment people out. I want to have all artists." And I'm thinking, oh, God, be careful what you pray for. [They laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you don't want to help destroy the garment industry in their original location.

MARILYN MINTER: No, I don't. No, I don't, but he thinks—because we're not picky about things. We don't care about the floor and—you see what I'm saying? And he just loves that. We done complain.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you like the sense that—I mean, even though you don't know there are other artists, there are some in your—there's a little community there?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, we never—the only one I really see is Robert because I told him about it. I'm trying to get more artists in there, because just recently I gave somebody the name of the landlord; he's looking for a space.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So while—so it's been a trade-off: You have this great space, more room for assistants, but you miss having it where you live?

MARILYN MINTER: I really miss it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you said you do it—look anyway. Does that mean you just stay after everyone has left?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I just go late at night. I go all the time and look when no one's there. I leave notes. Yes. But I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the building has access 24 hours?

MARILYN MINTER: I do, yes. Well, yes, everyone has a card. I make them too nervous if I look at them when they're working—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sure.

MARILYN MINTER:—unless they've been there with me a long time. If they've been with me a long time, no problem.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I noticed you have different kinds of lighting in the studio. What lights do you use? And is that something you've been doing—

MARILYN MINTER: Both kinds—we use both fluorescent and incandescent. These are energy incandescents; they're less energy than the fluorescents.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So are you carefully calibrating it—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—so there's a certain degree of warmth and coolness? Are you trying to duplicate a gallery setting?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you want it to be constant, so you don't care about natural light.

MARILYN MINTER: And the—no, natural light—when does art get shown in natural light? [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, sometimes artists want to see their work in natural light—

MARILYN MINTER: Love the times.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—that when you make it in natural light—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—regardless of the fact it never gets shown in natural light.

MARILYN MINTER: No, I know. Is that crazy or what? [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're trying to duplicate that gallery/museum?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and the museum and everything else, yes—the people's homes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what about music or sound?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, we listen to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because we were recording yesterday, but what do you prefer, and what do your assistants—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I like to listen to talk radio. I listen to NPR all the time or other stations. But I also listen to music when I feel like it. I listen to music all the time. And I read listening to music.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of—is it always the same kind of music or more of a variety?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I have a really wide range, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has that evolved over the years?

MARILYN MINTER: No, it's always been that way. Yes, I like everything but country, because I hate country because I grew up in the South. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about your work routines? Do you start early in the morning or never—

MARILYN MINTER: No, I'm not an early person at all. I like working late—I work really late, till 2:00 in the morning.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that's kind of a reflection of when you were out at clubs and staying up late and—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it does. Yes, and it's a good thing my husband has those same hours. Yes. We both—I get up at 9:30.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because you have assistants, it sounds like you do work practically every day.

MARILYN MINTER: I love working.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It's a very constant—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it's constant. I love to work, and I love to relax. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: When I was at the studio and looking around the walls, all of it is—maybe it's because it's a new studio, but all of it is your work in process.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, we're just making brand-new things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you typically not have any other visual references on the walls except your work?

MARILYN MINTER: Here—all of them are here. All the other visual references are here. This is where—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Here in your home?

MARILYN MINTER: This is where we decide what paintings to make. This is where we generate the images. This is where we shoot. The studio is where we paint and build, although we build sets here too. We build sets here all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you mind if people see work in progress?

MARILYN MINTER: Not at all. Not at all.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're not afraid they're going to get misunderstanding of what it's going to look like or—

MARILYN MINTER: I don't really care, they have to have an imagination; otherwise they shouldn't come to the studio if they can't see—but I'm lucky. I've got enough people buying my work—there was a moment when if I didn't have anyone wanting to buy my work, it was critical that they only saw it at a certain stage because I was living or dying whether they bought the painting or not.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you would not want them to see it until it was done?

MARILYN MINTER: Not done but almost done. But these days I've got enough people. Like, I sold a painting just by people looking at the references now. All the time they look at the references—

[Audio break.]

MARILYN MINTER:—even though we changed the reference a lot, they—because I make such few paintings, but there's enough people that want them so far. The problem with that is they want the same thing all the time. Like, when I made eyes for a long time and then I went to mouths, they said, "Oh, we want eyes." And then when I made dirty feet and then I went to shoes, "Oh, we want dirty feet." "Oh, no, now we all—we want shoes." "Oh, now all we want is shoes under glass." But I'm really into doing the babies. So I've got to compromise; I have to give somebody some shoes and the rest will be babies.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you do compromise on that.

MARILYN MINTER: I do. Yes, I do compromise, because I have to to survive. I think that it's a place I've had to maneuver my entire career. I always want to do these totally abstract things, but I know I have to have some narrative to sell. So I go totally abstract all the time, but I make enough that's palatable to collectors. But the really good collectors, the ones that have an eye—and they're really few and far between—will buy the really abstract ones, the really wild, the—less narrative; the really rich, rich, rich things that I just did in my last show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It seems that in recent years every body of work is selling, develops interest. So even though someone says they want eyes or shoes or whatever—

MARILYN MINTER: [Inaudible]—want a mouth. All those Wangechi mouths—everybody wants a Wangechi mouth.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—wouldn't you and wouldn't the dealer trust that you could just go ahead and change and do what you want because—

MARILYN MINTER: One dealer does. My main dealer does. She says, "Do whatever you want." She totally trusts

me. Yes, but it took a while.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's still on 94—

MARILYN MINTER: Salon 94. They just give me carte blanche. They totally trust me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, it's been proven that you can be trusted.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but my new dealers are worried all the time. So I just have to—I understand what their fears are. It's a really rotten, volatile economy. And I'm not going to be the prima donna. I'm going to survive. I'm going to keep making art. I can do that. It's like those actors who make one for themselves and one for the commercial. They can make a *Tower Heist*, and then they can make a *Something about Mary*, you know what I mean?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Tell me about commissions. We haven't talked about that yet. When did you start doing commercial photography—

MARILYN MINTER: Only one.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—to earn money?

MARILYN MINTER: Commercial photography started when I started shooting again. This one art director said, "This is amazing," and he—my very first—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's in 1995?

MARILYN MINTER: No—

JUDITH RICHARDS: '99?

MARILYN MINTER: '99. And my very first commercial job was shooting for Versace. Isn't that wild? I shot—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you have an agent that got you that job?

MARILYN MINTER: Nope.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you have an agent now?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes. Yes, I didn't have an agent for a long time. Well, he was my agent, I guess, but he thought I was so rarified that he was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That nobody would want to hire you.

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, he was so rarified, he thought I was better than—and I don't understand why he was such a snot to all these different magazines, because I was—for so much—in his head, what I was doing was so exotic.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is he still your agent?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, no.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: He's moved to France. No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So how did you get an agent?

MARILYN MINTER: It's funny, because—this is going to kill you, but I've never even looked at my books, because that's another thing. They want something else. There was a girl that took over for him.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was his name?

MARILYN MINTER: His name was Ian—what was that guy's name that did *Issue*?

MR. OLANDER: Jan.

MARILYN MINTER: Jan—

MR. OLANDER: Jan Dijkers.

MARILYN MINTER: Jan Dijkers, yes.

MR. OLANDER: Jan-Willem Dijkers.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he's got a great eye.

JUDITH RICHARDS: D-I-C-K?

MARILYN MINTER: D-I-C-K—

MR. OLANDER: K-K, right?

MARILYN MINTER: D-I-C-K-E-R-S.

MR. OLANDER: I think it's K-K, because—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it is. It's Dutch. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: D-I-K-K-E-R-S.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he's fluent in Dutch and French.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So he was the agent, and then the woman who took over for him became your agent?

MARILYN MINTER: Became my agent, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what's her name?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, do you remember our last day before Shea?

MR. OLANDER: What?

MARILYN MINTER: What was my last agent's name?

MR. OLANDER: Ultra was the company.

MARILYN MINTER: Ultra, yes.

MR. OLANDER: What was the girl's name?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, it's Okay. So you have a different agent now?

MARILYN MINTER: He actually—he took over—yes, she didn't even have to go anywhere. They approached her. They said, "I hear you're closing. Can we have Marilyn?" And the next agency I had is—what it is, it's Neville Wakefield and Shea Spencer. They only have artists: Collier Schorr, me, Ryan McGinley, Roe Ethridge, David Benjamin Sherry—that's it—Alex Praeger—all artists. So these are all people that don't need the work. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you first started and you got that first Versace job, you did that because you needed the money.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I desperately needed the money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It wasn't because you just wanted to do that.

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, I was so broke. I had no money. I used to rent this space out in the summer and move upstate.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And so—

MARILYN MINTER: I had to borrow money from my husband to pay Johan.

MR. OLANDER: Grilled cheese every day.

MARILYN MINTER: We had grilled cheese sandwiches every day—for how many years?

MR. OLANDER: I don't know. It was a couple of years when we had nothing but grilled cheese.

MARILYN MINTER: Grilled cheese sandwiches. I had no money. At one time you went from \$14 to 12 [dollars]. [Laughs.]

MARILYN MINTER: I know. Thank you for that. [They laugh.] But I made it up to you.

MR. OLANDER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, so you gradually took on more assignments?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I didn't get that many. I was still very messy. It was—even when I did a commercial job, they'd turn it into an art project.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean?

MARILYN MINTER: I thought it was the face of the future. They turned it into some weird dream-like thing. They thought it was really beautiful. This was in New York Magazine. New York Magazine was—an editorial, you could make no money. They paid me for—most people don't make a dime on editorial, but I shot here, so they paid me for this place to by my studio. So I would make \$5,000 per job, and I desperately needed that \$5,000. Yes, it got me through—I used to pay bills, like, "Okay, we'll pay this one this month," that kind of thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right, right, right.

MARILYN MINTER: This is a recent memory.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like you enjoyed that Versace job besides—

MARILYN MINTER: I loved every one of them except for one. And then I said I'm not doing it anymore on this one.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What kind of jobs—

MARILYN MINTER: Because nobody ever takes the good photos. Only one place—Allure took everything I wanted them to take. I love working for Allure. They just give me carte blanche, and they never retouched. I'm the first artist they never retouched. There was a big editorial fight over it. They didn't erase anything. They didn't fix the model's teeth. They didn't take any of the sweat away. They didn't fix the smears. The art director loves me, but there's very few things I can do for them. I turn down almost every job because I have no time, because it's always editorial.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is it always time?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it's always editorial.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, editorial. So do you prefer the—what do you call the opposite of editorial—

MARILYN MINTER: Advertising?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: I don't get any.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you did the Jimmy Choo.

MARILYN MINTER: That's one a year. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you did the Tom Ford.

MARILYN MINTER: Both of those were good things to do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The Jimmy Chu was many, many years ago, you said.

MARILYN MINTER: Two years—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, two years ago.

MARILYN MINTER:—it was at least two years ago.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, so how did the Tom Ford come about?

MARILYN MINTER: Because he loved my paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did he see them?

MARILYN MINTER: In the Whitney Biennial. And he was all of a sudden—the Tom Ford thing was a total fluke. He had—the first time he was going to operate as a clothes seller, because he left to write movies. He left, and it was this big scene when he left. I lost a gallery almost because of that, because I think one of the main reasons that I didn't show at Emmanuel Perriton is because I did the Tom Ford campaign. And Pinault owns—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Francois Pinault, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MARILYN MINTER:—yes, owns Gucci. And Tom walked on Gucci. So the fact that I worked with Tom Ford was—but it's not like—Tom Ford's boyfriend is a real art lover, and he goes to see shows all the time. And he talked him into it. He said, "Let's do something totally new."

Well, anyway, it was a big mistake on Tom Ford's part, because everything I do is antithetical to this total control freak. And so he liked—my feet—his shoes, \$16,000 splashing in mud. But I gave him a lot of photos; he only used half of them. I couldn't stand it. They just were not commercial at all for him, and they weren't messy, and the model had freckles, and I wouldn't let him take them off, and her lipstick was smeared.

Yes, but now we actually tell people that he hired me and won his first fashion line. But it was a mistake on his part. But he paid me. God, the money is so stupid—stupid money for two weeks' work. Yes, that's one of the reasons people get seduced into doing commercial work, because it's so easy, the money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and it's so much money. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you continued to do it when good projects come up?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, nobody asks me. Really. They all love me though, but no one would ever hire me. I don't want them anyway. But it's not like they ask. They just copy me, because I clean it up—

JUDITH RICHARDS: How do you mean?

MARILYN MINTER:—they clean it up. I can show you my—what is it called—we have a whole drawer of, let's say borrowed—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Copycat?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, from commercials.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, there's—

MARILYN MINTER: Because these poor commercial photographers have to come up with something every week.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Well, you see on TV all the time ads where you say, "Oh, that's that artist; that's this artist." You can see it.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes. No, I get copied, because they clean it up. I'm way too messy and uncontrolled—but Tamara Mellon wouldn't do it—and, I mean, I did it because I knew I could get a lot of—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sorry, who was that?

MARILYN MINTER: Jimmy Choo is Tamara Mellon.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Tamara—

MARILYN MINTER: Mellon, M-E-L-L-O-N. She wanted to hire an artist. She hired Nan Goldin to do the last campaign. Although when I did it, I did it—see, they used Nan's name. I wouldn't let them use my name. And they signed a whole bunch of contracts saying they wouldn't use my name, and then they did it anyway. That pamphlet you said—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—it says "by Marilyn Minter." They weren't supposed to do that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what did you do?

MARILYN MINTER: Nothing, because it's, like, going to court would have been just a pain in the ass, but they did it anyway. But with Nan's, it's every time the ad is out it says Nan Goldin. They didn't do that. They just did it for their booklet.

Never—it didn't hurt me. Everyone who knows anything knows I did—I just didn't want my name on it. Terry Richardson shoots all the time, and his name's not on it.

[End of Disc]

JUDITH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Marilyn Minter in her home in New York City on November 30th, 2011, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc three.

A couple more questions about commissions. Tell me about—

MARILYN MINTER: The only commission we've ever done is the one for Peter Brant, Stephanie Seymour. That's the only real commission.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about the—

MARILYN MINTER: People begged me for—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about the Pamela Anderson project?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, people begged me for Pams—begged, like begged—and this one guy—I really like him—so we call it the "last fucking Pam ever." And that's the one that you saw Agata working on.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Because I put it off and put it off and put it off. I really like this guy. He was obsessed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, I saw that most of those Pamela Anderson paintings were from '07—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—but then there was suddenly one from '09, so that was somebody who—

MARILYN MINTER: Begged and begged and begged and begged.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So now there's another one.

MARILYN MINTER: Now there's one more. But it's called "the last fucking Pam ever." [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: But tell me about that project. So you're not calling it a commission. How did that come up?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it came up because -- I liked this collector. He's a really nice guy. I really like him. He's been just really good to me. And he really, really wants it. He's obsessed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, I—sorry—how did the initial project start with her?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, with her, starting at the very beginning.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, because I'm sitting in my studio in the summer right after the biannual.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the biannual was '06, the summer '06.

MARILYN MINTER: '06. And I got a phone call from Pamela Anderson—and this is my studio upstate—and she said that—and she was about to get married to Kid Rock. And David LaChapelle, who liked my work, wanted to commission me to make a painting of Pam and he was going to give it to her for a wedding present. And I thought, oh, that'll be great, because I love working with icons. And I knew right away I was going to take off all her makeup, because I knew she was an animal rights activist. And you don't know this, but I am too. And I'm a vegetarian, but I'm sort of a hypocrite because I wear leather. But I haven't worn fur or eaten meat in 23 years now, 24 years.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you eat fish?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I do, but I can just barely get it down. But I eat it because I know I have to eat some

protein. I mostly eat rice and beans, yes.

And what happened—so then the wedding split up—the marriage split up. They got married and then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, they got married.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And they split up. And I never had time to do it anyway, because I was working on my show. And every time I tried to do a show—this was all good news—I was supposed to do a show with Jeanne, and then they—the Whitney took all the paintings for the Whitney Biennial. I was supposed to do a show with Jeanne in 2003. And the SF MoMA took all the paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: For the retrospectives, '05.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And the SF MoMA really started the whole thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I want to go—let's finish Pamela Anderson.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then I want to go back to both of those shows.

MARILYN MINTER: Okay. Pamela Anderson, and then after—so—[name inaudible]—was—came over, saw my show at Jeanne's—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Bice Crugier?

MARILYN MINTER: [Name inaudible.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, I'm sorry, yes.

MARILYN MINTER: From Parkett. She came over and she asked me to do the show. And I said, "Yes." And I said, "Oh, I know, I'll put Pamela Anderson as a centerfold in Parkett. And I thought that would be really funny, because—

JUDITH RICHARDS: You hadn't shot it yet.

MARILYN MINTER: No. But I knew she wanted me to do it. So I had to bargain away—so I made another Pam because Tony Shafrazi, who knew her—because he was the one that set this whole up, because he was showing David LaChapelle at that time—and he set it up, as long as I sold him a painting and gave him 40 percent off all the photos. So I really just sold my soul.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean all the photos?

MARILYN MINTER: All the photos that came out of the shoot.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Regardless of how many, he'd get 40 percent?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, off. That's how he was getting paid. And so since I told him—this is what I did find out. I made the first Pam painting, and I offered it to him first because I said, "You get first dibs on the first one." And it was—we asked for \$300,000 because we knew people that were offering us that. And he said—this is the first person that said to me, "Women artists don't make that kind of money." He said, "This is a \$150,000 painting." And Jeanne says, "But we can get—don't be ridiculous." And he actually said on the phone, "You're never going to get that amount. You're never going to get that amount." And I said, "Well, I don't know, Sandy Heller, who's a big consultant"—who's actually been really great to me—"said he has people that will buy it." And, I mean, there was just—everybody wanted it. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: How many paintings did you do initially?

MARILYN MINTER: I think about five.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's all?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. That's all there is.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you shot it in your studio here?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I went to L.A., shot everything in a hotel, the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: With your assistants?

MARILYN MINTER: With just Johan, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And she was—

MARILYN MINTER: She was lovely.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—perfectly happy to do whatever you wanted to do?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, she let me cut her bangs. I made her look beautiful. Took all her makeup off. And I knew that there was this really empathetic human being there, because people who are animal activists can't stand animals being hurt. It just kills them. And I thought, this is a really kind person, and nobody knows that. She's also really smart. She works with artists all the time. She worked with Jeff Koons, and she worked with Richard Prince, and she worked with Ed Ruscha. And she worked with also—just recently Mel Ramos.

So I was one of a good, healthy lineup.

JUDITH RICHARDS: First woman.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh—pardon? Yes, oh, always.

JUDITH RICHARDS: All the others were men.

MARILYN MINTER: I was the first woman that Peter Brant ever commissioned to do Stephanie. Yes, that was the first time anyone had—and I said, "Well, I'll do the best one." And I think he resented me saying that to this day actually. He's someone who's an unreconstructed—women are—he's never had a mother that worked. He's my age. He's just not used to women being in power. I can see that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did he like the work that you made?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he gave me—I said, "Can I have an extra 20,000 [dollars]?" And he gave it to me, because it took me nine months to do. And he said, yes, he liked it enough to give me an extra 20,000 [dollars].

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have other people commissioned you in that way? Would you accept the commission?

MARILYN MINTER: They ask me all the time, but no, I never have. I just want to do part of that pantheon of stars. [They laugh.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who he had commissioned for Stephanie.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes—and everybody—Maurizio Cattelan and—he did a trophy wife; he made a trophy, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And Clemente and David Salle and blah, blah, blah, blah.

JUDITH RICHARDS: One more commercial question—

MARILYN MINTER: Sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about this new biggest magazine ever, *Visionaire*?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, *Visionaire*. It's funny, isn't it?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I heard about it, I saw that you were a participant, but I couldn't find an image of what you have in it. I saw the list of names.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the image I have in it—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how did that start? How did you—

MARILYN MINTER: They just asked me to be participating in their next *Visionaire*. I always wanted to be in *Visionaire*. So I didn't have anything brand-new when they asked me. So I said, "Well, let's just use"—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did they ask you for something brand-new?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Or that just was what you wanted?

MARILYN MINTER: No, asked me for something brand-new that no one's seen. So I gave them the reference for the baby painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean "the reference"?

MARILYN MINTER: The image I made in Photoshop. And then we had it rescanned, because usually you can't—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that isn't actually a work of art; it's something you made specifically for *Visionaire*?

MARILYN MINTER: It's in there, and it's called *The Reference for a Painting* that's 10 foot high. Yes. But I figured, they have the giant magazine; they should have a giant baby. [Laughs.] I basically said that. That's what I was thinking.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you pleased with the result?

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Have you see it?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but it's really hard to turn the pages.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I saw a picture of people turning the pages. It's about 5-by-7 feet.

MARILYN MINTER: It's 5-by-7 feet, exactly.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It takes two people to turn each page.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, to not ruin them, yes. But they wanted to beat the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's editorial work.

MARILYN MINTER: No, that's no work at all that you get paid for.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you don't get paid for it?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no. All editorial, you don't get paid at all. I got paid just because I used this place as my studio. They had to pay for a studio. That's the only reason I made any money.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In other projects.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes. Because I had no money. The Allure, I did for fun. And I got payments out of it, because whenever I was shooting with freckles, I would have the model put bubblegum in her mouth and blow bubbles. [Laughs.] But I work with the same model all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You do?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. She's covered in freckles. She's Brazilian and Scottish. Her name is Cintia Dicker, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, you told me—Cintia Dicker.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she's the most beautiful human being I've ever seen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: She lives in New York?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So let's go back to the Whitney Biennial. Actually no, before that, the retrospective, SF MoMA, 2005.

MARILYN MINTER: SF MoMA—that was—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's a huge event in your career.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, it was.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did that happen? Who was the curator? Remind me.

MARILYN MINTER: His name was Josh Shirkey. And he saw my work at the fair.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which fair?

MARILYN MINTER: The Armory.

JUDITH RICHARDS: New York?

MARILYN MINTER: And he remembered this collector had a painting of mine of—he had 14th Street drag queen with scars and lipstick. And he remembered it. And then he just thought, you know, this is an interesting artist, and then they just asked me to send them a whole bunch of work.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Actual work or images?

MARILYN MINTER: Pictures, images of work. And they asked Fredericks Freiser, who had done a photo show of me. And then Roberta Smith wrote this really glowing review.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Of that show at Fredericks Freiser.

MARILYN MINTER: And it had a star up. And the director of SF MoMA at that—she was a curator, I think, Madeleine Grynsztejn, saw the show and decided—and so he said, "Let's show her. Let's give her a one-person show." [Laughs.] Just like that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So would that—which turned out to be your first retrospective—

MARILYN MINTER: Since the Everson Museum.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how did you feel about the fact that you're a New York artist and this first retrospective is in San Francisco?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, it's amazing, huh. It was amazing. And then everything sold that was in the show. People were buying things out of the show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which show was that?

MARILYN MINTER: At SF MoMA. Yes, my dealer, which was Carmen Hammons at the time, David Hammons' daughter. She was Carmen's director.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Carmen?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. She went out to San Francisco, and the museum bought a painting. So she just negotiated it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was there a possibility that show could travel?

MARILYN MINTER: There was no money for it to travel. Yes, I don't think it was—still people couldn't believe I was at—people asked, "Where's your next show?" I said, "SF MoMA." And they go, "Come on, where's your next show?" It was like that—SF MoMA! Then I have no money, so I decided since—I wanted to advertise it. So I asked all the dealers that I worked with, which is people all over the world, to give me \$500. And they did, and then we took an ad out in *Artforum*. That's why—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So SF MoMA didn't take out an ad?

MARILYN MINTER: They designed it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But they needed to have money to support it?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, to buy the ad.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So I got all the dealers—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So it sounds like you were very pleased with the show.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes, it was good.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you involved in any way in decisions about what would be included?

MARILYN MINTER: I thought I was, but, no, really he was the first curator I'd ever met that knew exactly what he wanted to do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And what about the installation? Were you consulted and involved in that?

MARILYN MINTER: Beautiful. No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you just walked in?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I was there when they were hanging it, but I didn't really have much to say, because he had his ideas; he knew exactly what he wanted to do. Yes, it was very cool. I worked with him, though. We hung some photos in a room that only was used as storage. So we actually ended up having photos and paintings, which is what I wanted. At that time, I was constantly doing that.

And then I was about to have a show at Jeanne's. And that's when the Whitney called—Chrissie Iles called and said, "Would you like—let's add this show in April." And then they called in September, said, "This is Chrissie Iles." And I said, "Hi." And she said, "Would you like to be in the Whitney Biennial?"

JUDITH RICHARDS: Really? She said it that way?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And I said, "Don't you want to come and see my work?" She says, "We know your work." [Laughs.] It was like that. I said, "Sure." And then it was just this constant barrage of phone calls, one more beautiful than the other. "Can we use your image as our ad?" "Can we use your image as the cover of the catalog?" "Can we use your images as an invitation to send out"—the invitation to their patrons or whatever you call the people that go to—members. Members.

And then I think the last one was, "Can we use your art to be the banners on the street?" And it was just, like, I was the poster child for the Whitney Biennial. So I owe Chrissie Iles and Philippe Vergne my whole career.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Obviously you were pleased with that. Did you get involved in the installation of your paintings for that show?

MARILYN MINTER: No one even let you come in, because I was a painter. The only reason I got to come in the building at all—all these people were there installing, like Urs Fischer and people that did installations. But they had a painting with something stuck to it, and they didn't want to pull it off, some kind of tape. So they asked me to come and do it. So that's the one—of course I jumped around and looked everywhere, but, yes, I didn't—this is a true story; this is pretty embarrassing—they used one of the paintings as the cover of the catalog, and then they forgot to pick up the painting. So it was really hard to get through.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean it was hard to get through?

MARILYN MINTER: It's hard to get through to the Whitney, because there was all these artists saying that, "I want to have this in instead," and so they just ignored them. So it was like—somebody came over here for a reason from the Whitney, and I said, "She's only saying they're going to pick up these two paintings, but this one's on the cover of the catalog." And all of a sudden, it was like a bell went off. She said, "Oh, my God." So she was an assistant curator, and so she said, "We're really sorry," and they came and got it. It almost wasn't in the show, because they weren't getting back in touch with me. And she already had the whole thing planned. So I ended up having a painting in the lobby. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, my God. I see. The installation was planned without the key work.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, having it in the lobby might have been a good solution.

MARILYN MINTER: Every time you walk down the stairs, it's the first thing you saw. You know, so it was all these—that's why I believe in this happy accident, because my whole life has been like that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What about—so after the biennial, then I think—

MARILYN MINTER: Parkett [ph].

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, no, at the same time was the Creative Time.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was before the biennial, wasn't it?

MARILYN MINTER: That was planned before. That was happening before the biennial, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And who was it at Creative Time who had the idea to ask you this? Anne Pasternak?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I gave her the idea, I want to do these billboards. She said, "Okay, do them." And then I shot it. And then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So she agreed that you would do it without knowing what the images would be? Or she knew —

MARILYN MINTER: I tried to explain to her what they were going to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Similar to current—other work she had seen?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I don't know if I had anything like it yet. I don't think I did. But I showed her immediately after I shot it. I showed it to her immediately.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, were those images related to the Tom Ford?

MARILYN MINTER: No, Tom Ford was after that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Tom Ford was 2006. This was 2005.

JUDITH RICHARDS: '07, yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Or 2007—Tom Ford—see, I have bad—I don't even know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, that's all right.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, this is how all the numbers get fucked up.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And the Creative Time was '06. I didn't know how much in advance you did the Tom Ford before it came out.

MARILYN MINTER: Creative Time was about a week before the Whitney Biennial. It was that close, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you pick which images would go on which billboards or three different—

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Because we got all donated billboards. And they're all the long, skinny ones that nobody wants.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean the wide?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the long skinny ones, wide and the long skinny ones, tall.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So I had to elongate everything, because I was using 35-millimeter film. So that's when I first started using Photoshop. And I saw the Photoshop job they did, the people that do Photoshop, and they were much worse than what we did. So then I realized we're better, because we did it thinking, well they're going to make it so much better. And they didn't, so I had to go in and say, "You've got to do this, this, this and this."

JUDITH RICHARDS: I mean, it isn't simple to elongate something, still have the image readable the way you want it to be readable.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, no, you could do it because it was empty space. So I could do it, but I wanted to at least have some kind of a—I wanted some movement in the puddle; I didn't want this, like, desert. I wanted it to be wet and movement. So I made them do stuff that we did here first.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What was—once you saw them up, was it—

MARILYN MINTER: I was disappointed.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I was going to say, were you surprised in a happy way or—

MARILYN MINTER: I was disappointed because I had to alter the image with Photoshop to elongate it. But in

retrospect, it really looked good, but I was just super critical. And that was—I didn't have any perspective till after it was over. I look at the installations, and I think it was pretty good, yes. Yes, it looked pretty good.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did you get very positive feedback from people?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, yes. Yes, all the blogs everywhere—*Cool Hunter*, yes, and all kinds of things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: *Cool Hunter*?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, there's these blogs that look for cool things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ah, I see. Did any interesting things happen because of those billboards?

MARILYN MINTER: Of the billboards?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you think—that related directly to the billboards? [Phone rings.]

MARILYN MINTER: You want to pause? [Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: We're talking about the billboards. And I said, were there—what happened as a result? Do you know of anything? And you were going to talk about—

MARILYN MINTER: Okay, Jerry Seinfeld bought a painting out of the Whitney because of the billboards, because he was driving up 9th Avenue, and he said, "What are those? What"—and that's just what I wanted. What else happened? Matthew Barney, when I met him, has told me how much he liked the billboards. And that was really impressive to me. I would walk down the street in Chelsea, and people would say, "Great billboards," things like that.

And I wanted to do more. I always liked doing billboards, but no one's ever offered again. So that was—yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I want to—you've spoken in passing about this show, that show, and I want to talk about your relationships with galleries as a—

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I'll tell you something interesting that happened.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, good.

MARILYN MINTER: This is the most interesting thing. Anne Pasternak was my generation. And so then when I reemerged—she really didn't believe in me; she wrote me off.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How do you know that?

MARILYN MINTER: She told me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: She said that to you?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and she said that she made a mistake and that she really—she thinks I'm a terrific artist. And that means a lot to me, that someone would say something like that. She's the only person that ever actually said, "I really didn't think you had anything going, and I really apologize," because she really didn't want to do the billboards. And Jeanne talked her into it.

And that was one of those things that I learned—I learned that you just can't be mad at people because they change their minds. You just can't write people off because they diss you, because things change, like, on a dime. And so don't hold grudges, because it's like eating poison and waiting for the other person to die—[[laughs]]—resentments.

There's a couple of bridges that I burned, though, in my life, because I decided this is just not worth it; these are just too bad, these people are just too bad, they were too mean, something like that. And you know what? It's funny. I can't think of one person that I feel that way about, but I know there was one or two in the past I'm not going to let go of.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: We talked in passing yesterday about your shows at Gracie Mansion with the collaborations you did with Christophe Kohlhoffer. And then that collaboration ended, and you didn't show with her anymore.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, she thought Christophe—just like everybody else—thought that Christophe was the power and I was just the girlfriend. And everyone thought that actually. They thought he was the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: That must have been difficult.

MARILYN MINTER: Drove me crazy. Drove me crazy. Yes, but I couldn't prove anything, because he was a famous artist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So after you and he split up and you weren't doing that collaboration anymore and you started your own work again, you had the show at Nicola Jacobs, we talked about, and we talked about, obviously, the Max Protetch show.

MARILYN MINTER: I'll tell you one thing about the Nicola Jacobs show. They came to see my work because they saw it somewhere—I forget where—and I went into the bathroom, and I walked out of the bathroom, and she offered me a show. [Laughs.] And that never happened before, that it was that quick someone offered me a show. I had the Nicola Jacobs show before I had the White Columns show. Yes, that was interesting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then the Simon Watson and the Max Protetch—and you mentioned Jeanne Meyers [Myers Bloom Gallery, Santa Monica, California -MM]—

MARILYN MINTER: That was the first gallery that dropped me—

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm trying—

MARILYN MINTER:—after I did the *Porn* was—[inaudible].

JUDITH RICHARDS: Was that a difficult—

MARILYN MINTER: Very painful, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I'm trying to ask you what your approach has been to getting gallery representation, but it sounds as if most of these things just came to you. Is that a wrong impression?

MARILYN MINTER: No, this is exactly what it was like. Everybody I wanted didn't want me. And everybody—but there were people that wanted me always. I just thought I was better than the gallery. And so the best of the lot that wanted me was Frederick Freiser, but I knew I was never going to show there.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But then you did.

MARILYN MINTER: No, but I knew I was never going to be their artist.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Be represented, you mean.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and I said I'd do a photo show there. And I did it with all photos and two paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That was '03.

MARILYN MINTER: '03, yes. But at that time, I was already showing with Jeanne.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did that relationship with Jeannie [ph] start?

MARILYN MINTER: I never talked about Xavier LaBoulbenne leaving town in the middle of the night in 2000 and taking—and owing me \$30,000.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, you didn't.

MARILYN MINTER: But he—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, I see—yes, you had shows there at '97, '98 and 2000.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, two shows. And then he owed everybody in town money, including his artists. And he just literally left town in the middle of the night. And I believed him, because he was gifted at telling me exactly what I wanted to hear. And I was in deep denial. But the one thing he did do was he turned people onto my work. He turned Thaddaeus Ropac onto my work. That's the first time—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who?

MARILYN MINTER: Thaddaeus Ropac—he [owned -MM] Thaddaeus Ropac. And then after that, he turned—and

also Jeanne Greenburg, who used to work for Deitch Projects— he turned her onto my work, because she'd written me off and then saw the work and said, "She's pretty good."

So how I got into Jeanne's [ph] was my girlfriend, who was always my real supporter was Laurie Simmons— supported me during the *Porn* days too.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did—

MARILYN MINTER: We had the same lab.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—just to take a side—how did you meet Laurie? Do you remember when?

MARILYN MINTER: Jimmy De Sana—yes, Jimmy De Sana. Jimmy and I were friends. And Laurie and Jimmy—Laurie and Jimmy were friends, and she got his estate. And she was there at the very end when he died. And she did the memorial.

And so we were just friends with Jimmy. I went all the way to the end, too. It was my first friend that I had that died of AIDS. And it was hard for me. I didn't know I could do it, because I was scared, because I'd never known anyone who was dying. People I know just died; they didn't know they were dying. Now I know somebody else who's dying right now. And I'm just not going to abandon them. I'm going all the way to the end. And that's when I made this decision.

And because of that, Jimmy and I got kind of close. And then one day before he died—or after he died, I was in his will. So Laurie was the executor of his will. So then we just started talking, and we really hit it off. So we had the same lab, and she saw my photos in the lab—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which lab was that?

MARILYN MINTER: Duggal, which is a nightmare place.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: And she was showing at Metro. And she was doing a film project with Jeanne, and she said, "Well, I'll talk to Jeanne about your work," and she did. And Jeanne came over and bought some photos, and then she was talking—and then—it was, like, at that point, she was going to be—

JUDITH RICHARDS: The C-prints—the large C-prints.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, large C-prints. They were on the wall. And then she also bought a painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So at that point, you weren't represented by anybody else?

MARILYN MINTER: No. Galleries that I wanted didn't even call me back. Jack Pearson [ph] tried to get me into Anton Kern, and he turned me down. He said I was a really good artist, though, but not for him. And it's true; I'm not for him. But he did say I was a really good artist. That meant a lot to me. But, I mean, I couldn't get anybody to come—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were approaching people—

MARILYN MINTER: I was this close to getting into David Zwirner, because the director loved me. And he turned me down.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you were approaching people or through intermediaries approaching people?

MARILYN MINTER: This is what happened. If I got them into the studio, they offered me a show. I made enough work when Xavier closed, but nobody wanted to come over. And so if I—if they got—if I got them to come over, then they offered me a show. But people would come—they'd say at the front door, "I can't stay long." And then that's—like, Paul Morris, all these different galleries.

But I couldn't get the galleries I wanted to show me, and I couldn't even get them to return my phone call. I finally got Andrea Rosen over, and she told me how great the work was and said, "I'm thinking of giving you a"— it was a small room she had. And I said, "Great, I'd love that." And then she said, "How old are you?" And I said, "53." And she goes, "Oh, I didn't know that." And I said—anyway, all talk of giving me a show evaporated when I told her how old I was.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is that the first time that happened?

MARILYN MINTER: Overtly, yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did she explain herself?

MARILYN MINTER: No, she said she had a lot of trouble with John Coplans; I didn't know you were that old.

JUDITH RICHARDS: John Coplans was much older.

MARILYN MINTER: I know. But for her, she was young, and 53 was ancient.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That wasn't that long ago—10 years ago. She wasn't that young.

MARILYN MINTER: She was pregnant.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, I see—yes, Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: [Laughs.] Yes, she was pregnant when she came up here. Was it 10 years ago? Yes, it was probably 10 years ago. I was very close—the biggest disappointment was Bella at Zwirner really wanted David to show me. But he always—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Bella—what's Bella's last—

MARILYN MINTER: Bella—I'll find out in a second. [Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Bella Hubert?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, H-U-B-E-R-T.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Did David come to the studio?

MARILYN MINTER: No, he saw my work at Basel from my Swedish dealer. I always had galleries in Europe. I had Thaddaeus Ropac and—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Was there a difference in the response to your work in Europe—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, the—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—either from the dealers or the public, the critics?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, they liked it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: More than here?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, actually—yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Earlier than here?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, when I was at Basel, I got a good response everywhere. Everyone who saw the work said, "This is really good work."

JUDITH RICHARDS: What year was that? Do you remember?

MARILYN MINTER: 2002—were at Basel—they always took me to Basel. My Swedish dealers—that's why I'm never going to leave them.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's the—

MARILYN MINTER: Andrehn Schiptjenko. They showed me when no one would even come over.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And so you still show there.

MARILYN MINTER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: And do they bring you to Basel still, or does Jeanne?

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, photos only, because they can't—since my dealers always pick for production, they just don't have the money for the painting's production.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: But I give them photos, and I give them videos.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Can the photos go rolled, and they can—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And how are your photos mounted?

MARILYN MINTER: Face mounted.

JUDITH RICHARDS: With plexi?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, that's exactly how we do it. Yes, no, I'm loyal to the people that—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So Jeanne saw your work, recommended it—was recommended to you. She saw it. And did she then—

MARILYN MINTER: Then she came over to look at a bunch of paintings, and it was right after SF MoMA offered me a show. And I told her. And then she offered me a show. And then we were looking at the schedule, and she said, "When do I have room?" And then we set up a show, and then September came along and the—no, SF MoMA took the work that I was going to make for Jeanne, yes. And then I was going to do a show, and then the Whitney took the work that I was going to make for Jeanne.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And that was early '06. So finally later in '06, you had the show.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But obviously she was working for you that year because you said she convinced Anne Pasternak—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—to have you do the—

MARILYN MINTER: She had already been working for me. Just—I never could get a show together for her because museums kept taking it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then it was—

MARILYN MINTER: That's like the best reason in the world, right?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right. And then—so then you had a show in '09 and the one that's still up right now.

MARILYN MINTER: What do you mean?

JUDITH RICHARDS: At Salon 94.

MARILYN MINTER: My last show was 'til 2009 and then this show.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So I have three altogether.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So—and what about Regen Projects?

MARILYN MINTER: Regen offered me a show—

JUDITH RICHARDS: They just called you—or through Jeanne.

MARILYN MINTER: No, Jeanne'd [ph] been working on it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So she wanted to have this affiliation with L.A.?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Well, yes. I get offered a lot of places but I can't make enough work for a lot of galleries. So I can only have three galleries. I really can only have two galleries. But now that my operation is up and running, maybe we can have three.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So the first priority is Salon 94.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Then the Swedish—the Stockholm?

MARILYN MINTER: No. The second project is Regen.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: I can only have three galleries that do paintings.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what's the third that does paintings?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, we're negotiating right at the moment.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So we can't say. [They laugh.]

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I'll know at the end of Miami Basel this year.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. That's something that Jeanne is—

MARILYN MINTER: Doing right now.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—doing because she wants your work to have more exposure?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, there's like art galleries in Europe who have made me offers. When I left Ropak, I could always show with Ropak, that kind of thing. But it just doesn't do me any good to show in France. And I really want to show in either—well, I don't even want to tell you, because as soon as I mentioned the town.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: So this is one of those galleries that they would show with. And so they wanted to do something, and then they're figuring out how because I don't do shows just—like, I'm a sculptor now. They have to pay for production. So then they negotiate.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, with two, even three galleries and art fairs and this and that—

MARILYN MINTER: That's why we have to have those pieces of paper, because then we figure out how much it costs to make each work.

JUDITH RICHARDS: But it sounds like there's a lot of pressure.

MARILYN MINTER: Lots of pressure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yet you're excited about this opportunity.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you're going to deal with the pressure.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I like it. I don't mind it. I like it. When you make art, it's just exhilarating.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And do you leave all the details about who's getting what to Jeanne?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but it's—yes, and it's really—I have to, because there's huge fights about it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sure. It's money.

MARILYN MINTER: So I'm staying out of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So she negotiates and deals with all that.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and there's fights over how much things are, all kinds of things.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You mean sale prices?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When you do have a show with Jeanne, are you involved with picking the image for the announcement or any other kind of—

MARILYN MINTER: She trusts me.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you do; she asks you and you do?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Nowadays I do what I want, and she's like—but there was a time when she made all the decisions. But she has moments of brilliance when she comes in and says, "Blah, blah," and all of a sudden it makes so much sense. Like, she said, "Why don't you do a freckle room?" So for *Frieze*, I made a whole room with freckles, paintings of freckles. And Maja Hoffman bought a painting. I have a Swiss posse now ever since the—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Sounds like it.

MARILYN MINTER:—ever since the Parkett [ph]. But my Swiss posse let me down, though, because I wasn't in the Venice Biennale. Yes, but I think she was going in a different direction, but now all of a sudden she's embraced me again.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How so?

MARILYN MINTER: She didn't come see me to look for the Venice Biennale. And now she's taking the entire body of work that's in that show and putting it in the Kunsthaus.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which show? Oh, really?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: In Zurich.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, in May.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's fantastic.

MARILYN MINTER: [Laughs.] I know.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That makes up for—[laughs]—will it still be up during Basel?

MARILYN MINTER: I've no complaints. Oh, yes. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Perfect.

MARILYN MINTER: It opens right before Basel, the 31st of May.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you usually go to Basel or—

MARILYN MINTER: Never been to Basel.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you think you'll go this time or—

MARILYN MINTER: I think I have to. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, you'll go for the opening in May, I guess. So then you'd have to go a second time.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it's not—the opening's two days later.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, but Basel opens in June. You said the show opens in May.

MARILYN MINTER: May 31st. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay. Okay. It all becomes clear.

MARILYN MINTER: It is confusing, though, if you just listen to me. [Laughs.] I'm not so clear sometimes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you put any restrictions on the sale of your work and maybe in particular the video, how it's to be shown, how many—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I mean, restrictions in the sense that I like to project them. I really love being projected. But I can't complain, because MoMA bought the video and just installed it in their lobby on a monitor.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Which video?

MARILYN MINTER: *Green Pink Caviar*. And they just installed it, and it was up for a year and a half—or year and five months, something like that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So while you preferred to have it projected, you accept that it could be—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, if they're going to do that, sure.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And any person who'd purchase it?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, the videos up until *Playpen* were unlimited edition.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean by that?

MARILYN MINTER: I mean, you could buy my video for \$40. I mean, MoMA bought the video for \$200. They bought the archival. But *Playpen* is an edition. And that's why there's only, like, three minutes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like if you made the previous videos, *Pink Green Caviar* unlimited—

MARILYN MINTER: *Green Pink Caviar*. Did you know Madonna bought it?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, yes, I want to go into that—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—but just this one thing about—technical issue—

MARILYN MINTER: We might have to do this tomorrow, because I do have to stop at 6.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like a philosophical decision to make something an unlimited edition.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it was.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why did you change your mind when it came to *Playpen*?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I'm making the *Me* video, the one in the front unlimited edition. [Laughs.] So—because—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that will be available for a nominal cost.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I've been so busy, I can't even make a box for it. But I'm doing it in concert with ArtPace Artadia, Chris Vroom.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So he's going to produce it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you know him? Have you known him for a while?

MARILYN MINTER: I'm on the board.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: Do you like him?

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I think he's a good guy. I'm trying to get him to hire a friend of mine.

JUDITH RICHARDS: To do what?

MARILYN MINTER: Be Lila. Lila's leaving. Well, Lila's gone already, but it's just not working; she was working from Boston. And she can't do it. It just doesn't work.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What's Lila's last name?

MARILYN MINTER: Kanter [sic].

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, that's right. So let's go to the *Green Pink Caviar*.

MARILYN MINTER: That has a life of its own.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, so let's talk a little bit about that. How did it—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, this was a beautiful story. Okay, I was shooting models licking up candy. I had this idea—all right, I'll start from the very beginning—I saw a shopping bag when I got off the subway on Houston Street, and it was a shopping bag, and it was a rainy day, and I just glanced at it—this is how I get all my ideas—and it was a tongue sticking out of a mouth with yellow—something yellow on the end. And then it hit me: I should make paintings with my tongue, paint on the tongue.

And then I started shooting it. And then my makeup artist—

JUDITH RICHARDS: What did you start shooting?

MARILYN MINTER: Models licking up candy.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just—

MARILYN MINTER: But it looked like paint. I had all these really bright colors.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Close-ups, so you're just seeing the bottom part of the face.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No glass in between; just—

MARILYN MINTER: No, they were licking on glass, but I hadn't gone under glass yet. No, I did eventually go under glass. But at that point in time, I only was shooting on top of the glass. Eventually I went under, but there was a lot of shots on top. Most of them were on top, which—I never ended up using it all. But while I was doing it, I had this really shitty video camera, and she just went underneath and started shooting. No, no, she shot from on top too, and then I—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Who's "she"?

MARILYN MINTER: My makeup artist. Then I took it and went underneath and shot it, and I went, "This looks great." So then I thought I'm going to have to make the video.

JUDITH RICHARDS: What do you mean, you're going to have to make the video?

MARILYN MINTER: I'll have to make a video of this.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because you were thinking of just still photographs?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. And then what happened is I got asked—this was a commission—from MAC—

JUDITH RICHARDS: MAC Cosmetics.

MARILYN MINTER:—MAC Cosmetics to do an eye for their campaign. And so I said, "OK, I'll do this if you"—no, I didn't even tell them this. I told the woman who organized it, Cary Leitzes—I said, "If you do this, I want"—they wanted to shoot me shooting it for their—some kind of ad for artists. It was me, Richard Phillips and Maria Kalman making something for them.

And I talked to their videographer, the videographer, and I said, "Well, listen, you can shoot me all you want, but when I change the makeups—model and her makeup—her eye makeup, I want the models to lick this candy off the glass and I'll just shoot that and we'll make a video between us, you and me." And he said, "Okay."

So it was a \$40,000 shoot. I mean, I paid really important models, the one I use all the time who's now a big deal; and another model with a really long tongue and huge lips. And she's Moroccan. And so every time the model changed their makeup, I'd have her lick. And then I'd shoot stills before. I'd shoot the stills ahead. And then he'd go in with the video camera. And then he and I just worked—I gave him a photo, and he edited it, and we worked on it, and *Green Pink Caviar*—the whole—and I loved it. And at this point, Anne and I were friends. And I said, "I've got another project for you." And I sent it over to—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Anne Pasternak.

MARILYN MINTER:—yes, Creative Time. And she bumped another artist and put it on the MTV billboard, and it was up for three months, because MTV loved it so much, they just kept it up. [Laughs.] And then I also had—

JUDITH RICHARDS: So this is a coproduction with you and the makeup artist—no, the videographer, who was—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, he's the—his name was Austin Linn Austin [ph].

JUDITH RICHARDS: Austin Linn Austin [ph].

MARILYN MINTER: Austin, yes. Well, it wasn't a coproduction. I produced it; I did everything. He shot it. I did the sound. I did everything. And I traded with art because I didn't have any money. I mean, my sound guys, this guy who does documentary sound—he's this abstract documentary sound guy named Josh Ralph. And he gets a hundred thousand dollars to do things, and he worked for a photo. And we became friends.

JUDITH RICHARDS: How did you pick the sound for that?

MARILYN MINTER: A friend of mine is in advertising, and I showed him a sample, and he said, "I know who should do the sound." And he has this really incredible place in the East Village called Rumor Mill. And it's this old synagogue. And it's in the middle of—you've got to go through a laundry room to get to it. But then there's this huge production house right in the middle of these apartment buildings that was an old synagogue. And he bought it. And he's a kind of cool guy. He did all the sound for *The Cove* and *Man on a Wire* and all these documentaries.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Yes. So it was on the MTV—

MARILYN MINTER: Video screen.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—video screen in Times Square.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And then how did the next piece of its life happen?

MARILYN MINTER: So I made this, and then it was up during the entire show. And then two different sources gave it to Madonna, one of them being Steven Klein, because his assistant is a big fan of mine—plus Steven Klein rips me off all the time, because he has to. I don't even regret—I don't even get mad at these people. They just have to look at artists because they have to come up with an idea a week—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER:—because the fashion world is so much nastier than the art world. And then somebody in L.A. who worked with Madonna's buyer gave it to her, too. So I got a phone call—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Because they knew she was doing this tour that had to do with candy and—

MARILYN MINTER: No. No. Just thought she should see it. Now, she'd been buying my art for a long time, since 2004 or something.

JUDITH RICHARDS: From Jeanne or before that from—

MARILYN MINTER: The first thing she bought was from Sarah Gavlak in Palm Beach. And then all the other times have been through Regen Projects, because she used to have a house in L.A. And her buyer, who was a good friend of mine at this point—I'm going to see their movie Sunday actually. Anyway, the next thing I know, I get a phone call from—used to be Steven Klein's assistant. And she said, "How would you like to sell this to Madonna?" And I said—"How much would you want to sell this to Madonna for?" And I said, "Well, how much does she want me to pay her?" [Laughs.] Because Madonna's been a hero of mine.

And then she just bought it and sent me tickets to the O2 Arena in London for the premiere. And I was right up front with—let's see, there was the Valentino posse and the Stella McCarthy posse, and then there was me and my posse.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] How big was your posse?

MARILYN MINTER: Just two people. [They laugh.] And then I found out there are all these people that follow her around, and she sends them tickets. Yes, it's like she's got worshippers. And I was talking to them when we were standing there watching everything. And then—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Were you happy the way your image looked?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, it was an out-of-body experience. I really loved it. And she was really respectful.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And—now, it's a seven—almost an eight-minute video.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And when I watched it online, I wasn't sure if she was using the entire video.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, she does, but I only took the YouTube section you saw to show it on my website, because that's all I could find. I had to take somebody's YouTube—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right.

MARILYN MINTER:—because they're not interested in shooting my video; they're interested in shooting Madonna, all her people. But they sent me some stills, and we did some Photoshop for the website. And then she's been buying work ever since. And she came over here, and I go to her house for her housewarming or for her birthday. And then we bonded over the fact we both got thrown out of our respective worlds, because she got thrown out of her world for the *Sex* book. And right now she's looking at my video—not the babies, but the words—*Me*—I might do something for the new tour.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did you do that video, the other one you're talking about, *Me*?

MARILYN MINTER: This August when I shot the Whitney.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Has that been seen anywhere?

MARILYN MINTER: It's in the street in front of—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, that one. Yes. Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. I call it *I'm Not Much But I'm All I Think About*.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I didn't know—when you referred to it as *Me*, I didn't—

MARILYN MINTER: I call it *Me*, but it's *I'm Not Much But I'm All I Think About*. And what I did was I was shooting the Whitney. And then I just took the *W* and I turned it upside-down and made a "Me." [Laughs.] And, I mean, the Whitney, when they commissioned me to make this for their gala, didn't know it—well, they did know it. They knew they were paying for my videos. And that was just something that came out of it, because I was playing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Go ahead.

MARILYN MINTER: I shot the baby video called *Playpen* and the video *I'm Not Much But I'm All I think About* and the Whitney letters falling into the mercury pool in a two-day period in August, August 1st and 2nd.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where?

MARILYN MINTER: In a commercial studio, because I'm using the Phantom camera, which is a very highly technical camera that you have to be certified to use.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Why do you have to be certified?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, it's 2,500 frames per second, and it's a million-dollar insurance policy.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So you borrow it; you go to where it is.

MARILYN MINTER: Always rent it, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I see.

MARILYN MINTER: And I worked for Darren Aronofsky—I worked with his DP, Darren Lew.

JUDITH RICHARDS: On what?

MARILYN MINTER: We was the DP on the shoot. He shot everything. But I get to direct, cut and action and all of that. It's a very specific thing.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Doing all these several video works relatively recently, do you see that as a continuing part of your work, an expanding part?

MARILYN MINTER: I'm always going to do a video, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: For every show? I mean, it's second to the paintings.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I mean, if I get an idea, only if I get an idea. Well, the painting—since it's so high-res, I can make paintings out of these stills from the video, instead of shooting with the camera. Those are all stills. Those bottom things are stills. You couldn't do that on a regular video camera, 16-millimeter or 18-millimeter.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That must be incredible to look through thousands and thousands, though, of potential stills.

MARILYN MINTER: So many. Yes—no, it's not bad, because I have different children. So I just make piles. But I've only done one, Vivi, and I'm about to do one other.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You called it a Vivi?

MARILYN MINTER: Her name is Vivian.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh.

MARILYN MINTER: She's one of my—one of my ex-students' children. And then the little boy there is my grandnephew. And the painting of Luke is my step-grandson. And his sister is right up there. That's going to end up being a painting.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You're mentioning something that I meant to ask you about, and that's how you met your husband.

MARILYN MINTER: Through Mary Heilmann.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And tell me a little about that and tell me a little about him.

MARILYN MINTER: Well, he is [not] an artist. My husband's a [financial -MM] adviser. He—no, what he was is—Mary Heilmann had—I shouldn't tell you this, but he has a lot of artists as clients. He's a stockbroker.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Financial adviser.

MARILYN MINTER: Financial adviser. And Mary Heilmann was one of them. That's the only one I can mention.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Okay.

MARILYN MINTER: But he has a lot of famous artists as—so Mary—he was her stockbroker. So I met him through Mary Heilmann. She told me he looks really good in a suit. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: She knew that would matter to you?

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I'd never dated anybody in a suit.

JUDITH RICHARDS: When did you meet him?

MARILYN MINTER: 1991—yes, in '91. I'm the first person he went out with when he left his wife. And I wasn't the cause of his breakup, because when I met him, I didn't think anything of it. He's just a married man. But he actually called me up when he moved out. And I said, "I don't want to be the first person you go out with." I tried to talk him out of it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: I said, "Go date for six months and then call me again."

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: But he was really persistent. And we ended up falling in love. We had nothing in common, other than the fact we were both sober.

JUDITH RICHARDS: That's huge.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, that's big, yes, because we both had this passion for recovery. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: He obviously has a passion for art.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, well, he doesn't have a passion like I do, but he—

JUDITH RICHARDS: No, but—

MARILYN MINTER:—what he has is a passion for design. He's building our house. He's designing it. He's designing my studio.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Now, I wanted to ask you—you relatively recently have this house in the country, or you've had one for—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, well, we've had it since 2000. We built it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Where?

MARILYN MINTER: In Cold Spring, New York. But we hired Stan Allen. At that time he was just a teacher at Columbia, and he is Polly Apfelbaum's husband, who's a friend. And we figured, well, who are you going to hire? You're going to hire a friend. But now he's the dean at Princeton. So we're building an addition.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So that house was built in 2000.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, but we bought the property in '98—right before the boom.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And do you have a studio there?

MARILYN MINTER: It's being built right now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Oh, that's the addition.

MARILYN MINTER: That's where my husband is, that's why he's not down here.

JUDITH RICHARDS: I've read about a kind of ambivalent feeling you have about working in the studio up there, but I wanted to ask you about that. Do you enjoy—if you're in the studio there, are you working alone?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, and it's heaven. Yes—no, I love working up there. But I've got such a big studio now, I'm going to have to hire somebody up there to work with me, because I'm going to be down here most of the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So what would they do up there when you weren't there?

MARILYN MINTER: They're painting while I'm not painting. Yes. Or I'm going to make big enough paintings so we both can work on it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Ah, have you ever done that?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Kind of like a dual piano?

MARILYN MINTER: All the time. Oh, yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Two people working at the same time.

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, all the time, yes. All the time. If you notice, people—like, three people work on it. See, it's one technique.

JUDITH RICHARDS: You've trained them so well—

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes, you couldn't tell—

JUDITH RICHARDS:—they're clones.

MARILYN MINTER: You couldn't tell them apart in a million years. You really couldn't. I can tell two of the finishers apart, but nobody else could.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The studio in the country—do you work there during specific periods of time?

MARILYN MINTER: Usually I work there—I try and work there Sundays and Mondays and Tuesdays. But since I've been doing the video—since August, I really haven't been able to. I tried to do this painting, but it was a failure. And I guess I stopped somewhere in the middle of the summer.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you—

MARILYN MINTER: But since August I've been really just—

JUDITH RICHARDS: And you spend most of your time in the summer there?

MARILYN MINTER: No. No, because I was getting ready for the show. I was here all the time. But once I get all these new images, I'm going to take one image and just go up there and paint for a while. And I'll be there like a week or two weeks.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Is there something about doing the whole thing yourself that is a treat, that you enjoy?

MARILYN MINTER: No, I don't want to do a whole thing myself anymore. I want to just paint the under painting. I'm really good at it. I'm better than most. And the finishing means I can't do anything but finish it. So I can't do that anymore. I've got too many demands on me. I can't finish it and still answer the phone. Yes, that's really what it comes down to.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER: So I gave up being a finisher. And it was the best decision I ever made, because then I can generate images and I can generate my vision, and there are people that paint better than me now. So why would I be a finisher anymore? No one can generate the images but me now.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And this way you—as you said, your mind can keep thinking, you can come up with new ideas —

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. Yes.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—and have them realized more quickly.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, because I think about it all the time. I'm working all the time. Everyone talks about that I never take breaks. They think I work so hard, but I have so much energy.

[Audio break.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Just one quick question about the studio again or actually about working. What do you do when you want to take a break? Is there some—

MARILYN MINTER: I have to leave town.

JUDITH RICHARDS:—like, jog or—[laughs]—or do—

MARILYN MINTER: I actually leave town. I can't stop working. I read, though. My goal in life is to sit and read— [laughs]—by the pool or the ocean.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you have a pool?

MARILYN MINTER: No.

JUDITH RICHARDS: No? No.

MARILYN MINTER: By the pool or the ocean. That's what I'd love to do.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So when you want to go away, that's the kind of vacation you take.

MARILYN MINTER: I want to do nothing. My husband wants to go to all museums—although we did take a break when I went up to this wedding, and we spent the whole day in the national museum in—I don't know the name of it, but it's in Boston, and we had such a good time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The Museum of Fine Arts.

MARILYN MINTER: Museum of Fine Arts, yes. And they had the Christian Marclay *The Clock*—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes.

MARILYN MINTER:—and here I had to stand in line, and there I just walked in and watched it for hours. It's such a masterpiece.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you plan and take trips that don't have anything to do with your art?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, absolutely.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Like, for example?

MARILYN MINTER: Like, we went to Switzerland, and we went to Vals. We drove around and went to Luxembourg, because we wanted to see Luxembourg. We drive all the time. We've gone all over Italy. We got married in Rome. Been to Naples—we drive—I get to read. He drives. I listen to music and read, and he drives. He loves to drive.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Good.

MARILYN MINTER: We've gone to Memphis. We've gone to—all the way to California. We've gone all the way to the coast of Maine, the coast of California, the Grand Tetons, the Grand Canyon.

JUDITH RICHARDS: It sounds like they're just pure enjoyment, not necessarily to be inspired for your work.

MARILYN MINTER: No, no, no, no, no, my work doesn't come anything at all from nature. [They laugh.] Nature is my refuge.

JUDITH RICHARDS: So if you take a trip, it's to see the natural world—

MARILYN MINTER: Nature and animals, yes, nature and animals. I go to zoos—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes. Not cultural venues.

MARILYN MINTER: Nature and animals. I'm a junkie for culture, so if I want to escape, I'm wild for animals.

JUDITH RICHARDS: African safari?

MARILYN MINTER: Oh, I don't think I could do it, because I couldn't stand seeing people—third-world countries just kill me, just kill me. I'm never going to go to India. I don't think I could do it. I'm getting more and more and more sensitive to the sense that I can't watch these children when they—I used to give all my money to Doctors Without Borders and UNICEF, and I just can't see the ads. I can't stand to see children being harmed or animals. It just kills me, I mean, to a point where it like ruins my day or week. The Post always has some horror story.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Yes, don't look at the Post.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, I don't even want to look at the headlines. But that's like burying my head. I can't do it. Yes. I just can't do it.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Right now in your work, what do you think are your major concerns or—and/or your major challenges?

MARILYN MINTER: To keep being good. [Laughs.]

[Audio break.]

MARILYN MINTER: [In progress]—to not be a parody of what I'm known for. I watch Malcolm Morley turn out these hideous paintings over and over. And he was such a good painter in the Brooklyn Museum show and early on. They were so good. And he's a parody of what he's known for. I don't want to be that.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Are there other artists who you feel a real kinship with, either in the past or the present in terms of your interest in the body and sexuality and in any aspect of your work that is really central, are there other artists who—

MARILYN MINTER: Well, I—this is going to—you know who I really love is Irving Penn, because he always did these close-ups. I learned more from watching him than almost anybody—Warhol, of course; and I mean, the ones that I really relate to, I liked the way he took distance from things and the kind of cynicism, sort of believe in it because I really hate sentimentality and nostalgia because I'm so sentimental and nostalgic. [They laugh.] I hate tricky art, and I hate art that tells you how to think. I want it to be some kind of mystery. I love things that—I love that transcendental moment, looking at another artist, that just makes you feel good to be alive. And that's why I do it. I try and create that for other people. I'm really happy when I make something I like.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Well, we could close here unless there's something else you'd like to say.

MARILYN MINTER: No, that's perfect.

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thank you very much.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, thank you.

[End of Disc]

MARILYN MINTER: Okay, now, I figured no one's going to hear this for years, but I think the reason I'm not afraid to talk at all is because I have to talk at AA meetings all the time. And I talk about whatever I'm thinking and feeling. So everyone are saying, "Oh, you're a natural," all the time. They want me to talk in front of their class or talk—give a lecture or—because I have this experience of having to tell the truth all the time to survive, to stay sober.

And so it's sort of no biggie to talk in front of 500 people because I'm used to it. [Laughs.] I talk to 200 all the time.

JUDITH RICHARDS: The meetings are that big that you go to?

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, sometimes. As long as you don't lie, you're fine in meetings. As long as you don't lie when you're talking like this, you're fine. If you lie, you're in deep doo-doo, because then people can smell it. I can.

JUDITH RICHARDS: [Laughs.] To continue the metaphor.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes, yes, yes, exactly. I can. You can, too, I bet. Right?

JUDITH RICHARDS: I hope so.

MARILYN MINTER: Yes. So—

JUDITH RICHARDS: Do you enjoy public speaking?

MARILYN MINTER: No, but I'm not afraid of it. No, but I talk for hours every Thursday, like six hours straight, to students. And as long as I don't lie to them, we have a good—I think that if you just put your ego aside and try to have a real dialogue, we'll have a good whatever we call this and we'll have a good session of teaching. And that's when I help the most people, when I tell the truth when I'm speaking. And we have a saying in AA that you can't keep it unless you give it away. So I just thought I should tell—that's the most important thing that I've ever done is getting sober.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And staying sober.

MARILYN MINTER: And staying sober, yes. And it's far more important than anything that's happened to my career or my husband, which is the love of my life, is my soul mate. I put that first, staying sober.

JUDITH RICHARDS: And nothing else could have happened without it.

MARILYN MINTER: Nothing. Yes. So that's what I want to add, because this is for posterity. No one's going to—I would never break my anonymity in the world. But I'm breaking it in for the Smithsonian thing. [Laughs.]

JUDITH RICHARDS: Thank you.

MARILYN MINTER: You're welcome.

[End of Interview]