



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

**Oral history interview with Alexis Smith, 2014
January 24-April 14**

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Alexis Smith on January 24, 2014. The interview took place in Venice, Calif., and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Alexis Smith has reviewed the transcript. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Alexis Smith at the artist's studio in Venice, California on January 24th, 2014 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one. Hi, Alex.

ALEXIS SMITH: Hey, Hunter.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's make sure we have this in a place where you can be heard.

MS. SMITH: Do you want me to move forward?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You can just move someplace over here —

MS. SMITH: Why don't I move this so that you can have more access here? I can take this stuff out.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm okay. I want to put this somewhere so you can be heard.

MS. SMITH: Okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You talk into this and see if that works.

MS. SMITH: Not very sturdy, that's the thing. Yeah, we need to — there we go. Can I be heard now? I don't want to get my feet moved up with the cord.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think you're being heard now.

MS. SMITH: I'm being heard?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes. Tell me your full name as it appeared on your birth certificate and when and where you were born.

MS. SMITH: My full name as I — as it appeared on my birth certificate is Patricia Anne, A-N-N-E, Smith, S-M-I-T-H. And I was born, I think, in Santa Monica, California. My parents moved around a lot, so I'm not 100 percent sure, but I think that I was actually born in Santa Monica.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year and what day?

MS. SMITH: In 19 — August 24th. Let's see, where — 1949.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And — you sound fine to me and on the recording here. And tell me about — let's just start at the beginning. Where were you — first of all, tell me your parents' names.

MS. SMITH: My father's name was — I'm getting real nervous for some reason. Isn't it weird? I'm getting — my mother's name was Lucille Doak Smith. [Lucille Lloyd Doak Smith — AS] And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How would I spell that middle name? Lucille —

MS. SMITH: Doak, D-O-A-K.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: D-O-A-K Smith.

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: And I'm getting really nervous. It's like I can't even remember my father's name. No, my father's name was Dayrel Driver Smith, D-A-Y-R-E-L. And he was a doctor.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And he started out as being a — he started out as being a medical doctor and having his own surgery. And he got drafted in World War II. And he had a rather arduous and awful job, which was to parachute into the jungle in Burma and find the shot-up GIs and patch them up and walk them out.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So he was a doctor working during the war?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, during the war. And then when my father came back, he was pretty much done with blood. And he went back to school and became a psychiatrist. He thought people were, you know, more crazy than they were sick. And so that's how I grew up on the grounds of Metropolitan State Hospital. And that was a mental hospital.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you grew up — you were born in Santa Monica, but somehow you wound — your —

MS. SMITH: Well, first, my father — after the war, my parents — my father was, like, done with blood. And then, my parents had a — had a citrus ranch for a while. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. And where was that?

MS. SMITH: Oh, I'm not sure exactly where it was. I think it was in Charter Oaks, which is sort of out by Pomona. I'm not sure of the exact name of the place. And anyway, but my mother, you know, was like, "I married a doctor," you know? You know, I wanted, you know — I wanted, you know — I wanted to stay married to a doctor. So my parents — that's when my father got the job at the Metropolitan State Hospital, which is a mental hospital in — back when California had a wonderful mental health system. And so, I lived in Metropolitan State Hospital with all the other doctors and their families. And it formed sort of like a big circle around the edges of the hospital, with doctors and their children as a buffer. And we had patients who worked in the house and worked in the, you know, in the yard and, you know, and they'd do crazy things. And sometimes the — some, you know — one of the people in the house would boil the poker chips in the coffee or something. It was kind of crazy, but it was interesting.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They would boil the poker chips in the coffee?

MS. SMITH: You know, or something weird would happen. You know, they'd have like an episode, and then they'd disappear for a while.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So —

MS. SMITH: So — but this has probably been fairly much documented that I grew up on the grounds of a mental hospital, because it was very — it has that kind of colorful artist's background quality. But you didn't know that, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I did know that.

MS. SMITH: You did know that? All right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I did. And it was — this was out in Norwalk, right?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it was in Norwalk, right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how many years were you there?

MS. SMITH: I was there until — let's see — I think about 1960. [1965 — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So from when —

MS. SMITH: And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Beginning what years, do you think?

MS. SMITH: On the hospital?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MS. SMITH: Oh, I don't really — I'm not sure I really know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Like how old —

MS. SMITH: I just spent my childhood there. So I'm guessing I spent my childhood from maybe like five or six to 10, or something like that. I'm not sure. I'm not sure what years because I was a kid. So I'm not totally sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: I remember the place really vividly. And the other thing I — but another thing that's really interesting about it for me is that — this is completely off the wall — which is that where we are now is like — we're like in the — we're like in Venice, and there's lots of street people. And, you know, there's lots of crazy people and stuff like that. And I have a real comfort with those people. And I — and the homeless people and stuff like that. And I give them money and try to shepherd them towards, you know, like services and stuff like that, because I don't have any prejudices against any of those people.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You don't —

MS. SMITH: I don't feel threatened.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You don't feel threatened by crazy people?

MS. SMITH: I don't feel — no, I don't feel — I know I have absolute sixth sense hardwired about who's dangerous and who's not.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And did you have any brothers and sisters?

MS. SMITH: I didn't.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So only child, raised — and if I remember correctly, your father was quite a bit older than your mother?

MS. SMITH: My father was nine years older than my mother. And then, so when my mother died young at really — my father was just completely blown. I think between the war and then my mother dying young, and then me kind of wanting to run away from home in the '60s and be a hippie and all that kind of stuff, I think that just did my father in. But anyway, he moved up to Oregon. And he — [started a breakfast club where he gave advice to the locals in a greasy spoon because his brother was up in Oregon, and he felt more comfortable there — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But wait, let's pause for — you were only 11 years old when your mother died, right?

MS. SMITH: I did. I was 11 years old when my mother died.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how did your mother pass away?

MS. SMITH: She died of bladder cancer.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Bladder cancer?

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, what year was that?

MS. SMITH: I'm guessing — I think it was 1961, but I'm not totally sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: It could have been 1960.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And your father was very upset, clearly?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it was terrible.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what happened after that?

MS. SMITH: Well, I lived with my father for — until — and then I went to, you know, I went to junior high school and high school. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, what — you moved away from the mental —

MS. SMITH: I moved away from the hospital, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So why did he move away from the Metropolitan State Hospital after your mother died?

MS. SMITH: I mean, he just did. He wanted to just get away from it. You know, he wanted to compartmentalize it, probably.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So where did you move after that?

MS. SMITH: We moved to this place called Friendly Hills in Whittier. And I went to junior high school and high school in Whittier.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I need you to speak up more, or I need to move this closer to you. Hang on. You're usually so outspoken. Why don't you move closer to my microphone here?

MS. SMITH: Well, this is not — I'm outspoken when I'm talking about something pleasant, but my family life was not all that super pleasant.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just scoot a little closer to me.

MS. SMITH: Oh.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Like — there we go. I want to make sure I get every precious word.

MS. SMITH: Okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So anyway, it's not pleasant. I mean, you're not talking about — your talking about your mother's passing away when you're 11 is never going to be pleasant to talk about.

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And your father was upset. And he moved then to — when he moved to Whittier, what did he do there?

MS. SMITH: He commuted to the hospital for a while. And I don't know because I wasn't really old enough to really understand the ins and outs of my father's life.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So essentially, you moved to Whittier. And what was the house like that you lived in in Whittier?

MS. SMITH: To be absolutely honest, I don't have a clear recollection of the house I lived in in Whittier. The only house I have a clear recollection of is the house we had in Palm Springs that we went out to on the weekends.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you said — you have said that that was very important, that you'd go out to Palm Springs in the weekends, and that that was an important influence. Tell me about Palm Springs in the early 1960s.

MS. SMITH: Well, there was — yeah, well, it was, you know — it was wonderful. We had like a modern house. And it wasn't really very crowded there. And it was warm. And my mother felt usually better when she was there and stuff like that. So it was a big — and I think it sort of — I don't know.

I feel — I know that — I think, because Scott [Grieger] and I go out to the desert, you know, regularly and stuff like that. And I think that, especially if you live in this climate, it gets pretty damp. And I think it was comfortable to go out and dry out. And my mother's asthma didn't bother her that much when she was in the desert.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, so your mother suffered from asthma as well?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. That was what — that was actually — she suffered from asthma for a long time, but you didn't ask about that. You asked what she died of. And she died of bladder cancer. So — but she was pretty frail and had a lot of health problems.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She had a lot of health problems the whole time?

MS. SMITH: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So she — you grew up — you've talked about how you were closer to your father than your mother.

MS. SMITH: Well, I was mostly — I was mostly closer to my father because my mother needed my father. And she didn't really need me. And I'm not sure — this is — everybody has to know all this stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you've already — it's already in the Whitney catalogue.

MS. SMITH: Oh, it is?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So we're not revealing — we're not doing — we're not too revelatory.

MS. SMITH: Oh, okay. All right, breaking new ground, huh?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Not so much, because I hadn't remembered about how much closer you were to your father. And you talked a lot about how he was a storyteller. And you thought that was a big influence at the time.

MS. SMITH: Well, and also, I think that it was a huge accidental boon that I was raised by my father because my father didn't know how to raise me as a girl. He only knew how to raise me, like, as a guy. And I think that the — I think it made me more brave and ambitious that I was raised by my father, than if I would have, you know, been more — if I would have been more influenced by my mother's frailty and difficulties and stuff like that. And also, it made me want to get the hell out of there! [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you were — so in a way, you weren't acculturated in the way girls are by their mothers, especially in the early '60s, which —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, because my [mother — AS] died when I was 11 [of bladder cancer — AS]. And so, he had all the time between, you know, elementary school and the end of high school to, you know, to — you know, to imprint me with his, you know — I mean, we had family life together.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did you come away with? You came away with resilience, I guess, and a certain sense of ambition. What would you say?

MS. SMITH: I think I was — I think what I wasn't was real, like, you know, frail and feminine and, you

know, all that kind of stuff. I think I was more the way you'd be if you were, you know — I would think I was more boyish.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Like a tomboy?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, more like a tomboy in some ways. But I think the other thing that was very — that was surprising is that I had always thought of myself as an ugly duckling. And when as — when I was in — like when I was — graduated from high school and when I went to — and when I went to Irvine, which was the next step, the next propitious step of going to this school that was close to the beach, cheap, and was far enough away that you didn't have to come home on the weekend. Which were all these, like, kind of stupid, like, teenage, you know, things and stuff like that. I think that was certainly the most — that was the most propitious decision I ever made in my entire life was to go to Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is UC Irvine.

MS. SMITH: UC Irvine, right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you start there in — what year did you start college there?

MS. SMITH: Let's see. I think I started in 1966. [1967 — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, we were jumping a little —

MS. SMITH: Which is when I graduated from high school.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — we're jumping a little bit ahead. Where did you attend elementary school and high school?

MS. SMITH: I went to elementary school in — near the hospital. And I forget what the name of the place was. It was like in a Mexican neighborhood. And I don't remember what the name of it was. And that was in all the — see, that was a big factor in my parents' wanting to go to Whittier, where there was like a higher class of people, because, the junior high school I had, all the girls were wearing like low-cut blouses and lipstick and stuff like that. That's one of the things that really freaked my father out. So that's one of the reasons that we moved to Whittier. [Whittier High —AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I see. Pulls you out of Norwalk and moves you to Whittier?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, right away, you know, before I get into some kind of trouble. So I had to put off getting into trouble till I went to Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So where did you go to junior high? Do you remember the names of your junior high or high schools?

MS. SMITH: I don't — well, my high school was Whittier High School. I don't remember what the name of the junior high school was. It was — I don't remember [if there was one — AS].

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you graduate in —

MS. SMITH: No.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you graduate in '66?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I graduated from high school and then started Irvine in 1966, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And we've talked about this being a propitious moment in your life for many reasons, not the least of which being that UC Irvine, in 1966, was quite the exciting place to go to college.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it was a really good place to go to college. And it was certainly — if it wasn't a good place to go to college, it was a good place to study art. [I started out as a French major but it didn't go anywhere — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But that's not how you started? You started —

MS. SMITH: No, I didn't go there for that reason at all. Like I said, I was — I went there for the kind of lame reasons that teenagers have, which is that — you know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you already had studied French and were almost fluent in French. And hadn't you already gone to France for the summers?

MS. SMITH: I had, but see, that was one of those things that — going to France, I think maybe I went to France in a summer during college and not after high school.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And, yeah, going to France and studying French really cured me of thinking that's what I should do.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It cured you of thinking you wanted French as a major?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. You know, and also, even if I was a French major, like in — you know, I started out as that. I right away realized that besides, you know, like going to France and ordering from the menu and stuff like that, that it wasn't — I don't know. I wasn't — it didn't seem that compelling, especially after I started taking art classes and stuff like that. It seemed — and I spent a summer in France, like I said, in one of those things. And it seemed — a lot of the people seemed — it just didn't seem as interesting as the art thing did.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you go to museums while you were in France?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. I — [Yes, and the buildings with marble floors and bronze trappings really surprised me compared with the straight-forward lack of elegance back home — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where were you?

MS. SMITH: Huh?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where were you in France?

MS. SMITH: Oh, I don't know. I started out in the provinces somewhere and went to Paris and visited some museums and stuff like that. But it wasn't that long. I think it was for about three weeks or a month or something. It just — it mostly was one of those things where it seems really fabulous from

far away. And it's really pretty and stuff when you go there, but the content of it wasn't that interesting, if you know what I mean.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you didn't really — you went to France and did not relate to what you were looking at and —

MS. SMITH: No, I kind of got — no, it's not like it wasn't that I wasn't — it wasn't what I was looking at. I went there as a French major, which is somebody that was presumably going to study enough French and become a French teacher. And I just — that just wasn't going to fly. It wasn't that interesting. It was nice being able to speak French to the natives, but it was more interesting to go places and look at the buildings and, you know, just do other — you know, just act like a tourist.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] So after you — so you wind up at UC Irvine, but even when you start at UC Irvine, I don't think you're — you're not in the art department right away?

MS. SMITH: No, I wasn't, I don't even remember. I think I probably started out as a French major.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did you migrate from this — being a French major at UC Irvine to being an art major?

MS. SMITH: I took this class, [from — AS] John Coplans called "The Nature of Art." And he was so interesting and funny. And just, you know, it was like — like I said, it was back in the '60s. And I'm sure we've talked about this before, but he made — he said all this stuff about, you know, how the ergot rot that was on the rye bread, you know, was like LSD. And they — all the peasants had hallucinations and all this stuff. And I don't know whether it was made up or not, you know? But it was one of those things that gets your attention, right? It was funny. And I took a couple art classes. And, you know, as everybody sort of famously knows, I dated my professors and was completely sucked in by them and their lifestyles, I think.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you dated Robert Irwin?

MS. SMITH: I dated Bob. I dated some other people, too, but you — [laughs] — they don't have to be named. We don't have to go and do it at length. But I definitely dated Bob Irwin. And I was really surprised at how, you know — what his life was like. And because I eventually wound up in Venice, you know, I got to be friendly with all those guys, you know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So for the record, what —

MS. SMITH: I mean, Larry just still lives right up — he's right up the street.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So who are some of those people? Like Larry Bell and — because I mean, whoever's — you know, tell me some other names of people who are — you were friends with at the time from the beach set.

MS. SMITH: Let's see.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I know you — in the Whitney catalogue, you talk about your friendship with Vija Celmins.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, Vija, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who is also your teacher?

MS. SMITH: I mean, she was — she and I were very friendly for a really long time until she moved to New York, and she had — hardly ever comes back. Occasionally, she does. She had a show a few years ago that I saw. But yeah, I was real good friends with Vija. And she had a — her studio is just right around the corner. It used to be on — it was on Venice Boulevard. And — but she's been gone for a long time. It was sad when she left. And also, I was in that women's group with, you know, Vija and Luchita Hurtado, and —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know that other name.

MS. SMITH: And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's the name you just said?

MS. SMITH: Her name is — I'm blanking now on how to spell it. Luchita, L-U-C-H-I-T-A, Hurtado. I'm not — I'm sure — I think it's H-U-R-T-A-D-O. She was in a women's group, and like Avilda Moses. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Avilda Moses?

MS. SMITH: And — what's her name? [... - AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] And Barbara Haskell, I think.

MS. SMITH: And Barbara Haskell. [And the other woman was Ann McCay — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's quite a woman's group.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And I don't remember what the other girl's — woman's name was, somebody that I didn't like. I don't remember what her name was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, just — I really want to visit this woman's group. Well, we're here. Let's talk about what years were you — so what year did you start hanging — doing a women's group?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know the answer.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you started —

MS. SMITH: It must have been when I was — came here.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: College — this is after college or during college?

MS. SMITH: Oh, no, no, no. No, that was much after — that was way after college.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: After college. Well, just hold that thought then.

MS. SMITH: Okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Come back to this one. So let's talk about —

MS. SMITH: So then after the —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — you're dating — how often — long did you date Robert Irwin?

MS. SMITH: Not that long. Not that long.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is not that long six months, or a year, or — ?

MS. SMITH: No, I don't even think it was that long. It was probably just a few months. [Six months — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now he was the famously most compelling talker?

MS. SMITH: He was really a good talker.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: He's still a good talker, actually.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And everyone, then, says he was really such an amazingly influential teacher, but his work doesn't seem to have anything to do with your work. So in what way could he have been influential as a teacher? Do you —

MS. SMITH: No, it wasn't so much that he was influential as a teacher. He was influential because he was my window into the artist lifestyle —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: — in LA. You know, and the one thing that worries me about this is that it's — it probably — this is probably Alexis stuff that's, like, out there. Like, what's the name of that guy that already — that wrote the book about the artists and — I forget what his name is. I'm sure there are other interviews that have — that talk about this stuff, especially my Irvine thing and stuff like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: So I just want to — I mean, it's just — it's not really — it's not news, basically.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, but essentially, when someone reads this, they are not going to read it as though they've already read something else.

MS. SMITH: Oh, so it doesn't matter, is what you're saying. I just want to make sure you know that these are my, sort of, like —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: As an old editor, you know that it has to — it — we cannot assume that whoever's reading your oral history will have already read all the other interviews with you.

MS. SMITH: Well, okay, all right. Well, it's just — I just want to be, you know — because I feel like I'm saying —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And also, people sometimes change their views on things. I mean, one thing that's interesting to me about Irvine is — well, let's talk about it. I know it has been discussed, but what — as we know, what was interesting about Irvine was that it was a very new school.

MS. SMITH: It was a brand-new school, exactly. And it didn't have hardly any buildings or hardly any faculty. And because of that, that was the best thing about it. I think all the people that were there thought — eventually came away thinking that they were blessed, because we really did, you know — we really did — it was a really interesting group of people, and they were really serious, and the

chemistry between the students and the faculty and the art department was really good. And the teachers, and, you know, were interesting and well-spoken, and they had interesting work. And the students were really ambitious and an interesting mix of people from a lot of different weird places.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So apart from — so the teachers — you remember were dealing with — were John Coplans, Robert Irwin, and Vija Celmins. Were there other teachers who interested you at the time?

MS. SMITH: I think there were. Nobody really comes to mind as being real — those are the people that I remember the most, but those are mostly people that, you know, became friends of mine, too.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And who are your classmates?

MS. SMITH: My classmates? [Robert Wilhite, UC Irvine — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or were there any classmates you remember who wanted to —

MS. SMITH: Oh, there's a bunch of them, but I don't know whether I can — there's a whole — actually, there was a reunion recently of a lot of the people, but right now, I don't think I could come up with a list again. I mean, I could research for it, but I don't remember right off the top of my head.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But did you have relationships with your classmates?

MS. SMITH: You mean like friends or like lovers? [Mostly art friends — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Both.

MS. SMITH: No, I don't remember. I think maybe had an occasional — but I think that there's a lot of people that — I don't know. It's not like the way that this world imprinted on me, do you know what I mean? And beside from the fact that there was a — I think there was a — actually, there was — there's — I tell you what there is —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I'll put it on pause.

[Audio break.]

MS. SMITH: This catalogue has — these are the people that are — were either my teachers, or they were my contemporaries.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But were they — but really, do you think any of those people helped to influence or have an impact on the development of you as an artist or your work?

MS. SMITH: Oh, I think they all did. I mean, I think we were — oh, there's Vija. I think that the — and there's Bob. And there's Craig and all the — it was a really small world. There's Larry. There's two Larrys. Ed Moses. These are all people that we — that everybody knew everybody and hung out with everybody, because it was the '60s. And it's not the way it — you know, it is now when you go to college, I mean, you know, you get fired for sleeping with your students and stuff like that, but in the '60s, even if we — even if everybody wasn't sleeping with everybody, in which they — a lot of people were, it was a more — it was like a king's X, you know what I mean? It was like a private thing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And it wasn't some kind of big scandal or whatever. It was just a different world.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when you —

MS. SMITH: Sex, drugs, and rock and roll.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I — they — so they — when you went, though, you didn't even intend to major in art. So here you are learning about art at that school. I mean, and you — tell me about the transition into art-making while you were there.

MS. SMITH: Well, let's see. How was the transition into art-making?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, you said that you — the kinds of things you made there were the kinds of things you, sort of, had made your whole life, but —

MS. SMITH: Right, I made little collages with pasting, cutting stuff out of places and pasting stuff, or writing stuff on the typewriter and, you know, stuff like that. I just was — I was already making these kind of little, weird things. And I didn't think they were anything. And I — and when I went to college, people seemed to think that they were — that they were interesting and that they could be art. And I never — that's just something I wouldn't have known otherwise.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So they gave you —

MS. SMITH: They gave me permission. They gave me encouragement. They gave me a group of people that — all kinds of people that were really interested in art. And there was a, you know, there was a social scene. There was an intellectual scene. There was a lot of people competing with each other to be amusing and cool. And it sort of — it made a crucible.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And your — had your interest in literature already evolved to the point where it showed up in your work in college? Or is that later?

MS. SMITH: No, I pretty much always made little, crappy stuff, even when — you know, before I went to college. And I also read a lot because I was an only child. I mean, it's — it — nothing was — nothing was — everything was sort of just a — just the way it, you know — it just happened. And it didn't seem — it was like an — it seemed like a progression that was sort of obvious, in retrospect. Yeah, I think if you had that book, that makes it — that book would be hugely helpful in terms of understanding what it was like to be there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But what about your — the evolution of — the combination of your interest in literature and your combination of — and your interest in collage? How did you come to start wanting to use literature as a part of the artwork that you are making?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. It just was something that — I read a lot when I was a kid. And I — you know, it was the source of — that was — the written stuff was the source that was the easiest. As I — see, it started out as books. And then, it got to be books that had images on them, right. And it's — and then, it got to be — and then, I took big sections of written material and put images on. I mean, it just, sort of, was just a natural evolution.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But — and the times that — in which you were making art, I would guess that in the mid-'60s, your greater — the greatest influence in art making at that time would have to have been Pop art?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. It wasn't — I think that Pop art wasn't a big — I don't think that it was. I think it might have been big in the world, but I don't think it was big in that place where I was. I think that the — I think the Light and Space thing was big in my world. And performance was just being invented. And things that had words in them were like — I mean, you know, that was what was interesting.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you did some performances.

MS. SMITH: I do. I did some performances [like "Scherezade [sic] the Story Teller" from the Sixties with Zazu Faure, Patty Faure's daughter. I read out loud and I got all the guests stoned on hashish — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you — while you were still in college?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I'm not sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I can help with that because I have my —

MS. SMITH: Oh, you do? You know, I didn't —

[END OF CARD ONE.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Alexis Smith at the artist's studio in Venice, California on January 24th, 2014 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two, after lunch at Hama Sushi next door to Alexis' studio. We come back and resume our discussion about UC Irvine and the evolution of her work, her collage work, at that time.

So by the time you graduated from UC Irvine, what kind of work were you making?

MS. SMITH: One-of-a-kind books.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: One-of-a-kind books. See if we can get you closer to the microphone.

MS. SMITH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I was making one-of-a-kind books, I think. And — can we turn it off for a second and let me — I'll show you what I was making, and then we can talk about it a little bit?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I know. I know because I've looked at the catalogue, unless you need to look — okay, hang on. I'll put it on pause.

MS. SMITH: Oh, no.

[Audio break.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: There you go. Why were you making these one-of-a-kind books? It would have been, like, the late '60s, early '70s because you graduated from UC Irvine in 1970. So —

MS. SMITH: Well, I wouldn't say that I was making them for any specific reason. I probably was making them because I was — I started out as a humanities major. And I basically was familiar with — I had read, you know, a lot of books. And I'd made a lot of, sort of — what would you call it? When I was a kid, I cut stuff up and pasted it together and made small things. And somehow, the — when I was in art school, I just didn't know how to do that many things. And so, I — and so, I took my two

interests, which were literature and photos and pictures from magazines and catalogues and stuff like that [... - AS]

And I started making one-of-a-kind books. And the first one-of-a-kind books — the first books that I made were — and actually, all the books were a mish-mash or a mélange of appropriated images and appropriated text. And some of the text — the things were made so that they were — the most important thing about the experience of the book was the sequential part of it, where I made — I had a table that was covered with felt. And I made people wash their hands before. And they sat down. And they got to, one by one, turn the pages and look at the images. And it made a lot of people really uncomfortable. You know, it was like — that was like their little performance, and it kind of creeped them out. And some people thought it was really sort of fun and interesting and wanted to see what was next. And some people felt, like, self-conscious about having to treat them really carefully and without any — and they felt uncomfortable that they didn't know what I was doing because they were so eccentric and had so many weird things, non sequiturs and stuff in them, that they made people — they were interesting. Some people really got into it. And other people were very self-conscious and afraid they were going to look stupid.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MS. SMITH: And it was sort of — it was interesting. It was — everybody had their own thing. And everybody had their own things that they liked, or they — that they responded to or they didn't respond to. And it was sort of — it was interesting for me because I sort of learned about what, you know — I mean, I learned that a lot of people were made to feel self-conscious because of all the ceremony attached to it, but that the ceremony was sort of critical to keep them from riffling through them and messing them up and, also, getting them to have some thoughts about the things they were seeing enough so that they could, over the length of the book, get a — get an actual, coherent experience out of it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now were you present while they were looking at the book?

MS. SMITH: I — you mean, like, was I standing there — was I staring at them? No, I wasn't. I wasn't. I just put — you know, the books were on, like, the little, felt table, you know, that's in the — that you can see the picture of. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where did this take place? Where were they exhibited that way?

MS. SMITH: Some of them — I don't remember exactly where, but they were exhibited a few places, like in museums or, you know, whatever, like in shows. I don't remember where they were. I remember they were in my studio when I had people over to look at them. A lot of people were made really uncomfortable being in my studio. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So they came over to your studio, and you made them sit down at a table to do this?

MS. SMITH: Made them wash their hands and, you know, and sit down at the table and stuff like that. And they — and because the books were so weird, and they didn't have any kind of coherent scenario that went with them, a lot of people got real uncomfortable. And they got uncomfortable about touching them because I made a lot of fanfare — [laughs] — about making them wash their hands as though — it was funny. It was kind of cool.

I think the thing that was interesting about it is that it was a performance using the occasion of it

for — I don't know how to describe it. It was like a — everybody had to do their little, kind of, performance thing. They had to be self-conscious. They had to think about turning the pages and whether they were going to crimp them. They had to decide whether they were going to be interested in it, or that they were going to just feel stupid and get through it as fast as possible. It just — everybody had a different experience, even though they looked at the same thing. And that part was — I thought that part was really interesting. But, I got tired of it. And I got tired of having to deal with the people. And that's really what it — why I decided to make — got into making objects that people could look at when I wasn't there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I noticed that in the catalogue — we're looking at the catalogue from your 1991 retrospective at the Whitney. And you have — very quickly, by like 1972, the books are up on the wall.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, and they've already gotten to the place where other people could look at them without involving me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is one of the few — first pieces I ever saw of yours, this *Hiawatha*.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah. Oh, let's see.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's from 1972.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And, you know, you've typed out the text.

MS. SMITH: Right, the one about the, "How low the [mighty have fallen — AS]" I used to be able to say that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: "The Gitche Gumee."

MS. SMITH: Yeah. No, but there was a line there that I clearly liked about it. I forgot which one it was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. They have — now at this point, you were really typing out texts from —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I was, okay. Yeah, I was. And that one — the next one, after the — this one, which was *Clues and Souvenirs*. And that was my — because I was really interested in, you know, like detective stuff and everything. And what's really funny — [laughs] — is you can tell I have a sense of humor, because that is my college roommate [Sandy Singer — AS]. And she's — you can see her butt crack under her apron. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In this photograph, with her back turned to us.

MS. SMITH: In the photograph, in the *Clues and Souvenirs* books, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, how funny.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. That was funny.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, they have —

MS. SMITH: And there's — this one, they had the finger paint, because there's — like related to — for lip prints and thumb prints and, you know, the kind of — this one is about the traces that humans leave.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you have lipstick marks — lipstick kisses on pieces of paper.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, right, exactly.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Matchbooks and tickets and plane tickets from —

MS. SMITH: Things that are pawned and that kind of stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Things that are pawned, exactly, and some photographs.

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now this is a good place to talk about — I mean, at this point, I mean, not so much in *Hiawatha*, where you've redone the text with *Hiawatha*, and you've included some photographics. By the time you get to *Clues and Souvenirs* in '71 or '72, you really have incorporated a lot of additional material, in terms of photographs. Did you do this with a Xerox machine? I mean, now we take it for granted that, if there's a photograph and a text combination, you just knocked it out in your computer.

MS. SMITH: No, no, actually, there — they were —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did this — how did these happen?

MS. SMITH: What are we talking about?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because you'll have like — here's a photograph of a car on a —

MS. SMITH: Well, that's just a photograph cut out of a magazine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it's a collage?

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the elements, the photography elements are just collage —

MS. SMITH: And see, it goes to — the person driving the car picture goes with all the license plates that are on the corners of all the other pieces. These are, like, the license plates of the cars that are passing me — see?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this particular book is text and collage?

MS. SMITH: Text and collage and, like, my penciled drawings and photography and underlining. And this is a — what do you call it? Finger paint. I mean, we — [laughs] — were doing a lot of media here.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But — and in 1971 and 1972 you're doing — the books become more and more complex.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, they all — they just — once I started collaging stuff together and I heard about frames, that was like — this is when we crossed over from the books. See, there was — all of a

sudden, there was a really important thing, which is that, once these things — the problem with these is that these people had to be there, and they had to touch the stuff, and all that. And I just have to tell them how to deal with it and stuff. But once it was on the wall, they could just think whatever they wanted. I don't care. You know, if they don't get it, then that's their problem. You know, that's the good thing about frames, right? Once it's in the frame and on the wall, they can't wreck it. And it doesn't matter what they think. It's already made.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it has a less —

MS. SMITH: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — interactive, right?

MS. SMITH: A good, like, sort of — what would you call that? Like an aesthetic, right, would you say? "I'm going to do whatever I want to. They don't like it? Tough. At least they won't wreck it."
[Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And in 1974, some of this work gets shown at — I think it's your first solo show at a gallery, at the Riko Mizuno Gallery.

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: On La Cienega.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that is funny.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now tell me about what — can you remember anything — this must have been important to you. It was your first show at a commercial gallery. Riko Mizuno showed a lot of interesting people.

MS. SMITH: You know, I don't — it all runs together. I had lots of shows when I was young. I showed at Riko's. And I showed at Nick Wilder [Nicholas Wilder Gallery] and then, you know, and sort of in the same period. And I showed a lot of different places. I really did. And I — so I don't have really strong, you know, feelings about every — you know, because I'm a — you know, I have to look up where it was, too, just the same as you. I don't remember, right? I mean, I had lots of opportunities to show things.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, here's a —

MS. SMITH: Okay, so that's Riko's.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's Riko's. And this is where you showed the *Charlie Chan* pieces. And you also showed the *Virgin Queen* pieces. And, interestingly —

MS. SMITH: And that's her actual, the virgin — my copy of the actual signature of the virgin queen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What do you mean your copy of the actual signature?

MS. SMITH: Well, I copied her signature.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, you copied Queen Elizabeth I's signature? ["The Virgin Queen" — AS]

MS. SMITH: Yeah, signature.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: As part of this 1974 piece — “Queen Ballot: ‘Virgins Only’ - Girl Barred.”

MS. SMITH: Yeah, see, that one was the — that was funny. What was funny about the whole thing was that, I mean, you know, you could see the Alexis humor here, that — here’s poor Queen Elizabeth, who was the virgin queen, right? And here she’s paired with the poor high school prom queen, who wasn’t a virgin and got dethroned. So all these things were really, like, funny and stupid. Like, you know, pretty much the way I still am. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is a newspaper clipping that’s next to this portrait of Queen Elizabeth I. And —

MS. SMITH: And it’s about that prom queen that gets dethroned because she wasn’t a virgin, right? So I mean, you know, have I changed? No. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I was going to put — say that.

MS. SMITH: It’s a little bit more — maybe there’s a little more high-tech presentation, but really, we’re talking about the same thing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was going to say —

MS. SMITH: Same sensibility from, like, day one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Well, what I was going to say here, specifically, is, by 1974, you’ve had your woman’s group. And I wanted to talk about the influence of the woman’s movement on your art, because it was, of course, extremely prominent in Los Angeles in the early ’70s.

MS. SMITH: Well, I don’t think it was such a big influence on my art. I think it was a big influence on my life.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: And what — it was really — it was actually one of the best things that ever happened to me, that I can think of. But one of the things that was really — I think there’s two things, and they were related to each other. And they’re out of the ordinary in most women’s lives. And the thing one is that — the thing I told you that my mother died when I was a kid. So I was brought up by my father. So, I wasn’t brought up as a girl. I was, you know — I didn’t have all those, you know — I didn’t have to do all that stuff that girls have to do because I didn’t live with them. I lived alone in a house with a man, which was my father. It may have been, you know — it may have had awkwardness and stuff sometimes, but it was — it probably was a huge predictor of my ability to live in a man’s world and make things and do things and, you know, like do the floors of the LA Convention Center and do stuff that, you know — I don’t know. It just was — I don’t think I’m as brave now as I used to be, but I always said I could do stuff, even if I had no idea how to do it. [Didn’t have feminine wiles — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That’s true.

MS. SMITH: You know what I’m saying?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was the second one?

MS. SMITH: What do you mean?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You said there were two things about the women's movement. One, you were brought up by your father, and the second thing —

MS. SMITH: Oh, no, I was thinking the — I was thinking that, prior to the women's movement —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: — I had the lucky break of being brought up by my father. So I had — I wasn't girlish in the first place.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And then, I think that the other thing that was — the next thing that was really influential, you know, after I got out of college and stuff like that, was that — and this was — there was probably a big gap here, but the women's group that I was in back in the, you know — back in the — I don't know what do you call it —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Early '70s?

MS. SMITH: Well, yeah, but I mean, I'm not sure, sort of, how to — should have a period when people had women's groups, right? Which, sort of, like, women's lib period, I guess.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it's right — it's after Judy Chicago [takes over — AS] starts the woman's area.

[... - AS]

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I know you're going to have to write that word, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, what was —

MS. SMITH: I mean, she just wanted to be the center of attention in that thing she did with the boxing gloves [Judy Chicago, *Boxing Gloves*, with Avilda and Ann and Luchita - AS], with the guys and stuff like that. I mean, when — the women's group we were in was basically about everybody talking about the things that they encountered and the way they felt about them, and the, you know, the — you know, like the things that they had — what happened from week to week and what their boyfriends and husbands and stuff did to them, or place — or they, you know, were kind of like dissed by somebody out in the world. Or they made some step forward in the — you know, like in terms of doing what they wanted to do or asserting themselves or — you know, that kind of stuff. And it was just a — we just got — we go into each other's lives and our — and sagas. And then, every week, somebody, you know, gave them the latest installment of all these people, you know, all these people in the, you know, in the lives of the other women.

And we bucked them up, but also, we laughed. I mean, you know what I mean? We laughed about the things that happened to people and how they — you know, like a nice, supportive laugh of what — you know, about people we knew and they, you know — when some guy was, like, a really big jerk. And you know, and I — and they shined him on or they told him to, you know, take a hike or whatever.

And it was just like, week to week, it was like we knew these characters because these characters were like boyfriends and husbands, right? And so, everybody had the weekly installment of how they stuck up for themselves or how they subverted like, you know, the things that happened to them. And it was just — it was real interesting. It was just as if you — I don't know. It was like, when you heard everybody else's story, you incorporated it into yourself, sort of, like — it made us feel like we all had this — we're sort of in the same situation. And it also, because of the — it was in the evening and because, you know, we were sitting around talking, there was a lot of stuff that seemed painful when it happened, but seemed funny by the time it got it to them, you know — [You laugh over it — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: — the Monday night group.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Would you consider it, like, empowering? I mean, did you all feel like it helped to get, kind of — because it's still a time when —

MS. SMITH: Well, empowering was a little — is the new word for it, but I definitely think we — the things that seemed bad seemed less bad. And some of them seemed funny. And some of the ones we — you know, sometimes we busted each other about, you know, that we, you know — that we were, you know — we weren't like facing the reality of whatever the situation was. And you know, they were either making it sound better or worse than it was. And it was just a — it was just like therapy with a whole bunch of people, because I think — like I said, as the daughter of a psychiatrist, I certainly know that a lot of why people get better is because they say the things that's making them feel bad, and they hear it. And that's what the way our women's — that's the way our women's group was. [Out loud — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So as you — you did this for how — what — how long?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. We did it for several years. I don't remember how long.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In the early '70s?

MS. SMITH: I think so. I think that — the two things that stick in my mind as the two, sort of, group achievements of my young life, both of which have, you know, they don't exist anymore. It was my — it was the women's group.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And the group of us that started MOCA. [Artists who want their own venue for Contemporary Art — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which is — we're going to talk about in about 10 years.

MS. SMITH: Huh?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which we're going to talk about when we get to it. But, so here you are, a young artist starting out, and a woman. And now this — needless to say, in the 1960s, there were not many opportunities for women to show. But you're showing at Riko Mizuno, which is a prominent gallery. And do you have any sense that your work is evolving as work made by a woman, as opposed to what was being done by the men?

MS. SMITH: Well, I think — let's see, whether I was sensitive about it or not, it was definitely not very physical. It was, you know, it was books and things made out of paper and stuff. And it was delicate. I don't think any self-respecting guy would say that, unless a gay would say that was his work, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and you all — but you also were — the work, at this point, really does have — sometimes has to do with a subject that comes up in your work throughout your career, and that is the way women are represented in history and the media —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that part is true.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — and in fiction.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, absolutely.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, even from this piece about Queen Elizabeth, right?

MS. SMITH: Oh, *The Virgin Queen*, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: From the very beginning. So —

MS. SMITH: Well, I always had a good sense of humor, which came from my father. And — I don't know. I think it's hard to go back and be the person or think about the person who, you know, who lived 40 years ago. I mean, just — it's just hard to go back. I'm really lucky, I think, that I have — Richard Armstrong's book [*Alexis Smith*, 1991]. I mean, it's — I mean, it was a — it was really a lucky break to have a book like that, because, now, it probably wouldn't be that hard to do another book because, you know, because I have, you know, all the photography and all that kind of stuff. But the — to go back and — I mean, I look up when I did stuff because I don't remember. It's like it's never — like having your own — it's like having your own, you know, like — what do you call it? — research thing, where you can go back. Like for example, right now, they had — they just remade my chair, this chair here that's going to go in one of our —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This director's chair with the name Alexis Smith on it?

MS. SMITH: This — right, Alexis Smith art chair is just — is just got — because that one got wrecked. I mean, I still have the remnants of it, but Honor Fraser just had another one made that matches. And we — and I found a piece that was appropriate, actually, just before you came over this morning, and found a piece that would be appropriate that she could hang in concert with the chair, to take to an art director.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now we have to really stop here. And you have to explain for the oral history how you got the name Alexis Smith.

MS. SMITH: Oh, God.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which I know you've explained a lot, but we —

MS. SMITH: No, no, that's okay. No, I don't have a problem with it. It just was such a long time ago. And it turned out to be such a giant headache after 9-11.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, right. Okay, well, tell me about that part of it, too.

[... - AS]

[Audio break.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were telling me about how it is you happened to change your name from Patti Anne Smith [Patricia Anne Smith K.A. Alexis — AS] to Alexis — ?

MS. SMITH: Well, I changed — my real name is Patricia Anne Smith. And I am saddled with it forever because I never changed it legally. So my checks say “Patricia Anne Smith, known as Alexis Smith,” because I took the name of the movie star Alexis Smith when I was in college. And — but I couldn’t legally change it to Alexis Smith because she was still alive. And her husband, Craig Stevens, was mad at me forever, although she was very nice about it. And she —

[... - AS]

MS. SMITH: I know. I need to show you something.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, hang on.

[Audio break.]

MS. SMITH: So there she is.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were saying her husband, Craig Stevens, was upset about it, but she, the movie star Alexis Smith, let you use her photograph on your poster for the Whitney Biennial in 1991. Well, the Whitney — excuse me — your Whitney Museum —

MS. SMITH: Retrospective —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — retrospective in 1991.

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That’s pretty fabulous.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, absolutely.

MS. SMITH: Actually, it was 1992. But anyway, yeah, so I never could change my name legally then.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you could never change your name legally because the movie star Alexis Smith had that name, but —

MS. SMITH: But now I have — I just, you know, I —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But is it true you didn’t know who the movie star Alexis Smith was when you chose the name Alexis?

MS. SMITH: Well, actually, it changed — I chose the name Alex because we were all coming up with names in my dorm and stuff like that. And then later, I realized there was an artist named Alexis Smith.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean, an actress?

MS. SMITH: An actress, yeah, I mean an actress named Alexis Smith. And I don't know. I changed my name. You know, I got, you know, [... - AS] I changed it to Alexis. I already had the Smith.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, you know, you knew about Hollywood. I mean, your work was already interested in Hollywood to some extent. Did the —

MS. SMITH: So to me, it seemed like a, sort of, like a no-brainer. And because when you're young, you don't think about the downside of things, right? That it was weird, I guess, a little bit because her husband was upset, but it wasn't so weird that it was a deal breaker. But the thing that was the real — the thing — what really got me in trouble was because — was after 9-11. Because then, I had, you know, then I was — it became hard for me to travel as Alexis Smith and stuff because my real name is Patricia Anne Smith. And it says on my passport on the back, "Bearer known as Alexis Smith." It's a big headache now.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, very big headache.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it has — it's — I think that, you know, it's almost as though you have a living performance art piece going on about, you know, your relationship to fame and to Hollywood and to iconic women.

MS. SMITH: Well, yeah, and it's also — it's one of those things where — I mean, yeah, legally, it got complicated at one point. And it has its drawbacks and stuff like that. But it's a really good thing for me. I mean, I would have been Patti Smith anyway, right? You know, I already was, and it was spelled like that, right? So it's like — I mean, you know, it was like one way or another, it would have — something like this would have happened. But I think when you change your name, even if you do it, I mean, whatever, you know, I think you — I think it's, like, a big statement to yourself that you're, you know, you want to be somebody else. And I think that's what — and ultimately, I think that's what mine was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And isn't that also, sort of, the absolute essence of Los Angeles?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, like the — [Changing your identity — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or Southern California?

MS. SMITH: You know, yeah, so-and-so McGillicuddy becomes, like, Rock Hudson or something, you know what I mean? That's what happens.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or as you were talking about earlier, John Wayne's real name being Marion.

MS. SMITH: Being Marion, right exactly. Marion Morrison was his —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Marion Morrison. So he had to overcome a lot to become John Wayne.

MS. SMITH: Exactly. So I think that — I think there's a funny part of it and a — but also, a — there's a real therapeutic part of it, to be the person that you want to be and not the person that you are. And I think I — that's really happened for me. I mean, everybody doesn't get there the same way,

but that's something that happened to me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you had —

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — as you said, you had a formative experience in college, because you were around artists, who actually achieved a lot of success on their — at — in the late — by the late '60s, your artist friends were achieving a great amount of success. I mean, the artists from the Light and Space movement —

MS. SMITH: Well, my artist teachers anyway.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Your artist teachers. I mean, Robert Irwin and Larry Bell and Vija Celmins, all those artists had quite a lot of success. Did their success make it seem to you that, well, if they can do it, I can do it?

MS. SMITH: No, because I didn't have any yardstick. I mean, they, you know, I — they made it [seem possible — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: But whether you — I think it's more of a "fools rush in" thing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Fools rush in?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. I think it's one of those things where it looked really interesting, what they were doing. And I liked them. And they treated me well. They liked me, but I went out with them. You know, I knew what they were like. I knew what their world was like. I knew what their — you know, I thought their studios were cool. And I thought they were, you know, they were smart and funny. And, I don't know. I just — it just fell into another world. And then, once I became an artist myself, then I don't know. I just had to — it's this way. I found what I needed — what I wanted to do with my life. [Keep going. And now I am married to another artist—my husband Scott Grieger—for 26 years.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You talked to Richard Armstrong about your interest, at that point in your life, and your early work with the books and the first — taking the pages from the books and framing them and putting them on the walls as collages. You talk about the recurrent motifs of fate, you know, of fortune tellers, of stars in the sky. And you talk about — with him, about your interest in faith and destiny and —

MS. SMITH: Oh, well, that might, you know, that — I have the feeling that was — I mean, that was a pretty long time ago now. I'm getting a little bit —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At that time, did you think that?

MS. SMITH: No, no, I know, but I guess what's happening — what happens now, is like — okay, so the Whitney book was in 1990 —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: One.

MS. SMITH: — 1991, '91, and now, we are in 2014. So we are — I don't know. We're pretty much, you know — we're 20-something years later. And I think that the — that — it's different — like in

1990, I was, you know, newly minted, in a way. That's when I started doing my real serious, grown-up work, you know, with the — *On The Road* stuff and, you know, the big, you know, the large-scale pieces, and doing the, you know — I did my big terrazzo floors and big LA Convention Center and my giant floors in Ohio State. I did all those in the early '90s and did the *Snake Path* and, you know, I did all this stuff. I made all this gigantic stuff. And this stuff that I probably couldn't make now that I couldn't — people couldn't afford to make. And it was just a — it was just one of those things where I had this — it's like I had this vision of this stuff. And I just was relentless. But I don't have that — I don't have the opportunity to do anything that big because nobody gets to do those kind of big, giant things anymore. And I don't have the will. I don't — you know, I don't have the stamina, but mostly, I just don't have the opportunity or probably, ultimately, the desire, unless I have a lot of people working for me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what I hear you saying is that, you know, that —

MS. SMITH: It was a moment.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — the idea of fate and destiny are the kinds of ideas that you have then. And now, you don't really feel — you can think of yourself looking back on them now, and saying, well, that was just the way I felt then, but not now.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I don't feel that. I think I was real lucky. I mean, fate and destiny, yes or no. You know, they're kind of charming. They, you know, belong in the movies and, you know, and all that kind of stuff. But I was lucky, I got to make a lot of really big, monumental things that still exist. And they took a lot of perspiration. And, but it's some — there are things that I feel really proud of.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, before we go to that far forward, let's talk — go back a little bit to your personal life at this time. At what point do you and Chris Burden start dating? Do you know what year that is?

MS. SMITH: Oh, that was a long time ago. That was in the '70s or something.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it's in the '70s.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: Me and Chris Burden, boy, that was like a million years ago. After I broke up with Chris, he didn't speak to me for like, you know, for years. And then, after he married Nancy, he did. He started speaking because Nancy and I got friendly, and then — [Rubins — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He married Nancy?

MS. SMITH: Rubins.[Chris Burden is deceased from cancer — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Nancy Rubins?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. [His widow — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But he was —

MS. SMITH: But he was mad at me probably for — I don't know — 25 or 30 years before that?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You have to move closer. Now tell me about how you met and -

MS. SMITH: Who, Chris?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, because you were together for a while and at a formative point?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I don't know — I actually don't remember how we met, if you want to know the truth.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you both went to UC Irvine.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, but he was in graduate school, and I wasn't. But I don't think I dated him when I was in college. I think I ran into him later here.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you started living together?

MS. SMITH: Well, it was — I guess, sort of. He had this little pod studio, and he was really like — he was really fussy about every little —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, he had a place on the boardwalk in Venice, right?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, he did. He did, actually.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where —

MS. SMITH: And he was married to Barbara Burden. And actually, Barbara Burden was a — actually was — I don't remember. I don't know — I don't remember the exact timetable of this, but, even though my husband, Scott, and I didn't go on a date for, like, 15 or 20 [years — AS] or so later, at that time, I think I met Scott when he was living with Chris' ex-wife, Barbara Burden.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Barbara Burden. Well, he —

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — Chris and Barbara Burden were married for some time. And then — and he'd already — they had already been separated for some time when he come — when you two are together?

MS. SMITH: I don't — yeah, I don't remember that part. [Yes — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So and your current husband, Scott Grieger, was at that time dating Barbara Burden?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, but when — I think so. It's a little vague.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, in the '70s, when you and Chris get together, he's already established — he's already done the performances that have made him sort of the enfant terrible of — at that time. I mean, I think he's already done the crucified Volkswagen and so —

MS. SMITH: No, no. He didn't do those until the — I've got the book. Hang on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I know.

MS. SMITH: I'll get the Chris Burden book.

[Audio break.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You and Chris Burden start living together —

MS. SMITH: All right, starting out here, I don't know which one this is. This is F Space, which was — oh, I was here for that one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you —

MS. SMITH: The car. [When he was stapled to the Volkswagon — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're there — you were with Chris during *Trans-fixed*. And this is the most — one of the most famous —

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — performances Chris Burden ever did, where he has himself sort of crucified on the Volkswagen.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, except for there was a — except for it's not true, actually.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: He — the nails didn't go into the car. They just went through his hands. He couldn't get them through the car. [Laughs.] I remember that. Okay, let's see.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But —

MS. SMITH: And that's the one in Death Valley.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were there for *Trans-fixed*.

MS. SMITH: Oh, I remember this one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you were there for the —

MS. SMITH: *Through the Night Softly*, I think, is what that one's called. [Night Softly — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When he crawls — [through the broken glass — AS]

MS. SMITH: See, here's my "Compliments of Chris Burden" book here.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where he's crawling through broken glass.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, yeah, I saw that one. And I can't remember. I think I might have even been there for that annoying one with the bicycle.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where he bicycles through Death Valley.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I might have been in there. I don't remember. That one I was definitely there for.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were there for the most famous of all his performances —

MS. SMITH: For the *Shoot* one, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — where he has — *Shoot*, where he has himself shot.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. I can't remember. I remember that the — I remember about the Volkswagen one. I can't remember who shot him. Do you remember?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's Charles Christopher Hill, isn't it?

MS. SMITH: Oh, Charles shot him? [I don't know who shot him but I don't think it was Charles (Christopher Hill) or Bruce Richards — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think so.

MS. SMITH: It makes sense that he did.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think so.

MS. SMITH: But I didn't know that Charles would do that, but I'm not sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm going from my memory, not looking it up. But the next thing I have to ask you is —

MS. SMITH: Well, hey, it might say right here what — who did, who shot him, but anyway, I don't know. I don't remember. I remember being there. And I remember that Volkswagen was putting out, like, clouds of, like, black, gritty smoke and stuff. Oh, yeah, there's *Icarus*. Oh, yeah, I was there for that one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where the fires are lit on either side of him while he's lying down?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that's in — actually in his studio, which was this incredibly white, enameled everything, you know, brick building and stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was it very tidy and very clean?

MS. SMITH: It was so tidy and clean I couldn't stand it. I couldn't have any of my stuff there. None, zero. Okay, so there's *Doorway to Heaven*. That was actually in his door, where he took the wires [live wires — AS], and he put them together. And he had some kind of stuff like — I don't know — some kind of Vaseline or something, so they wouldn't get burned on his chest.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or he does the — he does the attempted electrocution.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And I think I was there for the Death Valley one, but I don't remember.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So these performances he's doing in the 1970s, what is your perspective on what he's doing? Because you're very much his girlfriend at the time.

MS. SMITH: Okay, so this is when — this is when we get to this page about — after — I was there for the one with all the little ships and all that kind of stuff, because he got all burned out. And then he started doing nothing but flying paper airplanes and making toys and stuff. He kind of, like — he kind of got kind of cuckoo. And this is all the early work. And I was pretty much around for that, but

once it starts getting into these big sculptures and stuff, I wasn't there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So yeah, you were together. I think about —

MS. SMITH: Oh, no, no, no. That's not true, there's more of them. There's a bunch of them here that I am, because they're not done chronologically. This is the one at the Newport Harbor Art Museum in 1972, where people could come in and stare at him or talk to him or whatever. And this is the *C.B.T.V.* one when he did the — when his video stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 1973, where he takes out the ads on television? And [yes — AS]—

MS. SMITH: And this is one where he — this is one that I wasn't there for, but the one where he tried — was like drowning in the water in the basement.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *Velvet Water* in 1974.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The performance where —

[Cross talk.]

MS. SMITH: Oh, and this one, this one, I was actually there. I was up on the thing with him I'm pretty sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The whole time?

MS. SMITH: No. This is where he's on the ledge in the gallery for —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

MS. SMITH: — I need the title of this if we're doing it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So let's just — no.

MS. SMITH: Anyway, I don't remember what the name of that one was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This one is called —

MS. SMITH: I think I was there, but I wasn't up on the ledge. This is the one — these start being the video ones, like —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *White Light, White Heat*. And so, when he goes up on the ledge inside the Ronald Feldman Gallery, he is there for almost a week. And you were there in New York with him.

MS. SMITH: I'm not 100 percent sure. I think I am, but — I think I was, but I don't remember clearly.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So as an artist yourself coming up in the world at that time, you're already having a lot of shows, what is your perspective of what's going on with your boyfriend?

MS. SMITH: My boyfriend? I don't know. It's hard to go back. And it's so much water under the bridge from here to, you know, in the late '70s and stuff like that. I was the — I have a note on there, which

is funny, which is the — I'm — whenever we went to Europe, I was *la ragazza di* Chris Burden, you know? Yeah, I always got the, you know, the — [Burden — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The girlfriend.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, second fiddle girlfriend, something like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. But did his performance — did his approach to making art have any impact on your approach?

MS. SMITH: In terms of what I did?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In terms of the seriousness with which you pursued your work, or the relentlessness with which you — as you discussed it — you described it just a minute ago?

MS. SMITH: Well, I think that the — I think I had my own version of relentlessness, but it didn't really come out until I started building more big, you know, my big — my big, public artworks [... - AS]. And I think — I don't know. I think it was a really intense, you know, boyfriend, girlfriend relationship. And it lasted a few years. And neither of us is that person anymore. So, you know, but it was interesting. [... - AS] I was there, that kind of stuff. It was interesting. It was interesting to see it. It's sort of funny to be — to have the — you know, to have the book, but —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you have a sense of the importance of the work that was being done by him or, at that time, that this was really the, kind of, performance art nobody was really doing it — [Chris Burden (died in 2015) — AS]

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I thought it was — [his own style — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — and seemed, like, very important?

MS. SMITH: I thought it was important. I thought it was serious. I didn't — I think if you — these things are really — these things are really meaningful, once he — I mean, they look a lot more jazzy, I mean, in the book than the actual experience of some of them, like the — like the, you know — like the one where, you know, where he could be electrocuted, but he really couldn't be electrocuted because he — you know, he wasn't close to the thing. They're more about the scariness of your — in your mind of the piece there, the — you know, they're more about making — creating doubts and uneasiness in the people that see them or, even more, the people that hear about them later, like where they become, like, a word-of-mouth thing or, you know, where they, you know — where they sound creepy or, you know, or like the one — [laughs] — the Utah art museum [Utah Museum of Art] where he's, like, in a — hanging in a canvas thing and stuff like that. Some of them are sort of — have like a, kind of, charming, funny quality to them. And some of them, once you get to the ones — once you get to the toy ones, it means he's kind of fritzed out, and he started running around in little shorts and — you know what I mean? — and throwing his little model airplanes in the air on the beach and stuff. He started — he got fritzed out after a while. And he needed to regroup. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was that the end of your relationship?

MS. SMITH: No, because I don't know what all the dates are.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I think —

MS. SMITH: No, it was — our relationship ended before the toy thing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when you — now, you broke up with him. And do you remember why?

MS. SMITH: Do I remember why? Yeah, because it was a, pretty much, a one-sided relationship, where he was the artist, and I was the gopher or the girlfriend or whatever you want to call it. And I just thought, I don't need this. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, did you feel like it was impinging on your own ability to make art?

MS. SMITH: Well, it was just too intense, that's all. It wasn't any different than anybody else's boyfriend, girlfriend thing. It's just one of those things where it was too much him and not enough me. That's all. I mean, you know, it wasn't like, you know, if I — I mean, Barbara was his — was more like a wife than I was. She did, you know, and she had another job, but she was more — she was more — she was — I don't know. She was — they were more of a, you know — like a more of — a more normal couple. [Laughs.] Didn't mean to use the word normal, but —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I see right here, in 1977, you have your first solo show at the Holly Soloman Gallery in New York.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that's right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now that's probably right in the middle of this time period, around this time period. And that must have made some sort of impression on you. It's your first solo show in New York. Big gallery. Well-respected gallery. How did that come about? How did you meet Holly and Horace [Soloman]? And how did you end up coming into the gallery?

MS. SMITH: I'm trying to think how I met Holly. I — oh, I know how I met Holly. Actually, it used to be really a lot easier to go back and forth to New York and whatever, when it was real easy to fly. And you just got the red eye. And it cost, like, \$100 or something, so that wasn't any big deal. And I had a show — what year? I looked this up because I just had that Holly Solomon —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, here, you had — it's 1977. And the works from 1977 are — include an important piece for you, I think, the Walt Whitman pieces, the *Leaves of Grass*. And they include all the collage elements and the — here, and they have — and the — and bits of that are — bits of the poem obviously. And —

MS. SMITH: The one that was the big deal one was *Alexis Smith Presents USA*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But that's later.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, but that's — I thought you were talking about Holly Solomon and —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But not in '77. I don't think that's in '77.

MS. SMITH: No, no, I know. I just thought you were talking about Holly Solomon.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Your show is in '77. The Holly Solomon, I remember — do you remember — and I'm assuming that you're showing the *Leaves of Grass* pieces and the *Beauty and the Beast* and those — [inaudible] — ? You're still doing the collages on the wall that refer to the early books, but Holly Solomon in 1977 is an interesting gallery because she was supportive, I think,

of artists working in these unconventional ways.

MS. SMITH: Well, I started painting on the walls in 1980, which — this is actually a show at Rosamund Felsen's of things on the wall. And then — but it didn't really come to fruition until Holly Solomon, the Holly Solomon show called *USA* in 1981.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: And that's when I started painting all the stuff on the walls and making — you know, having the, you know, the fake entry through the garden and, you know, that kind of stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, there's — in the early '80s, your work definitely becomes more, shall I say — I wouldn't — I guess I could use the word "theatrical." And certainly, you start using three-dimensional elements.

MS. SMITH: There's another one that belongs to Holly Solomon. And this is that, you know, that corrugated stuff that they used to have, like, in liquor store displays and stuff like that?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] This was the piece for — this is *Isadora*.

MS. SMITH: Right. This is *Isadora*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: From '81.

MS. SMITH: Right. And so, this is like my version of taking this corrugated paper and then, you know, making it into a landscape, so that these things could, you know, could float on it, you know. I mean, it seems kind of crazy to do. This was something that you could take somewhere and hang on the wall in an art fair and unroll the whole thing, and stick the collages and the little silver fish on. And she was on, so.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you — how did you make the transition? Tell me again about — I think it's the — when did you start working with Richard Sedivy?

MS. SMITH: [Rich — AS] Sedivy.[1980, scenic artist and letterer — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sedivy. You started working with Richard Sedivy, who was — did backdrop painting. And you learned a lot about backdrop painting and prop making and things. And that certainly seems to have changed the work and taken it into a —

MS. SMITH: Oh, in terms of the backgrounds and stuff like that, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In terms of making it more —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — larger scale.

MS. SMITH: I think — I'm not sure whether I ripped a part of this one, but this is one of the first ones, which was the "Hello Hollywood, Goodbye Farm, It Gave McDonald, That Needed Charm, Burma-Shave" [*Hello Hollywood*, 1980] that has the bale of hay and the, you know, the palm trees and stuff and was — this one was at Riko's, I think.[Rosamund's or Holly's — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year is that?

MS. SMITH: Was it 1980?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: '80. So what is the process for you by which you evolve from doing these frame collages to using — that's mine.

MS. SMITH: Oh.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To using — painting backdrops, adding props, adding three-dimensional elements? How did the evolution take place for you?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I don't know how it did. It just — I think in the sense of — I think I started the — when I started painting the backgrounds, I started doing it where I could do it here. And then, when, you know — that I, you know — that I had a — somebody to help me like Rich to paint the palm trees or do something like that. And then, I realized I could do like pounce patterns, which, you know, are like paper things, where you make the little holes and you put — then you can, you know, you can put the marks up on the wall and stuff like that. And then, you could paint them wherever you were. And because they weren't detailed like the palm trees or any of the things that Rich did, they were mostly like silhouettes and, you know, outlines, and stuff like that.

I could do them — I could just, you know, take these rolled-up things and roll them out, and then pounce them on the wall with — by putting little charcoals, these little poked lines in the outlines.

And then, go back and paint it, and, you know, paint it on the spot. And in — so it was sort of an instant installation. And it had all been worked out beforehand, and the scale of it. And then, it just had to be painted right on the wall and have the works go on top of it. And so, once I was able to move the technology so you didn't have to take the sign here with you, but you could just get somebody to work on it at — paint it at the other end with — it was a simple outline and stuff like that, it made it possible to take — send those things back east and make them work. [Pounce pattern — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: So —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — what — and did the involvement, increasing involvement with Hollywood at this point, because you were doing the *Chandlerisms* [1978], and you really — seems to me like you're doing a lot of work in dealing with Hollywood myths, Hollywood ideas. Did that contribute to this, kind of, three-dimensional, theatrical aspect of your work that evolves in the '80s?

MS. SMITH: I guess so. I'm not sure. It was just one of those things where you do the next thing, and then you do the next thing. You know, and each — every time you do it, you change it a little, or you refine it a little, or you do it — some of it — like I said, some of it was refined in ways where it was mostly refined, so that I could send the drawings in rolls back, and put them up without having to have somebody go with me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: You know what I mean? There were a lot of things that were just — ways to — what do you call it? Like to make the — make it so that I could do what I needed to do in a more efficient — in an efficient way. And a lot of those things evolved into the big pounce patterns that we made to do the big, public artworks and put the details of the — where the metal work was going to be on

the floors of the LA Convention Center.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now —

MS. SMITH: I mean, a lot of the stuff that started out as installations wound up being ways to, you know — technology that could be transferred over into public art.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now before this, I should say way before — like a little bit before this, in the early '70s, you were working for Frank Gehry?

MS. SMITH: I was, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: After school, after college. Yes? Do you remember the years you actually were working for him?

MS. SMITH: I worked for him after I was in college. And I'm not sure. I think I worked there about — when I was — I'd say I got a job there in about 1975, maybe. I'm not sure exactly when, but I did work for Frank.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did you do for —

MS. SMITH: [I was the girl Friday — AS] I could have stayed there forever.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did you do for him?

MS. SMITH: I was the person that could be spared. I was the person who didn't have a real — real serious function that — [inaudible]. And so, I just did whatever needed to be done. If they needed an extra hand to make a model I, you know, I helped them. The thing I did that was the most amusing and the most meaningful, which I remember the most, and this is ironic because, I probably told you this, but we had dinner with Frank's son Alejo and his girlfriend, Carrie [Jenkins], who's — [inaudible] — last night. Anyway, so I worked for Frank. And I don't know. I did, you know, I just did whatever was low-skilled work that they needed somebody to do. And mostly I kept him company, like I drove back and forth with him to [U]SC and I helped him so he wouldn't feel embarrassed about what to say to the students. I kind of was a translator. And yeah, we were — we got to be really good friends. And we're still really good friends, actually. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many years did you work for Frank?

MS. SMITH: I didn't work for him that long. I was always one of those people that was looking to work in their own studio, but I worked there — I must have worked there till about '75.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well —

MS. SMITH: I don't know whether I worked there longer or not. I don't remember the exact year.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When did you start then?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I don't know when I start. I —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So if —

MS. SMITH: I'm guessing that, I got out of college. And then, I got a really crappy job working for an insurance company. And I toughed it out for a couple years. And then, Vija came along and took pity

on me. And she got me — she told Frank to hire me. And so, I worked for Frank.

And I worked for Frank for three or four years, I'm not sure how long.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Like '72 to '75 about?

MS. SMITH: Something like that, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Same time you were with Chris Burden or some crossover.

MS. SMITH: Maybe. There might have been some crossover there —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Crossover.

MS. SMITH: But —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's a very heady group of people to be involved in. You're like —

MS. SMITH: I know, but see, I knew — what was really weird is that I've lived — I led a charmed life. I really did. It was like a — the, you know, like the — I don't know, like the world just came and got me. I really had no expectations of having all these things happen to me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, given the fact that you — later your work becomes more and more three-dimensional and architectural, did working for an architect have an influence on your interests in that way?

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah. Actually, it had the one — it had the most important influence of all, which is that I worked for Frank, I hung out in the office, I was there all the time, and I knew something that you would only know if you were in the office, which is that they told people they would build things they had no idea how to build. None, zero, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And they mocked up these cardboard things about when, you know, like the way they wanted it to look. And then, they just — you know, then they just tried to figure out how to do it. But they'd already signed the contracts by the time they were, like, trying to figure out how the heck they were going to do it. And if it hadn't been for that, I never would have done all those big floors and all that kind of stuff, because that's the secret. The secret is to say you can do it, even if you don't know how to do it. Right? That's like the magic key. You know, that's probably a good place to stop.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, no, because I got to say, at the same, it's like probably right after you leave Frank Gehry's, you start working with Jerry Solomon. And it says here you made frames.

MS. SMITH: What do you mean? It does not.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In 1975 [... - AS]

MS. SMITH: Oh, I couldn't possibly have.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: Where does it say that? No, it doesn't say that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anyway, so — it does. So you did not —

MS. SMITH: Well, show me where then.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you not work for Jerry Solomon? [... - AS] Hang on.

MS. SMITH: I don't think so.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Maybe it's over here.

MS. SMITH: I think I worked for Jerry Solomon, huh? [I never worked for Jerry Solomon — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, well, you don't have a memory of something with dealing with frames? Is it maybe something else here? I'll pause while we do this.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

[Audio break.] [That's right but he's not as easy to cook with as he used to be and charges more money — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you weren't working for Jerry Solomon. You were working with people at Jerry Solomon's framing —

[Audio break.]

MS. SMITH: I still work with Jerry Solomon, he's gotten to be a big pill! [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you talk about how that —

MS. SMITH: This is a Jerry Solomon item right here! [Sound of crinkling paper.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It says — you started talking about how you were — how it affected the way you were making frames. Let's talk about that, because those frames end up coming — becoming a big part of the work you do.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah. Yeah, I think so, too. I think that when I started making — you know, when I started making work, I realized — well, like look at that one, right? [The kind of frames I could make at Jerry Solomon — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: That one's a, you know, it's like a — it's like the color's perfect, right? The — it's got silk screening and writing on it that has some funny text. And it's got — you know, it's got the three things. It's got the images and the text. It's got the background. And it's got the — and the frame that goes, you know, perfectly seamlessly with it and looks like they were all found at the same time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the frame's created for it? [Yes — AS]

MS. SMITH: Right, exactly. And so —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what did — what did — did you — what does Jerry Solomon's — did you, like, tell him what you wanted? Or did you work it out with him to create these very special

frames? [His name is over the door, but I work with David, to suggest finishes and colors, etc. — AS]

MS. SMITH: Well, he's a big — you know, he's just the guy whose name is on the thing, but they had all kinds of carvers, and they have — that's a big operation. They have tons of people. And they can make all kinds of faux finishes and stuff. And you just, you know, they have — well, here we go.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did —

MS. SMITH: Just hang on, I'll be right back. I'll show this because I —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How — wait —

MS. SMITH: Because I — my whole principle —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did you evolve your interest in frames?

MS. SMITH: Because I did it the way I did everything else, which is that I realize that — usually, everything that I did, I did because I realized that there was a way to control it. That's basically what everything boils down to, right? So this frame or this frame, these are all things that are made so that they so that the swirls on this look like the images on the, you know, on the silk, right? It's the same thing. So, this is a crackle finish. And this is one of — this is the underpainting for a metal leaf of some sort. These are both natural woods. The most important thing was to try to get the whole thing to work together and to — basically, to control everything, and — make sure that all of the decisions were coherent decisions in terms of, you know, there aren't that many things. Like, this is a found frame that's broken, and you know, and stuff like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which —

MS. SMITH: But it has all this weird stuff in it and kind of all hangs together. Yeah, that was probably a found frame, but these are frames — like this is a faux finish that looks old. And then, you paint it. And it looks — you know what I mean? And then, you know, it — the color goes into it. And it looks like it's been around for a really long time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it made you more — it made your work more object-oriented. There are these collage pieces.

MS. SMITH: Well, I definitely — when I started making the pieces with frames, as opposed to the Plexi boxes, the pieces — they had — it was a changeover in a really particular way, which is that, when I was making the sequential pieces in the boxes, they all had narratives and stuff. But once I started to control the frames and things like that, they either had silkscreen text that were silkscreened right onto the background, or they didn't have any text.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, the text starts to disappear from the work as the frames become more prominent.

MS. SMITH: In the '90s. In the '90s because when you — once you get to — some of these ones back here have text on them, the '90s ones, but some of them don't.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: Like, some of these have — a lot of these even — a lot of these back here have silkscreen text and stuff on them. But once you get past the length of the — you know, past this

book, the ones recently haven't had hardly any of them. And mostly, they haven't had — they have the fancy frames, but they don't have the text. And the reason they don't have the text is because I don't have anybody to do it anymore. And so, if I want to do a text, and the piece is big, I get somebody to handle it, or — but I don't have the opportunity to silk screen the text on the Plexi anymore.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you moved away from the specific narrative in the course of your career. I mean, in the '70s, there's a specific narrative. In the '80s, there's less of a specific narrative. It seems as though time went on. you lost interest in having a, quote, having an actual narrative aspect to the way the work began.

MS. SMITH: Well, see, yeah, also, but — see, look at this one, this one here, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: Now you don't need — you — when you see this one, you don't need anything. You don't need any quote. You know exactly what that thing is, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

MS. SMITH: You do. You know exactly what that thing is.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What this little yellow thing is?

MS. SMITH: No, the collages.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or the whole picture. Yes, yes.

MS. SMITH: We're — yeah, that thing's a toothpick, but everybody knows what it is. And you don't need to — it doesn't need to — you don't need to talk about what it is because everybody who's going to get what it is, gets it. And anybody who doesn't get it is not going to get it anyway, right? [Laughs.] So I think that the — there was a serendipity between the fact that I couldn't really do the text anymore and the fact that, little by little, I realized that I don't really — I just stopped using the text, generally. A few of these pieces in here have a text, like the one — like the one with the hamburger, "Make Me One With Everything" [*Buddha's Feast*, 2002]. That one doesn't work without the text.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you did — for years, you did massive installations. I mean, now, people do installation art all the time, but I'm giving you credit for doing these painted installations in the early '80s. Like *Otis*, this is — you did one based on *Porgy and Bess* [*The Promised Land (Porgy and Bess)*, 1981].

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: With the text and then these enormous wall paintings with keyboards and —

MS. SMITH: I know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — ocean liners.

MS. SMITH: It's amazing, isn't it?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, *Cathay* [1981], another major installation with these small collages attached, with all this wall painting and props. What was, again, the role of installation art for you at this point? I mean, this is fairly —

MS. SMITH: Well, I think it — my husband says that I'm an only child, and that's why I'm so bossy. And I think that probably is — the font of all this comes from the fact that I'm an only child, and I have all these ideas and can't do them all by myself, so I boss people around. And I certainly — I don't do it so much anymore, because I don't do the public art or any of that kind of stuff. But mostly, the things that I made, I made because I could. I made them because I — you know, I could either do it, or I could get people who could do it to help me.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you weren't driven to do these big — you were driven to do these big installations, I take it?

MS. SMITH: Well, I don't know if I was driven — ?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In the early '80s?

MS. SMITH: Driven? I wanted to do them.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: But I couldn't have done them without the help of, you know, Rich Sedivy. And I couldn't have done them without Jerry Solomon. And I couldn't have done them without, you know, various people, like Norm Laich [the sign painter and artist — AS] now does some painting on some of my stuff. But I don't do as many of the words anymore because I don't have as — you know, it's kind of — I tend to do the things that come along. And, you know, the ones — sometimes they need words, and sometimes they don't. And a lot of the things that I do now, I don't need any words, or else the words are in the objects.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now in 1985, I think this might be — if not the first show —

MS. SMITH: This might be *Jane*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I wrote — no, I wrote about *Jane*. I know I wrote about the *Jane* exhibition. And that was, I think, I still think of that as a bit of a breakthrough exhibition for you.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think it was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because it's all about the different representations of Jane and different forms of populating —

MS. SMITH: Well, it was all about women, and all about —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: About women.

MS. SMITH: And all about all the ideas that, you know, Calamity Jane and, you know, Jane, Tarzan and Jane and, you know, Jane Eyre. And, you know, there were all these Janes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Jane Doe.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, there were all these — and it was sort of just the symbolic idea about Jane as being a, you know, a word for woman. It was a slang word for woman. And all these different things

were different prototypes of the way people think about women and what their roles are. And so, it was — that was probably — I'd already, you know, sort of been through that consciousness-raising thing and, you know, all that kind of stuff. And I was probably, you know, pretty well into thinking what the, you know, these ideas about, you know, how are women different from men and how — you know, what's their iconography? And you know, I don't know. It's just — I think it's between the women's group I was in and the women's lib and the — just the — just, you know, I mean, once I get into an idea, it's like the *Janes* are a thing. And then later on, I did the *On The Road* thing [And then Kerouac's *On the Road*]. And, you know, I just — it's just partly a — it's partly getting interested in the thing. And it's, you know, in the subject matter. And part of it's having the right materials in your arsenal to be able to make the point without being heavy handed or offending anybody, but sort of slipping in under the radar.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and you had another boyfriend at this time. And it's when I knew you. You were dating Coy Howard.

MS. SMITH: Oh yeah, that's right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Living together, I think? Living together?

MS. SMITH: Well, we weren't really living together, but we were an item anyway.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You were an item for a while there?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, quite a while.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So quite a while. And, of course, Coy Howard was an architect, an up-and-coming architect at the time, very involved in, like, a group of young architects coming up and getting a lot of attention in Los Angeles. And we talked at the time about how that was a kind of an influence because of his awareness of doing things in three dimensions and thinking in three dimensions and thinking on a large scale.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think he had an influence. I think he helped me, like, get into making my work more physical. And also, I think a lot of things came together. I think Coy encouraged me. And you know, I had my women's group to be thinking about, you know, where Jane is a synonym for women and the women's roles and stuff like that. And you just — it's just a whole bunch of things converging at the right moment.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: And then, after you get to be a certain age and you've made a certain amount of work, then everything is of interest. And you, you know, you're just adding into an existing body. And then, that has a lot to do with what materials I can find as my raw material, what I make, which is not something that — it wasn't that — so much that way when I was young. It was — there was more somebody, like, steering the boat.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] How long were you with Coy?

MS. SMITH: I don't know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Three years? [Ended in 1984 — AS]

MS. SMITH: I think — I know when I was — I know when I — I think — my guess is that I was with

him since about 1978 or '79. I'm not sure. Maybe even 1980, but I broke up with him. I don't know. I just wasn't happy. I just — there was something about it. It was too managed. And I wasn't really attracted to him anymore. And my father died in — let's see what year. I mean, he died in 1984. I'm trying to think of when he died. I think he died in the summer of 1984. And I don't know whether this is something that you want everybody in the whole world to know, I certainly don't want to want to embarrass Coy, but I — my father died, and I was so [messed up — AS] already — [laughs] — I don't like to say this in print because it's maybe too personal — but I was so [upset — AS] already, I just thought, shit, I should just break up with Coy, too, and, you know, and just go through all the whole business at one time and start over.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] So you broke up with him about eight —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, no, I don't know what —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — about '85? [1984, during the Olympics — AS]

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I think I broke up with him in '84, actually. I think I broke up with him when my father died. But maybe '84, '85. I'm not sure. But anyway, these are things that are a little bit delicate that I wouldn't want to embarrass Coy about, you know, that part. I'm not sure the part about my father dying and not wanting to — you know what I mean? Those are the kinds of things that I think are iffy in terms of putting them in the, you know, whatever. But that's why — that's what happened.[My father died during the 1984 Olympics. I was so upset, I decided to break up with Coy and start over — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's important. That's when I first met you, and I remember him — your talking about him helping the work that — not helping, but really being a force and making — in accentuating the three-dimensionality and the size of the work.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think being around Coy was really good. And he's a really good architect and a really good designer and all that kind of stuff. And I think that the only thing was, eventually, I — it just felt like I needed — I just needed a new start. I don't know how to describe it. I just did. After my father died, it was really wrenching, and I was really [upset — AS]. And I just thought, need a new start. And if you put it that way, I don't think it will be so offensive to Coy, you know what I mean? [I broke up with Coy and got a new start — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well —

MS. SMITH: I just needed a new start, that's all.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it's, you know —

MS. SMITH: And you can see it in the work. You can see how I kind of changed where I was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that — I think *Jane* happens after Coy, right?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And it's a new — it's kind of different from the women's stuff that's before.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Because — and there are lots of things, because *Jane* is —

MS. SMITH: It's about me, kind of in its own way. It's about female power.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The *Jane* series?

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MS. SMITH: It's just like a new start, kind of.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that was a super powerful series.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that was a good show. That really was a good show.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it's —

MS. SMITH: And it was — came out of me doing a lot of soul searching, too. So I think — and I think that's sort of when I started doing some fledgling public art, too.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It could be.

MS. SMITH: And I did some big pieces. That's *On the Road* you're in now.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you did the *On the Road* series based on the —

MS. SMITH: On Jack Kerouac's —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Jack Kerouac's book, obviously, in 1988.

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But I want to get to — I just want to talk quickly about your first public art piece.

MS. SMITH: What was it? Oh, the one in MacArthur Park?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it MacArthur Park, the first one?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I'm not sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And MacArthur Park I remember because that's when you had the neon lights turned on.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I know on that — those were beautiful, but they took them away.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They took them away?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, are they still there?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, my memory of that — I should —

[Audio break.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, *The Grand* in 1983, that installation that you did at the Keeler Grand Foyer [DeVos Performance Hall] —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that was —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

MS. SMITH: Hang on, we had a picture —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That sort of launches it?

MS. SMITH: — that's this one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, that starts to launch —

MS. SMITH: That's this one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That starts to launch another part of this three-dimensionality that —

MS. SMITH: That's this.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — we're talking about.

MS. SMITH: And these things are neat. And I don't know what kind of shape it is now, but the woman who commissioned it was still riding her broom around it, keeping them from wrecking it, like, up until a few years ago. [Mary Anne Keeler — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, as you — so your first — I would say that's the most — really, significant, three-dimensional architectural work is in 1983 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And after that, you do one in '84, you do *California* for the office building in Santa Rosa. Then you do another major one, *Niagara* [1985], in Lewiston, New York. [*Niagara*, granite marker (Margo Has?) — AS]

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That granite monument.

MS. SMITH: Now see, now that thing —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, you do —

MS. SMITH: — that thing — I can't remember. That thing came — that thing appeared again, but the Lewiston monument.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At the Artpark.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And I think they're still keeping it at Artpark, but I'm not sure what the — what finally came out of it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And *Mini-monuments* is what you did for

MacArthur Park in —

MS. SMITH: MacArthur Park. And that one, I think, like I said, I think the bronze suitcase is still there. I don't know about the one that has the terrazzo with the silhouette, with the dancing silhouette. So I don't know that that one's still there or not.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that was — a part of that was that you had a bronze suitcase in the park. And you also had them light the neon lights on the sign — neon light sign that was on one of the old buildings facing MacArthur Park.

MS. SMITH: Right, and then the third thing was the terrazzo thing with the bronze outline of the dancing figures.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The dancing —

MS. SMITH: It has —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — mice.

MS. SMITH: No, the dancing couple.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Dancing couple. And, but I want to get at here, before we keep moving —

MS. SMITH: Alright.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — is just say, really, just in a few years — and again, this is when you're with Coy Howard, the architect. So I mean, you start doing what is really architecture, in a way, or interior architecture. You're now — and tell me about that combination of working for Frank Gehry —

MS. SMITH: Well, the park —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — and Coy Howard and your art all coming together in these increasingly large architectural environments.

MS. SMITH: You know, and I've looked back on it. And I'm amazed that I was able to do that [much — AS]. I mean, I don't know. I know that that — those opportunities came about, like, right in, you know, 1990, like, right when we — right after when we were married, but I can't imagine how — I literally can't — I can't — I mean, I suppose I could go through my papers. And I can look at, you know, like the paperwork that goes with the different projects and stuff like that, but I can't imagine how I talked those people into those terrazzo pieces.

I mean, it's like a — it's like I'm — you have, like, these teeny, little things in MacArthur Park. And then, starting in 1990, you have these giant, 2,500-square-foot, or 35 — I mean, 2,500 — 25,000-square-feet, white, terrazzo floor for the one side of the LA Convention Center and another 35,000-square-foot one. One of the night sky and one of the, you know, a map of the earth, with Los Angeles as its, like, focus, from the — from the — it's a special perspective [sic], you know, like — what do you call it, like — I'm blanking out on the word. It's the — it's basically an accurate view of the globe, but with, you know, with California at its center, right? Instead of the normal projection, right? And — [Perspective — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And these are the two floors of the Convention Center?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, and they're still there, although they went through that thing of threatening to tear them out in order to have a football stadium, so.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But that died.

MS. SMITH: So, maybe.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And —

MS. SMITH: If it starts up again, I'll be riding my broom around.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it's fast. I mean, you went from those little MacArthur Park things. You did the *Snake Path* in 1992 for the Stewart Collection down at UC San Diego.

MS. SMITH: No, I think it was a little bit later than — is that what it says? [Giant Book — Milton's *Paradise Lost* - AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 1992.

MS. SMITH: Really? Well, then, the other ones are — then they're all at the same time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, '92 is *the Snake Path*, '93 are the Convention Center floors. So you were kind of working on them, that terrazzo concept. [epoxy terrazzo — AS]

MS. SMITH: Yeah, sort of — I must have been working on everything at the same time. And I had a really great assistant named Christine Lawson. [Christine Lawson was my assistant at Ohio State and did much of the heavy lifting on my project at the Schottenstein. But I believe she stayed in Columbus and settled there — AS] And she went back to Columbus, to Ohio State to do the job — to run the job at the, you know, for the giant athletic figures at Ohio State. And she fell in love and got married and, like, in the middle of the job, never to be heard from again, right?

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That would have been fairly stressful.

MS. SMITH: Right. Well, it was weird. And not only was it weird, it was kind of like I always thought — she was like a — like I said, she was a young architect. And she — I wanted her to be my partner, right? But she, like I said, she went off to Columbus, she was like a big girl, and you know, she'd never been really considered beautiful, you know, and this — you know, out in the, you know, boonies, she was considered to be, like, a total babe, and she just went wild. And that was the end of that. Don't you think that's funny? [Christine Lawson — AS]

[They laugh.]

Sad but true. So that's one of the things that went wrong with my big, you know, career, you know, in public art.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you got them all done. You got them —

MS. SMITH: I did. I got them all done.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You got all those done.

MS. SMITH: I got them all done. And not only that, I got something really amazing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You got the Ohio State one done?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, but the most — the best one was — is that I got the "Job of the Century" award

from the National Terrazzo and Mosaic Association in 2000. And they took us to Banff, Canada for this, like — and there were all the big terrazzo companies in the United States there, all these guys and stuff. And I was — it was incredible. I mean, it was really great to see these guys because they were all Italians. Every single one of them was in an Italian family, right? And we had this really great vacation. And these guys were, you know, wonderful, and all this kind of stuff. And I — so I said to these guys, like, “Well, gee, you guys are all Italians. Isn’t there anybody else in the, you know, industry, who’s like not an Italian?” And they said, “Well, sometimes people try to get in the industry, but you know, they never last.” [Job of the century, 200 — took us to Banff Canada — me and my husband Scott — AS]

[They laugh.]

But anyway, so I think that what happened, I mean, I don’t think you could do those things now because of the fact that the kids didn’t want to take over the industries and the — you know, there’s a few places out here, but the place that, you know, the big place out here is this place Corradini. And they don’t do — they only do cementitious terrazzo, which is — this other stuff is the — it’s got all the mother of pearl and the glass and all this stuff in it, it’s all this plastic stuff. That kind of stuff is really — that stuff is really hard. And that’s the one where you get all kinds of little, you know, color variations and, you know, and brightness variations and stuff. And so, that — I think that world probably has really taken a blow.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and during this time, so during the ’90s, you basically were — did public art more than you did other things. And one thing —

MS. SMITH: Well, I did, except for that I had that big Richard Armstrong retrospective show that was here and in — [1990 — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, you had your retrospective. And at the — you had a retrospective —

MS. SMITH: At the Whitney and a retrospective here. So, it’s not like it wasn’t — that it wasn’t really busy during that period. And that’s when we first got married and I thought — poor Scott!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was going to say — well, let’s pause for a moment. What I wanted to say was, like in the middle of this, or like — and then, to continue you — Coy Howard is gone. And you are single for a while. And then, you meet your old friend Scott Grieger, who —

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — you’ve known for a long time as a friend.

MS. SMITH: And what — actually what happened was sort of funny is that we had this whirlwind romance kind of, even — and even though we’d known each other for a long time. When we first met, he was with — he was with Barbara, and I was with Chris, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He was with Barbara Burden, and you were with Chris Burden.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, and I was with Chris, right. But then, so we — the reason that we — I was going to Skowhegan. [An art residency — AS] And I couldn’t take him. And he couldn’t go with me unless we were married. And so, we got married.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You were going to Skowhegan to do what?

MS. SMITH: To teach.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when was that?

MS. SMITH: It was in 1990.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so, you got married so he [Scott — AS] could come along?

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And that was great because we knew everybody, and everybody was like laughing, “They’re marrying each other,” kind of stuff. And it was great because we had a whole summer, where nobody knew us, that we could like — that we could just — you know, we didn’t have to hear about it. And by the time we got home, we were married, so. [Scott and I got married so he could go to Skowhegan and we have been married for 26 years — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you’d had a lot — ate a lot of lobster, if I remember correctly?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, really, no kidding. So that’s — I don’t know. That’s probably about — I don’t know. You’re pretty well brought up to date on the last — on the —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, the other thing that happened in the ’90s is you were busy with your retrospective. You were busy with all the public art. And you stopped teaching.

MS. SMITH: I did, I stopped teaching.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You had been teaching at UCLA.

MS. SMITH: I did.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What years did you teach at UCLA?

MS. SMITH: You know, I don’t really know. I think I must have quit teaching in — I’m not sure. I’m not sure when I quit teaching. I think in the early ’90s, like maybe like ’92 or ’93.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you were considered a very good teacher? Did you ever miss it?

MS. SMITH: I miss it now, because I’m not that busy, but I don’t miss it that much. I mean, Scott’s a really good teacher. He’s a much better teacher than me. I mean, you know, I teach workshops or I teach, you know — I sub for people, or you know, like Laddie [John] Dill has a — sometimes has a nice little class at Otis, and he goes out of town. And I take his class and stuff. Like I said, sometimes I miss it just because it — I’m a little — it’s more, I spend more time by myself. But I don’t know, you’re a writer. You know what I mean? You have your husband, but you don’t have kids and whatever. And you know, there’s times when you’re by yourself. And sometimes it’s too much. And sometimes it’s too little. So, it’s just the way it is, but I always make stuff, so I’m distracted.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, should we pause here?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I think it’s good. I think we’ll do another one on —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

[END OF CARD TWO.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Alexis Smith at the

artist's studio in Venice, California on April 14th, 2014 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number three. Now I had a little technical glitch, but we're back, and we're recording. And we're talking about the public art and specifically, we last were speaking about your work from the late '80s and how it made a big transition into working in public art. And let's talk — revisit what we were just discussing about the *Snake Path*. You said that the *Snake Path*, which is — was completed in the late '90s, but you know, really started in the early '90s, that you actually constructed a whole hillside that hadn't been there before.

MS. SMITH: That's true. And the hillside covered an addition to the library.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when you saw it originally, it was like all sort of — looked very naked and unbuilt, but now?

MS. SMITH: Well, it looked very naked in the sense it didn't have any plants on it. And it didn't have — it only had the, you know, the things that I had put there, like the granite bench and the giant granite book of *Paradise Lost* and the actual snake itself. But now, I think that the hillside has gotten so overgrown, that it looks like it was always there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's pause for a second. Actually, also, talk about the content of the *Snake Path* because now you've mentioned the book. What was the point of the *Snake Path* as a — conceptually, what was its theme?

MS. SMITH: Well, I think it was a — it was sort of a — I think that — I think I had — I had all kinds of allusions to knowledge and to — I don't know. It had allusions to knowledge, to the Garden of Eden, to — the snake actually came from the snake who was, sort of, the bearer of bad tidings in the Garden of Eden, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And I just took all those, sort of, metaphors about human knowledge and I tried to use them in a lot of different ways. I tried to use them as books. I tried to — I tried — I made the giant snake sort of as the focal point, because he was sort of the — the snake was the real critical being in the Garden of Eden. And definitely, he's certainly — you know, there's just Adam and Eve and the snake. And it's like — it's — with the physical thing, you first have it — you have it in your head first. And then, you start — and when you build it — me, when I built my — when I built my public artworks, I had, sort of, general ideas what they could or should be, based on where they were going to go, basically, and who was going to look at them. [*The Snake Path* at UCSD — AS]

And so, when I did the Convention Center, I knew that people would be going to the Convention Center that were from other places. And they didn't necessarily speak English and stuff like that. And so, when I did the terrazzo floors for the LA Convention Center, I did the map of the night sky, which everybody could recognize. It had the moon and the Milky Way and stuff like that. And I did the — and I did a map of the world, but I did a different projection, one that I did myself, where the Pacific Rim was at the center of the projection, as opposed to all the maps that you have, you know, in classes and stuff, just have like the whole world. And usually, the — I mean, it's unusual that the Pacific Ocean and the Pacific Rim would be, sort of, taken out and being made the focal point. And a lot of people from Asia travel here and stuff and go to events that, you know, in Los Angeles and stuff. And those people can find their way around and feel welcomed more because of the Pacific Rim feeling.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They can recognize —

MS. SMITH: Where they are.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — where they are.

MS. SMITH: And they know where they are. And they know where they're from. And they can see it all together, so.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's an interesting artistic conceit to sort of remake the world according to you being in the center of it.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, exactly. And if you could make the world, wouldn't you?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's, I think — that says a lot about — I mean, I think most artists would, yes.

MS. SMITH: But also — right, but also, I don't think it's just about me. I think it's just about deviating from convention, right, where it doesn't make sense to make a permanent floor with the LA Convention Center with the East Coast at the center. It's stupid.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It would be stupid. And so, when you say you came up with the ideas before you conceptualized these huge, complicated projects —

MS. SMITH: No, I came up with the ideas. I had to conceptualize them in order to be able to, you know, and — but I — but there's a big difference between having an idea and actually making it. And, you know, it's a — you know, I don't think the people can even — I don't — people don't even do public art at the level of cost and expense. And, I don't know, cost and time invested and having to get all the different agencies to sign on, and who's going to do it, and, you know, and you have to work really closely with an architectural firm because they — because it has to have stairways and elevators and food concessions. And you know, it has to have all this stuff, just to, you know, just — and so mine's just the frosting on the cake, but it's a really big, nasty, dirty, expensive frosting.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] And I always wondered, then and now, why bother? I mean, you could just sit in your studio and churn out works of art for sale at a gallery. Why —

MS. SMITH: Well, I've gone back to doing that, by the way. Just so you'll know. But I actually — I did it because I could, basically. And I — the reason I was — I — you know, everybody knows that I worked for Frank Gehry when I was a young person. And I didn't — and he was really great. And one thing I learned from him and about architecture, which probably he was probably — certainly the biggest influence, I mean, in this. And I worked in his office for, you know, several years. I knew he didn't — I knew he talked people into doing things when he didn't know how to do them. And that's the magic key, right? I mean, you have to decide, I want to make this thing. And then, you have to see whether you can.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So — but it was very nerve wracking?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, well, it was really nerve wracking. It was nerve wracking to — it was easier to think it up than it was to make it, that's for sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And at some point — but you kept going back for more. I mean, you didn't do just do one public art project. I mean, the *Snake Path* took, how many years to complete?

MS. SMITH: Oh, I don't — at this point, I don't even know. I think it probably took four or five years to

complete.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, they were taking years to complete, very time-consuming. And you —

MS. SMITH: Well, the bad one was the one at Ohio State because I had to fly back and forth for that [*Larger than Life*, 1999]. I think we practically got divorced over that one. [Laughs.] I don't think Scott's ever seen it. I've got the bucket list — [laughs] — and you see, I'm about to turn 65. So I've got my bucket list. And having Scott see the giant sports figures at Ohio State is on my bucket list.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Cool. Have you seen them since you finished it?

MS. SMITH: I haven't, but I'm sure they didn't do anything to them because, believe me, that thing was — that thing won the "Job of the Century" award from the National Terrazzo and Mosaic Association. And we — and they flew us to Banff, Canada, which was really radical.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now tell me about the concept for Ohio State.

MS. SMITH: Ohio State is gigantic sports figures. And there's a football player and a basketball player, and you know, they have all — they have — and there's a woman sports figure. And I think — I don't remember what sport she was, though. I think she was basketball. And they're just a whole, you know, group of them. Actually, we have — I'm going to look and see what they are if you want me to talk about.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, tell me about the concept behind — where was it actually executed and what did you do? Tell me more about that project.

MS. SMITH: Well, the sports center at Ohio State?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yep.

MS. SMITH: It was — I wish I — why don't you hang out for a second? I'm going to give this —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: If I put it on pause, I'll never be able to start this.

MS. SMITH: All right, it's right here. Okay, so here's two of the sports figures.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, okay.

MS. SMITH: There's the baseball player. And there's the female basketball player.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So these are huge, complex figures.

MS. SMITH: No, these are unbelievable. I could never make these —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how big are they?

MS. SMITH: Oh, they're huge. I can't even imagine. See how — well, look, the whole side of the whole lobby of the sports arena. And every one of the lobby — the doors of the lobbies had one of these giant sports — and they had baseball and women's basketball and football and something else. I don't even remember now what the fourth one was. And then, they also had fragmentary, you know, shots of, you know, like the — there's a — she's in front of a crowd with — and they all have background. And he's out in the football diamond with actual grass. And I just wouldn't ever be

able to do this again because the old — the terrazzo companies don't exist anymore because the young people didn't want to take over the industry because it was too gross.[The giant terrazzo sports figures at Ohio State — so my husband can see them — want my husband Scott to see them — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] That would — while we're here, but it's also true that you're a football fan.

MS. SMITH: I'm a big football fan.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And a college football fan.

MS. SMITH: Oh, I'm pretty much multi-denominational in football.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, you are, okay.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I pretty much watch anything.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: All right, but are — is football your only sport that you watch?

MS. SMITH: No, I'm pretty — I like to watch sports.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: I'm not as — I'm not very knowledgeable about anything but football.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this is really — when you got involved in this project, it was actually something that you knew about?

MS. SMITH: It was a labor of love as they call it. I mean, I did — I don't know how I ever got into this. I look at this and even I can't imagine. It's like the *Snake Path*. It's like I can't believe that I did these. I can't believe that I talked people into these things. I'm not — I can't believe that I found the people who were hungry enough to do something, you know, like — this was, like, their big chance to make art out of what they're — what they do. And it was just a lucky break. And it's hard to — I think, at this moment, it'd be really hard to do any of these things again because, like I said, the young people who were the — the young people didn't want to take over these companies.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now did you make more money doing this than you have on your — on the other art that you made?

MS. SMITH: No, I think it's kind of been up and down. I mean, you know, I probably made a lot of money doing it, but I also — you know, it was really stressful. And I was flying around all the time and arguing with people on the telephone. But the good thing about it, and this is probably hard to believe, is that I couldn't do it now. And the reason I couldn't do it now is something, really, that you'd never figure, like, in a million years. I couldn't do it now because I had to do it over the phone, because I had to make jokes with these people. And I had to, like, put my heads together with them and talk to them and find out what's really going on and then try to find a way to do it. But I had to know these people. I had to know their voices. And when things got really bad, I needed to crack jokes and stuff.

And I needed to have a really close, human connection with these people. And if it had been just email to these terrazzo companies, it would have never gotten built, never in a million years. It's pre

— I couldn't do these things again because of the — I — because — and you can't — it's a human interaction thing. And the email just wouldn't — it just was so complicated that I had to call — I had to talk to these people on the phone. And we had to go over, in minute detail, what was wrong and if there was a way to fix it, and — or if we could use it. Maybe we could go that way in some way, you know what I mean? We had to brainstorm, but you couldn't do it with email like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you were just talking about — we were talking earlier about how these seem to be — you seem to be really, really proud of your large-scale paintings.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, are you kidding?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I said, so what made you proud of these in particular?

MS. SMITH: Well, they're so incredibly radical. I mean, in the sense of the, you know, the fact that they have this level of detail of the grass behind the football player and the crowd behind the basketball player at Ohio State and stuff. I'm actually proud of all the public art that I made. I'm even — I'm proud of the Getty restaurant [*Taste*, 1997]. I haven't done any public — I mean, when you do public art, you know it's going to be there forever, or you hope it is, and in the case of the terrazzo, being really sad if it wasn't. And I think, in terms of the Getty restaurant, they've changed it, but they're trying to conserve it as best they can. [... - AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's talk about that because it was an amazing idea for them to do it.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it was amazing that they did — but they started — they do have — they did have — it's recently or I don't know. It happened over time. They changed this wall. And they, you know, made it more simple and took out the chair rail and stuff like that. But it's still there. I mean, most of it's still there. It's just been moved around a little, and one of the wall — one of the placements of the, you know, the wall changed a little — you know, the wainscoting on the bottom of the stuff on the wall has changed —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's talk about the concept of that because, obviously, that was a particularly amusing project for you.

MS. SMITH: Well, it was a great project for me because it was — because it was all the — I knew immediately that the theme of it should be taste. And I had just — Scott and I had just come back from the — [A trip to Bellagio in Italy, and Scott did beautiful little watercolors with gold leaf — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is the title of it? It has a fun title, too.

MS. SMITH: It's called *Taste*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] There you go. I thought it was something longer, but go ahead.

MS. SMITH: No, it was called *Taste*. But anyway, it was — we had just gotten back from Italy for that — from that residency in Bellagio and stuff. And I'd seen all these old —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, before you go on, talk to me briefly about that, about going to Bellagio, because this — now you're up to 1997.

MS. SMITH: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And tell me about going to Bellagio and to Italy and why you went there and what you did.

MS. SMITH: What I did? I think I chilled out a little. I took my husband, and we farted around. And he actually did a lot more work than I did. He did those illuminated manuscript drawings and stuff like that. And he was much more productive than I was. I was still blown from all the public art, stuff like that. But I found some stuff recently that — some paper pieces that I did were — which were funny that people gave me stuff, you know, like started collecting little pieces of flotsam and jetsam to give me little, you know, like wrappings from Italian things and stuff like that. And I made some stuff. [Enjoyed the other scholars — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did — why did you go there? I can't remember.

MS. SMITH: I went there because I applied.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was it? What exactly did you apply for?

MS. SMITH: It's a residency.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A resident —

MS. SMITH: It's like a — I think it was like a six weeks or two months residency at Bellagio. And you can look them up. And like I said, I was just totally blown after doing a lot of this public art and stuff. And so —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When you —

MS. SMITH: So that was great. And we got to go together [Scott and I — AS]. And we had a really wonderful time in Italy. And we made stuff. And that's when the — I got the idea from the — when I came back, they asked me to do the Getty restaurant. And that's where all the imagery from the Getty restaurant came from, was from the residency in Bellagio. I mean, I didn't do [much — AS] over there. And Scott did a bunch of beautiful watercolors and stuff. But when I got back, I knew — I had all those pictures in my head. Like all these pictures come from Italy, you know. The chair, the violin, the vase, the — you know, the food. It was just the level of sensuality in Italy that was so profound that seemed like it was just going to be perfect in the restaurant. Right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] And you know, certainly perfect for the Getty [Restaurant — AS], with their long association with Rome and —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, no, I thought it was a — I mean, the thing about all these works, and I guess the reason I felt so proprietary about them, is I really did try to make these things so that they — so that people would love them and appreciate them and not throw them away or, you know, or get rid of them, or change them too much. So, you know, in some cases, they have, and in some cases they haven't. And there's a few of them, like the two — the two that have issues are the *Red Carpet* that I did for Dave [Hickey]'s show at SITE Santa Fe [*Beau Monde*, 2001] —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's see what — that's quite a bit later. Before we go on to that, let's — well, we can go forward, and then go back. The Santa Fe project is —

MS. SMITH: What year is that?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — in 2002. You did —

MS. SMITH: Those are the — so it's five years between the Getty restaurant.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right, you were asked to do the — Dave Hickey was asked to organize the biennial exhibition at — for SITE Santa Fe in 2002. And you did *Red Carpet*. Now tell me about that?

MS. SMITH: Well, it's a gigantic — it's actually this. [25 inches by 35 inches, giant serape rug for SITE Santa Fe — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: Only — and so —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So like a mix?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I have a little cheesy — I don't think it's Mexican, but I have a little cheesy sarong — serape on my couch that's really beautiful. It's in colors of hell. It's yellow and orange and red and burgundy and black. And it's — it looks like the flames of hell. It's really a beautiful set of colors. And I took that serape that's sitting here on this couch, and I blew it up to a handmade rug that's 25 feet by 35 feet. And it goes — you walk up these black stairs onto this rug. And you had to put little booties on because the thing was so delicate. And you could — and it had an — the rug was — you stepped up the black stairs to this — into this sort of weird room that was constructed. And you walked on the rug. And the rug came up the wall behind and blended in and became a landscape. And then, it had a scone on the wall that was lit. And it said, "Nothing's new except what has been forgotten," which is right there. And that's the — I'm pointing to a print in my studio, which was the — which is the actual repeating — what would you call it? Like a —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Motif?

MS. SMITH: — motif. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] A repeating motif that was taken from this cheesy serape that we see before you. Only the real carpet is hand-loomed wool. And it's just absolutely, totally sensuous.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So where is that carpet?

MS. SMITH: Rolled up in my storage, [waiting for a home — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, you have that still?

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the whole piece —

MS. SMITH: I have so much stuff. I have a major storage crisis right at the moment.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's just pause for a second to ask about this piece because, unlike a lot of your public art, it's come back to you as an entity.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. It did. It's got to be a giant pain in the ass. It's been in my storage for — oh, I don't know. How many years is that? Almost 15 years.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's — but that's a major installation by you?

MS. SMITH: It's major, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But now, I mean —

MS. SMITH: So it's languishing in my storage. And the thing that's really hard about it is that I can't really just give it to somebody to throw on the floor, because if you don't — if people get dirt all over it, it's history, you know what I mean? So you have to wear booties and stuff to walk on it and stuff like that. Or, a museum could hang it on the wall in an armature, and it'd be beautiful, but —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or the museum could buy it as an installation or get it as an installation and have it be a permanent installation.

MS. SMITH: Well, see, but people can't walk on it is what I'm saying. They'd have to install it on the wall or someplace where you could only look at it because, otherwise, the people — dirt on people's feet would mess it up, you know what I mean? So that's something that somebody would have to — it could hang it on the wall and look great. You would just have to have a really, really giant wall.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, on that topic, just quickly, what was it like — and I know you've been friends for many years with Dave Hickey. What was it like working with him on the SITE Santa Fe biennial?

MS. SMITH: What was it like? I don't know. [He is an old friend — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, how did you come — conceptualize your installation for this show with him?

MS. SMITH: I made a crappy version of this print.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And I — you know, which is just a repeating module from this — my crummy, little serape. [Tourist serape — rug for SITE Santa Fe commissioned by Dave Hickey — still in my storage — AS] And I don't know. I just said, this is — you know, this is what I want to do. And he — I mean, he already had to — he had the dimensions sort of. I mean, he knew what he wanted. And he knew what area he wanted me to, you know, kind of do. And I — it's not that hard because it was just one of those things where I — when you do public art, you're used to doing it with other people.

I mean, every — I consider the serape to be public art because he — Dave's position was the same as when you have somebody doing the project management, like Mary Beebe's the person who organizes the Stuart Collection [UC San Diego]. You know what I mean?

And so, when Dave was the person who did SITE Santa Fe and, you know, it's like — you can't do this — you can't do any of this stuff without having enough people on board to deal with the — who are willing to deal with the problems and who are willing to negotiate with the people who are funding it or, you know, whatever. Or, you know, and you just — and you have to have people who are troubleshooters, who can help you brainstorm to deal with something that is unforeseen in terms of trying to mount this thing or, you know, or trying to — I don't know — make it copasetic with the environment.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now one thing is — you know, you're not a terrifically social person in my opinion. I mean, you work alone in your studio a lot. You're very literary. You read. How do you make the transition to working on this scale with all these people?

MS. SMITH: Well, I don't do it anymore because I can't. So I don't have to worry about it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, at the time, didn't —

MS. SMITH: But at the time, I don't know how I — in retrospect, it seems absolutely amazing that I did all this. I mean, this really seems absolutely amazing. I could not — there's so many reasons why I could never do this again. It's just absolutely unbelievable.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now is one of those reasons wanting to work by yourself? Or did you enjoy the process of working with other people?

MS. SMITH: No, I like to work with other people. I like to do it all. And you couldn't possibly do any of this stuff if you didn't have, like, a million people.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, but you —

MS. SMITH: But actually, I'm telling you, even though it sounds stupid — I know this sounds really stupid — but I couldn't do these again, because I couldn't do them by email. I can only do it because I made friends with all these people in all these different places. And I talked to them for hours about what was wrong. And I had boots on the ground, telling me what their status was, and whether I needed to fly back there and ride my broom around, or whether they could do it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] But see, it was okay with you, in all of these, to be working with all these people, a practice that was so different from what your previous work had been.

MS. SMITH: Well, I'm very — I have — I'm sort of like — I'm sort of a mixed bag. I mean, you know, yeah, I don't do this anymore. And I mostly just [fool — AS] around my studio basically and stuff. But I was very brave, and I — you know, working for Frank, you know, helped me and — because I was familiar with working for architects and stuff. And, I don't know. I just was — I just happened to be at the right place at the right time. And I had the right skills. And I had the moxie, you know. And I don't think I would do — I don't think I could do it again. But I did it then.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it was the heyday of public art in America. And it was great that you got to participate in it.

MS. SMITH: I know, it's true.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the bad thing is it also took you away from — I think it's, at that point, you decided not to take a job working for UCLA, is that correct?

MS. SMITH: Did I — well, I taught at UCLA periodically over the years. And I get another public job and I quit and then I get — go back and work and whatever. And I — but I only was able to do that because Henry Hopkins was there. And when Henry dies, then my connection — you see, I had a lot of old — I had a lot of supporters at UCLA, like old guys, like Bill Brice and Henry Hopkins, and stuff like that. And once those guys were gone, then they could care less about me at UCLA.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But so you — [laughs] — but you, at the time — would you have preferred to have a teaching career as well?

MS. SMITH: Well, I teach a little here and there. And people ask me, but Scott, my husband — Scott's been teaching for — my husband's been teaching for — I don't know — 25 years or something, 30 years or something. And so he, you know, he — we have enough teachers. You

know, he's a much better teacher than I am.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you —

MS. SMITH: I mean, I — sometimes I teach collage— and I'm a good — you know, if you want — I'm a good person to come in and have — look at people's work and give them some advice [and suggestions — AS], but it's not a — it's not my life's work.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You'd rather — yeah, you'd rather be making — well, I suppose everyone would rather be making art.

MS. SMITH: No, I know. No, no, it's not that. I just don't get asked to do it that much. [...- AS]We went to the graduate show at Otis last night. And I thought it was interesting. And I probably — I wouldn't mind — I probably could have talked to those people and given them some pointers, but I think they could have lived perfectly — I think they could live long, healthy lives without ever talking to me, and it'd be fine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, but I meant more like — we know that public art contributed a lot, but what did it take away from your career, from you, when you look back on it, if anything?

MS. SMITH: What did they — take that away from me?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did it take — it may have — did it take you — my sense, and I might be entirely wrong, my sense is it sort of took you out of your gallery, it took you a little bit out of teaching. It really became a whole different kind of —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, but it was a — during a — it was just during this one period. It was just during this one — I think what was worse about it is that it all happened when I was first married. And I think it just — that was really just — oh, that was harsh. But, you know, like I got married, you know, and like — and then all that stuff is in the early '90s, and stuff like that. And I'm sure Scott just had no idea. I mean, I had no idea, especially the one at Ohio State flying back and forth. He never even got to see that one. But —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because of the stress, it was so stressful?

MS. SMITH: Well, I mean, yeah, it was really stressful. It was really stressful. But, you know, it's one of those things that, because I was one of the — I was lucky enough to be one of the first successful women artists. I mean, you know, back then, there weren't any women artists that were successful. I mean, Vija was the only woman artist that I knew. I had a —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who was it?

MS. SMITH: Vija.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, Vija Celmins. Yeah.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, we had — I had a consciousness-raising group, as you probably know, that had all these women and, you know, artists and stuff like that. And we all sat around every week and, you know, crabbled about our problems, and laughed about the continuing — everybody's continuing saga about their work and their boyfriends and husbands and — it was really great.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where did you actually have that group? Where did you actually

meet?

MS. SMITH: I think we did it at Avilda Moses' house back when she was — at Ed's — but I don't remember for sure whose house it was. And it might have been sort of a moveable feast. We might have had it at different places, but I think we had at Avilda's. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So then at about — at a certain point, well, you finished *Larger than Life*, the piece at Columbus. You finished the SITE Santa Fe piece in 2002. [My giant figures in different sports, terrazzo in Columbus, OH — AS]

MS. SMITH: 2001.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, okay, 2001. And —

MS. SMITH: It has to be, because the show was in 2001.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're going to have to have somebody redo your resume.

MS. SMITH: Really?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *The Scarlet Letter*.

MS. SMITH: Where did you get this resume anyway?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Off of your — the gallery website.

MS. SMITH: Oh [... - AS]. They didn't even — I, you know, didn't even know them, and, you know, like six months ago. So they don't have any idea. They don't know whether this is true or not.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then after 2002, you did one called *Health & Human* —

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, that one was — I don't know what happened to that one. That one's sort of a — I don't know. [Hand-painted in Sacramento — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — in Sacramento. And how about *The Scarlet Letter* for the Las Vegas Central Library? [With Norm Laich, billboard and banner — AS]

MS. SMITH: You know, that one was cool. Unfortunately, they took it down. But it's — it was — it's pretty neat. You've seen that one, huh? You've seen the — I don't know *The Scarlet Letter's* on here. I think it is, actually. Yeah, there it is. They took it down because they were really fucked up about the idea that *The Scarlet Letter* was about sin. And so they took it down as soon as they could.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Really? So it was up in 2006 on the library —

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — the Las Vegas Central Library, and —

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — how long did it get to stay there?

MS. SMITH: They took it down. I don't know how many — how recently they took it down. It was there for a while, but they didn't like it because, like I said, because it was about sin, and everybody's really — a lot of hypocrites in Las Vegas. So they took it down. And then, I don't know, and then, there was a — I don't know. There was a new set of weird people in Las Vegas, weird women in Las Vegas. And I wonder if I have a picture of this? I don't know, but they — anyway, they took it down, and they put it on the — I told them, since they didn't have a wall big enough for it, I told them to put it on the floor. And so, they put it on the floor. And I told them to get up on ladders and take pictures of it. And that could be their event.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, where is it?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I don't know where it is now. It's probably rolled up somewhere. I don't know whether — I don't think they — I know it's not in my storage. I mean, I haven't gotten any notification that it's in my storage, but I don't know what happened to it. But like I said, somewhere on my computer, I probably have pictures of it on the floor. It's pretty weird.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, concluding your run of — your public art run was a piece called *The Birds*, a mosaic wall mural for the Metro Red Line on Hollywood and Highland?

MS. SMITH: Yeah, they didn't do it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They didn't do it. So you proposed it to them, and it never happened?

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that was sort of — apparently, that was the end of your interest in public art or the end of public art's reign —

MS. SMITH: Well, it wasn't that. It's just that — I don't know how to put this. Because now, I've gotten some queries from the MTA and stuff like that. But it's — I think — I don't know. I can't think of any term except probably — I'm probably too snotty to do those things now, because the idea of having to suck up to people for some little, crappy thing on the MTA, and then have them reject you is kind of like — I don't know. You know, how much do I care? I mean, I made a lot of stuff. And it's not going to be the end of the world if I don't do some little, crappy MTA job that they won't like anyway, you know. [Busy — AS]

[They laugh.]

So but you know what I mean? It's like — I mean, you know, I'm old. I've done this for a really long time. And I don't really, you know — I don't — the expression that just popped into my head is, I don't suffer fools very well.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, and it is like a ridiculous amount of bureaucracy.

MS. SMITH: I mean, you know, the idea that they — that, you know, I'm — I don't know whether they have anything — any kind of thing that I could do. But see, the problem with it is that whatever they have, it has really stringent guidelines — you know what I mean? — of like, what you're can make it out of, and you know, that kind of stuff. And the really great thing about all these things is that I got to work with people. And it wasn't one of those things where I just, you know, proposed something out of, you know, out of, you know, nowhere. You know what I mean? I worked with architects and stuff. And we figured out what the place needed and, you know, who was going to use it. And we

combined the budgets, and you know, did all these things that you just can't do in a little — when somebody's got you trapped into a little, tiny thing in an agency. And they could care less about me. So I'm very — even though it sounds snotty— is that I don't really feel like making anything crummy, or else, having to put up with people, right, you know, being real, you know, kind of disrespectful —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well —

MS. SMITH: — about my accomplishments.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Why should you?

MS. SMITH: And why should I? So I figure if I never made anything else, the things I would like to do, is that I would like to — I'd like to find some place for *The Red Carpet*, where it wouldn't get wrecked, where it could, like, hang on the wall or something because it would really look neat — it's like it was as big as this wall.[A permanent place for giant carpet the idea for *The Red Carpet* came from — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The —

MS. SMITH: It would be really fabulous hanging on the wall. [25 x 35 — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The piece from SITE Santa Fe.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. And, let's see what else. And I don't know. Margo [Leavin] and I jointly own this one. So that'll probably never see the light of day.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's that called?

MS. SMITH: The — it's called the *Starlight*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *The Starlight Express*?

MS. SMITH: No, it's just called *Starlight*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, *Starlight*, that wall mural with —

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — framed collages.

MS. SMITH: With collages, yeah. Yeah, and I don't know where that is. Like I said, I think Margo and I jointly own it. And she's probably got it. I'll probably never see it again. But I don't really care that much.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I needed to ask you — I recently wrote a catalogue essay about the work of Eleanor Antin.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I was really struck, at the time, by certain parallels with your work. And I realize I never had asked you. Did you have any — was Eleanor Antin ever an influence or a friend of yours or? [I don't know her very well — AS]

MS. SMITH: Well, what kind of work seemed —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, the interest in performance, female characters, text and image, borrowed images, you know — collages. A lot of — especially since she was working in the early '70s down in San Diego.

MS. SMITH: Well, I knew her, but we didn't — I think it was — it probably just was stuff that was in the air. Yeah, I wouldn't — you know, I knew her very slightly, but we, you know, our aesthetics were different.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you weren't friends or anything at the time? Obviously not.

MS. SMITH: Well, I mean, we were acquaintances.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Acquaintances.

MS. SMITH: Right, but I didn't — I have friends in, you know, San Diego because I've done a lot of work down there, but I — and I did occasionally — I think I taught at UCSD a couple times. And that might have been one of the times when I — but I didn't — most of the people that I know now that are still friends of mine are people related to the school and the museum.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, your public art starts to wind down.

MS. SMITH: Yeah. All at one time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And — all at one time. And your gallery — but in the meantime, you did have like regular shows, but I know you've talked to me a little bit about how you felt that maybe being involved in public art so intensely, that it took a toll on your ability to produce work for gallery shows, although you did, obviously, show on a fairly regular basis at Margo Leavin.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I never had any problem making work. Believe me, I made tons of work. I made so much work that my husband says, "I hope I die first." I mean, just — why don't you turn this off for a second and let me give you a little tour of all the crap that's stored in the lofts, and I mean, you know, I —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's talk for —

MS. SMITH: I mean, you know, I have, like, so much stuff —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We'll talk before we do that.

MS. SMITH: All right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Then we'll do a tour at the end because I have to have some more —

MS. SMITH: All right, well, go outside — you don't need to, but let me at least tell you that having — I have this place. I have — I'm having giant problems right now because I used to trade for my storage at LA Packing. And now, I'm going to have to pay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, no.

MS. SMITH: And so, I'm really looking at — like, oh, my God, what am I going to do with all this stuff?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, when you say all that stuff, how many pieces do you think you have in storage?

MS. SMITH: I'll show you how many.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hundreds, thousands?

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, you look at my storage, and you can — [inaudible] —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. That's not that bad.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it is. It's bad.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's not that bad.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, it is.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You probably have less than 100 pieces [50 — AS], but a lot of them are probably really big.

MS. SMITH: Well, the ones that are bad are not the little ones, which I probably should take out of those — is — there's two — there's a couple of — there's a lot of small ones that I should take out of there. And that'll just, you know, just stuff them, you know, find a place to put them. But the ones that are bad are like the — *Same Old Paradise*, this one. [Mural — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was just going to — interestingly, I was going to back up in my chronology here to ask you about *Same Old Paradise*.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This really massive mural that you did in 1987 which shows the snake on one side and the citrus on the other and the framed photo collages. And I — that was done for the Brooklyn Museum. [Honor Fraser is going to look for a home for *The Red Carpet* — AS]

MS. SMITH: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it was not permanent.

MS. SMITH: No, but it's in my storage. It's —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So —

MS. SMITH: — rolled up on canvas.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it was so influential relative to the *Snake Path*?

MS. SMITH: Well, that — yeah, that's the — that's where the *Snake Path* idea came from.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Now tell me about that.

MS. SMITH: And these are big — this thing is — I don't know, it's like — I can't see the exact dimensions of it anymore, it's so dinky. I think it's 22 [feet] by 65 [feet] or something like that. So it's really big. And these things are all — these are from billboard pieces that are mounted, and they

have collage objects on them. And it has my — let me see, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. It has my nine-sentence condensation of *On the Road*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And a lot of people have stolen it, thinking that it was a quote. “I was rushing through the world without a chance to see it. My eyes ached and nightmare day. I suddenly call — saw the —” Let’s see. “Suddenly saw the —” Okay. “Rushing through the world without a chance to see it. My eyes ached — suddenly saw the world —” or something like that, “ — as an oyster for us to open and the pearl was there. The pearl was there, a fast car, a coast to reach, a woman at the end of the road. I looked greedily out the window. Somewhere along the line, there’d be girls, visions, everything. Somewhere along the line, the pearl would be handed to me.”

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you took sentences from *On the Road* and compiled them together —

MS. SMITH: Right. I took —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — to make your own sentence. [*Condensation of On the Road* — AS]

MS. SMITH: I did it, my eight-sentence one. And what’s funny is that, every once and a while, somebody thinks that that’s a real quote. And they print it somewhere without realizing that it’s not, that I made it up — you know, I did it. So, but anyway, that’s the thing I would most like to find a home for, but I don’t even know whether it’s in — because it’s been rolled up for like 25 years or something. I have no idea what kind of shape it’s in. So Craig Krull was helping me try to find a place for it at one time, but — because there were some collector of his who was in the orange business or something like that. It didn’t work out.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What about your relationships with various dealers? I mean —

MS. SMITH: Well — [I am about to have another show with Honor Fraser — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You’re —

MS. SMITH: Dealer friendly.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, your — your primary representation for a very long time was Margo Leavin.

MS. SMITH: Right

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Margo was, at the time that you joined, the Margo Leavin Gallery.

MS. SMITH: 1982.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was one of the best galleries in Los Angeles. And tell me about your relationship with Margo over the years.

MS. SMITH: Well, at the beginning, my relationship with Margo was really good. She was like my partner. She was the only person who really ever, you know, could really ever sell the work. And she did a good job. And I was amazed. First time I ever made any money in my life. And that was good. That was good. And it went on pretty well for a long time, but I think when you’re with the same

gallery for a really long time, you pretty much use up all their client list. And so, anybody who, you know, anybody who ever wanted an Alexis Smith already had one. And I think that's when it got to be one of those things where, you know, where you're not holding your, you know — you're not, you know — you're not pulling your share or something, because she couldn't sell my work. So she — you know, I didn't make very much money.

And what was weird about it — I mean, they were really good in the sense of, you know, dealing with museums and keeping records and, you know, all that stuff. They were really good at that, but they — but I signed — but I wasn't, you know — they just weren't really able to sell the work. You know, so they gave some of it away. And, you know, to museums and stuff to sort of offset their losses and stuff, but I didn't really make very much money. And then, I think — and then, when Margo closed, which was something like 12-12-12 or something weird like that, I got all this work back. And it was really surprising, actually. You know, it was surprising. And so, I had a lot of work, you know, enough — like I had enough portraits to do a whole — show it on her — [inaudible] — I mean, I have like a ton of work. And a lot of it, people hadn't seen and stuff. And, you know, and it's been cropping up like in that — oh, like in the — oh, wait, hang on for a second.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are you going away again?

MS. SMITH: No, I'm not, I'm right here. I just wanted to give you an example of what — so, here's this contemporary art quarterly, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] *X-TRA*.

MS. SMITH: *X-TRA*, right. And so, here's Alexis Smith. I didn't even know they were doing this. There's the — my early one that belonged to Alexis Smith [*Ma-chees-ma*, 1971]. So I get that out of the way. And then, there's a written thing. And then there's the, you know, the degree of difficulty one. And the old — the new one, the Patti Smith one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And is this a review of your show or just an independent article?

MS. SMITH: It's just like an article, like those are all the way back to my early whatever. And it just, you know, just kind of came out of nowhere. So, I think because of the Honor Fraser stuff and the Craig Krull stuff, I just got more visible. I've just gotten more visible.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and I'm sure younger — a younger generation — I was going to say, a younger generation probably just doesn't really know the work.

MS. SMITH: Well, no, except for I'm the old person at Honor Fraser's. So I'm the only person of any age at the — everybody else in the gallery is 40.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, but I mean, the younger people haven't had much of a chance to see your work, because you haven't shown us much as — I mean, maybe not — maybe they don't know the whole trajectory of your career.

MS. SMITH: Oh, I can't imagine that they would. [Laughs.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you had — like looking here, you have — you had a big show. You had — it started — it seems to me there was a big, kind of, resurgence of interest after *Pacific Standard Time*, which was organized by the Getty in 2011.

MS. SMITH: Oh, right, right, the Getty bought some of my early work out of that, too.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And, you know, *Imitation of Life* was shown at Margo Leavin. And *Play it* —

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — [*Play it* — AS] *as it Lays* was shown at Tommy Solomon in 2009.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, yeah, that was a — that was a big splash.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that kind of brought back — started to bring back —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, that helped.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — some awareness of your history. And then, he does it again in 2011. But the — it seems — it really seems, knowing how LA has been and knowing the shows and things, it seems like you have — your work has not been as well-exposed in recent years here. And do you feel that as well?

MS. SMITH: Well, I felt that way before the Honor Fraser thing and the Craig Krull thing and all that kind of — and the Getty and all that kind of stuff. But I've gotten a lot of attention lately and — relatively. And —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, your last big show at Margo's was 2003, *Living Dangerously*. And then, the show in 2009 — there was six years between those two shows — is older work. So really, that's a long stretch to be — so, I mean, that's a long time for — you know, in LA, in contemporary terms.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, but I don't — it doesn't — to me, it isn't that way. I don't think of it that way.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I don't mean in terms of you. I just mean in terms of people receiving the work —

MS. SMITH: No, no, I know, but I don't care that much. That's the mystery. That's the part that matters to me. I don't care that much.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: About showing?

MS. SMITH: Well, I don't care — no, I just don't —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or about —

MS. SMITH: I want to — you know, I'm going to be 65 years old. And I've been doing this since I was 20. And I actually — I don't know. This is probably the cut-to-the-chase part. I probably have had a much more interesting, fulfilling, fun life than I would have ever expected, and intellectually stimulating in addition. And so, I don't feel — I guess I don't care that much. I don't care that much about the money. I mean, you know, it's nice to make some money, but it's not — I'm one of those people who's really prudent anyway. And so, I have — you know, I don't know. I have some money stashed away for a rainy day anyway. So I don't feel like a young person who's, you know, who's exposed. Right?

I find it amazing that it's — I, you know, like I got a lot of attention lately. But I don't — I don't know how to put this. I think I don't — I think I have the long view, right, because I've been around for a

really long time. And I'm glad that, while I'm still around, I can see young people appreciating my work and understanding it and being in a cooler, younger gallery, but that's good. It's a good sign, you know, in terms of the work. But I don't care about myself as much as I care about the work. And I think that's just an age thing, right? Because the work has got to carry on, right?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How important is it to you that your work carries on?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. It's significant. I hope they don't wreck the Convention Center, you know, that kind of stuff. I think I have a pretty good body of work. And most of the work that I've done, I don't have any qualms about, in the sense of, like, I haven't done anything embarrassing that's roaming around, I don't think.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Now one thing that happened to you, I know, that was extremely traumatic is that you had to move out of your studio.

MS. SMITH: Oh yeah. That was terrible.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that probably also accounts for the gap between showing in 2003 and 2009 with Margo Leavin. There was —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I got kicked out of my studio. Let's see, I got kicked out of my studio in — right at the end of 2005.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And talk to me about it. I know, just knowing you personally, I know that it was quite traumatic.

MS. SMITH: Oh, it was terrible. Well, it was one of those things that worked out. I mean, you are standing in my new studio, right? So, it was terrible at the time because it was so destabilizing. And there's stuff that — that's like why I have so much stuff at LA Packing, because there's just so much stuff that couldn't, you know — that I just had to stuff — you know, just had the — you know, just get it out of there. And I'm still finding things, like I've been on the hunt for what happened to my collection of women's bowling balls and, like, lipstick colors. And I finally found them in the — my inventory from LA Packing yesterday.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Your collection of women's bowling balls, that is an impressive find.

MS. SMITH: Well, and not only that, see, I have this — I have part of an installation in the other room, which is a billiard table and a playing card and a bunch of stuff that I — and I need the bowling balls to make it work. And so, just about the time I gave up, I found the bowling balls.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So how — that whole process of moving out of your studio and into another studio, how long did it take?

MS. SMITH: Well, that's how I — that's how I got in this bad place with having everything in storage, was that I just had to have LA Packing come over with a truck.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because they didn't give you very much notice, right?

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, they just said, too bad. See, because it was month-to-month. And I had reciprocal rent control with their neanderthal son at this little house that we owned. And the — but it was so weird the way it worked out, because —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, back up. I don't understand what you just said. What is reciprocal rent control have to do with it?

MS. SMITH: Okay, all right. What happened was — is that, let's see, we owned this property. I don't know. I bought this piece of property. And it had a rental house on it, and the neanderthal — in our neighborhood, like, and it was a big piece of property, and it was —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In Venice?

MS. SMITH: In Venice. And it was three lots. And it had this crappy house on it. And the son of the landlord and landlady of my building —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Your studio building?

MS. SMITH: Right, the son and daughter-in-law had lived in this house that I owned, right? Okay. So, what happened was — is that when I got kicked out of my studio, I — let's see, I don't know how I found out, but I realized — after I was finished getting totally traumatized and moving everything into a giant cardboard heap at LA Packing, I eventually realized that the two lots that I owned that had the crappy, little house on it were worth buckets of money. And those places [could be worth more than a million — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God.

MS. SMITH: However, that sounds a lot better than it is, because, by the time you pay the California state tax and the federal tax on \$2.5 million dollars, you aren't — it's a much reduced sum, let me tell you. But it was enough to get the studio.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so —

MS. SMITH: As an exchange.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were able to buy the studio?

MS. SMITH: Well, I was able to buy it, yeah, as a real estate exchange.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, good.

MS. SMITH: So I didn't have to pay money for it. I just had to take money out of the money. And then, we had to pay just unbelievable amount of taxes on what was left, like, I mean, heart-stopping, because we had to pay both California state and federal taxes on it. So it just completely ate up the proceeds. But I got my studio, so it was okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MS. SMITH: So I mean it's not like, I don't, you know — Scott still has a day job.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Okay.

MS. SMITH: But that's how I got this place.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So did it really — but it really upset your work patterns for quite a while?

MS. SMITH: Well, it was — it's not so much that it upset my work patterns is that it just threw everything in chaos because everything was, you know, I had — I started out with a little, crappy studio. And that didn't work. And it — and I, you know, all it was was a bunch of boxes. And, you know, that's when I figured out I had to do something. I had to get a building or do something that would have some kind of security, so —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We talked a little about somebody else whose work I've always thought you had an affiliation with, and I know you're friends — is Allen Ruppertsberg.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, he's quite popular these days.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you're both having a comeback. So he has this exhibition right now of drawings from the '70s.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I know, it's nice actually.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I thought of how —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, we went to the opening.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So tell me about your friendship with him, because you —

MS. SMITH: Well, I think he's a — I mean, I'm not sure that he and I are real — we're friendly in the sense that we're contemporaries, and we've known each other for a long time. And his girlfriend, Annette, is the person who I worked with at the Getty. And, you know, everybody knows everybody.

So I have some old Al Ruppertsbergs. I have a really great one that I can't find, but I think it's in one of my storages, which is the, "They told me I couldn't be a movie star because I don't have a chin." I haven't been able to find that one, but —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Did you trade work with him?

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I have the *Barbara Ann* in the other room, the —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The what?

MS. SMITH: The *Barbara Ann* if you want to see it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's a *Barbara Ann*?

MS. SMITH: Well, here, shut the thing off for a second.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, just finish talking.

MS. SMITH: Okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I can't be wandering around.

MS. SMITH: Okay, right. Well, it's a poster. It's a bread, you know, Barbara Ann used to be like a bread and roll and stuff bakery thing, that came to your door. And he has a — there's a Barbara —

big Barbara Ann poster that he — I don't know. I'd have to go look at it and see whether he changed it at all, or whether he just wrote on it or something. And — but —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The — why was — I mean, it seems like there's this moment in time where you and Allen Ruppersberg, you said like these are ideas that are in the air. Looking at it now, I think people will see — not only see your work not only as a feminist, but also as, you know, like a — very much immersed in what we would loosely call post-conceptual art, borrowing from appropriated —

MS. SMITH: Yeah, yeah. [Al's piece - I can't be a movie star because I don't have a chin — AS]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — sources, narrative, text.

MS. SMITH: I'm a big appropriator.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're a big appropriator.

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When you look back now, do those decisions seem clearer to you in terms of what your decision-making process was?

MS. SMITH: No. I think I'm one of those people that flies by the seat of their pants.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

[They laugh.]

MS. SMITH: You know, I just, you know, I know when I see it kind of stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: I don't know. I'm not sure. I mean, I think that I had to be really together and business-like and stuff when I was building all that big [work — AS] and that kind of stuff. But when it comes to just making stuff, that's something I can, you know, that's easy.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You work out of — do you consider your work out of — on that level, to be intuitive?

MS. SMITH: What, my collage work?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, and it's also what I do every day. I mean, I —

[Audio break.]

MS. SMITH: I don't do the giant public art things anymore. And — I just make stuff all the time. I just — I do. I'm — you know, I just — I do it just because I'm bored.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Did you ever — so you don't have some sort of grand, theoretical model for how, you know, you should be borrowing things from pre-printed material or —

MS. SMITH: I mean, I've made stuff out of everything. I mean, everything you can imagine, even like, you know, like those little music sheets that I glued, you know, glued Italian gum wrappers on when we were in Bellagio. You know what I mean? It's like, I just make stuff. It's just — it's like, I don't smoke cigarettes anymore. You know, I don't do anything. I, you know — bad, so that now I, you know, we have an occasional beer. And I — so I just make stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, one thing that I don't think we've talked about as much as I'd like is the role of literature in the evolution of all your work. I mean — and that is one thing, I think, that's interesting.

MS. SMITH: Well, it was more at the beginning. It was more at the beginning. It was more — I was, you know, I was a big reader before I was an artist. And I'm not as big a reader now as I was when I was young, but I somehow — it was something that I knew because I was an only child. And reading is something you can do if you're an only child. So beside — you can make stuff, and you can read, right? That's what you can do. And, you know, I mean, you have to go out and find other kids if you want to, you know —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But language itself has always been a big part.

MS. SMITH: Right, exactly. And my mother died when I was a kid. And my father was a psychiatrist. And he was — he was really smart and well-read. And I don't know. It just, it just — you just go with what you got.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] And you're still using a — but you're still using words today —

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — in terms of —

MS. SMITH: Just so know, just — I'm — you know, I don't use them quite in the same ways, but I use them.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SMITH: And I don't know. It's — I've been doing it for so long now that I don't think about it. I just do it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is there — if someone has a label about your art, do you consider yourself a post-conceptual artist? Or do you consider yourself a feminist artist?

MS. SMITH: No. I think you — I think I could be in so many categories. I could be collage artist, you know. I don't see myself as being very theoretical. I'm pretty much intuitive. A lot of my decisions are just based on what I feel about stuff or whether I see — I don't know — some kind of, you know, car crash ahead. You know, I'm careful about who I work with. I'm careful about what I do. I — you know, I do stuff I like. And I make stuff pretty much all — you know, every day or every week or, you know, something. So, it's kind of a Zen thing in a weird kind of way. I just do it. And I don't think about myself when I'm doing it. And it's become important that way.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you think artists today are limited by the fact that so much theory has to be absorbed?

MS. SMITH: You know, I completely — I don't know anything about theory, I have to say. I don't even understand — I mean, you know, I'm not very — I'm pretty dense when it comes to theory. I don't really understand it. And I don't understand why we need it. I mean, do you know what I mean? I don't — I'm just the — I'm like prehistoric. I'm like pre-theoretical.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you think —

MS. SMITH: And I don't have to — I don't have to stick up for what I do because, you know, if people buy it and hang it on the wall or they commission me to do things, I don't care. I mean, that's all the theory I need.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] You don't feel like you have to defend your position?

MS. SMITH: Oh, are you kidding me? I'm too old to defend my position. Besides, my position is kind of, you know, at my age, position's kind of rickety anyway, so —

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you feel like it limits other artists that they have to defend themselves with — [with theory — AS]

MS. SMITH: I don't even know who these people are that have to defend themselves. Who do they — who defends themselves? Give me an example.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think younger artists feel they have to have an artist's statement that will hold up in a critical way.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, but see, those are just people that just came out of Otis or Art Center or something. Those people are not people that have been, you know, out working very long.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. No, so, I mean for the younger generation.

MS. SMITH: I mean, that's why you're just carrying around your passport to prove that you're a citizen, you know, kind of thing, in case somebody asks.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Tell me about —

MS. SMITH: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — what question I haven't asked.

MS. SMITH: I don't know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or what statement you want to make that I haven't — that we haven't connected with yet.

MS. SMITH: Well, as you can see, I'm not a real big statement maker. I do better if there's a question to go with it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is there anything I haven't gone into —

MS. SMITH: I don't know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: — here that you think we should be talking about?

MS. SMITH: I don't know here. I think you've been actually pretty together here. We talked about my public art. We talked about the [many — AS] shows I've been in. [Laughs.] I don't know. Is there any other questions you want to ask that are anything you haven't covered? Yeah, I kind of feel like I made too much stuff, because I have this, you know, big, nasty inventory of stuff that I have to pay storage on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Picasso never thought he made too much stuff.

MS. SMITH: Yeah, I know, but he didn't have the kind of storage problems that I do.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He just kept buying new houses and sticking stuff in them.

MS. SMITH: Oh, yeah, well.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Fill them up and buy another house. Maybe you'll have to come to — as you —

MS. SMITH: I don't have enough money to buy another house — if I had enough money, I'd pay — to do that, I'd just pay the storage.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Well —

MS. SMITH: I mean, a lot of this stuff you have to check out, anyhow.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, on that note, we'll conclude this interview.

MS. SMITH: Okay. All right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Thank you for your time.

MS. SMITH: And you have a — this is the final one, right? You have everything.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Unless you have something else you'd like to add.

MS. SMITH: I can't think of anything offhand, can you?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I can't.

MS. SMITH: We talked about just about everything.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Thank you for your time.

MS. SMITH: You're welcome. You want to go to lunch?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

MS. SMITH: You want to go to Hama Sushi?

[END OF INTERVIEW.]