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Oral history interview with Max Kozloff, 2014 May 19-2015 January 20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Max Kozloff on May 19, 2014 - January 20, 2015. The interview took place in New York, N.Y., and was conducted by Annette Leddy for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Max Kozloff and Annette Leddy have reviewed the transcript. Their 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

MS. LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Max Kozloff at his home in New York City on June 5, 2014, for the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution. You were born in Chicago in 1933, right? Can you say a little bit about how your family came to Chicago?

MR. KOZLOFF: As best as I can remember from family lore, my mother was born in the West Side of Chicago, therefore was an American citizen. My father was born in a Ukrainian family in a village near Kiev—

MS. LEDDY: Oh?

MR. KOZLOFF:—and left, I'm told, either 1907 or 1911 for the United States, apparently to rejoin his older brother who had come to Detroit set up his fish business. But my father wandered over past Detroit and established himself in business in Chicago in the early '20s, learning the language and also a new field—in this case, leather production. He eventually owned a leather factory that produced as a subcontractor for various finished leather goods outlets.

MS. LEDDY: So he was an immigrant. He came as a very young man. And at what age did he have his own factory?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, that I don't know exactly. It was an old building. I think that it must have been in the later '20s or early '30s that he became an industrialist. And had a factory staff of workers of about 30 or 40 people.

MS. LEDDY: And just for a moment, your mother was born in Chicago, but is her family from Russia or Ukraine?

MR. KOZLOFF: From one of the Baltic states, I think—Lithuania or Ukraine—but I'm not sure about that. I didn't know my maternal grandparents at all.

MS. LEDDY: Because they were still in Russia?

MR. KOZLOFF: I think they passed on before I was capable of memory, or even when I was born.

MS. LEDDY: What generation was she—second, third?

MR. KOZLOFF: Who?

MS. LEDDY: Your mother.

MR. KOZLOFF: She was probably first generation.

MS. LEDDY: I see. So your father had this factory where he made leather goods like shoes, purses.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes—coats, jackets.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, that as well.

MR. KOZLOFF: Sporting goods, too.

MS. LEDDY: Like tennis racquets?

MR. KOZLOFF: No.

MS. LEDDY: Like balls?

MR. KOZLOFF: Baseball gloves and things.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, I see. What part of Chicago did you grow up in?

MR. KOZLOFF: Way north-side, just before the suburb of Evanston and the coast, that is the coast of Lake Michigan, Rogers Park.

MS. LEDDY: And so you were growing up during the Depression, more or less?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And did you feel the impact of it? Sounds like you were relatively affluent and you did not feel the impact of the Depression in your family.

MR. KOZLOFF: I was too young to pick up on the worry or anxiety that must have run through my parents at the fact that business was poor. Folks were out on the street and they had four children to feed.

MS. LEDDY: Yes. And Chicago was one of the worst hit places, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: It was certainly hard hit, yes.

MS. LEDDY: But it sounds like you were insulated from that experience.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, there must have been off and on days in business where the proprietor, my dad, had to learn the protocols and the ins and outs of complicated, secondary terrains of created and marketed goods. I remember being taken by him to various small traders in the west-side, to Maxwell Street, the equivalent in Chicago of Orchard Street here, where immigrants were selling hides, for example, and they would be bargaining. And this was very European, and I early learned that the inroads of past practice had transferred to Maxwell Street in Chicago.

I was named Maxwell, by the way, but that was after an uncle, not the street. And I also picked up attitudes towards the United States from my father that were both positive and negative. That is to say, he was happy to have found a tradition and a career and a wife and a family and an embracing democratic culture. On the other hand, he didn't like chewing gum and I didn't either.

MS. LEDDY: Right. You mean rude American manners?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, that's right.

MS. LEDDY: I see. And what about their politics?

MR. KOZLOFF: Liberal democratic in politics. Unexceptionally progressive and New Deal through and through.

MS. LEDDY: So they really weren't identified with the class of industry owners. They were small business.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, small business people, that's right.

MS. LEDDY: That kind of idea. And were they observant Jews? Were they very religious?

MR. KOZLOFF: Probably. Some of them might very well have been. But that didn't come up as a factor, other than the camaraderie and [inaudible] feeling that fellow immigrants generated and picked up from each other in that particular milieu.

MS. LEDDY: So your family was part of an immigrant community of relatively prosperous people?

MR. KOZLOFF: Relatively?

MS. LEDDY: Prosperous, relatively progressive, and this was your environment?

MR. KOZLOFF: We lived in a seven room apartment for all our children, and it was done nicely. It was, I would say, middle middle class.

MS. LEDDY: I see. And what were your parents like, personality-wise?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, my father was much more of a European in his outlook than my mother, with the exception of their joint interest and respect for art and music—above all, music. She was a traditional housewife. He was a traditional patriarch. Those roles they played to the tilt in comic, but also aggravated fashion, which we children were witnesses of. But it was a loving, long-time relationship. Lasted into the '50s when they got ill.

MS. LEDDY: And you said there were three siblings, all boys, right? There were four boys and you were the

youngest boy? And so, growing up as the youngest, what was your experience?

MR. KOZLOFF: I was spoiled from the beginning, because of reasons I can't explain. I don't know. But maybe I was charming. Maybe I was cute. I don't know.

MS. LEDDY: Sometimes people who are the youngest feel that they were given short shrift, but you're saying the opposite. You're saying that you got the most attention and the most—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I had two older brothers, 10 and 11 years older, so they were adults when I was still a child. And I looked up to them as my intellectual and social mentors and founts of wisdom.

MS. LEDDY: And in retrospect, was that true?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, that was true.

MS. LEDDY: That's good. And were there paintings in the house when you grew up?

MR. KOZLOFF: There was one painting—a Rembrandt-esque study of a rabbi, an oil painting right out of the 17th century. Although it was probably early 20th done by some immigrant. My father brought it home, put it on the wall very proudly. So I was interested in the idea of art having had a history, even if it was a little too pious for me.

MS. LEDDY: And that was the only painting in the house?

MR. KOZLOFF: The only original painting.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, the original painting.

MR. KOZLOFF: There might have been some reproductions.

MS. LEDDY: I see. So basically when did you show an interest in art?

MR. KOZLOFF: In middle of grammar school. I was painting weapons of war, drawing them more likely, like many other American schoolchildren in the early '40s. But I found that I liked drawing for its own sake, even if they weren't warplanes or warships.

MS. LEDDY: So first you drew bombers, and—

MR. KOZLOFF: Battleships.

MS. LEDDY: Did you base them on the photographs in the newspaper, or were they from imagination?

MR. KOZLOFF: Mostly from imagination.

MS. LEDDY: And was it a way of coping with the war and the anxiety or fear?

MR. KOZLOFF: A child in the 1940s was swept up, like everyone else, in a patriotic fervor.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: Our side above all the other sides. And there was, of course, violent inimical propaganda against our enemies which I imbibed, like everyone else. There were prayers, and there were pledges of allegiance in grammar school. However, I didn't subscribe to everything. And I didn't care so much about the jingoism of the environment.

MS. LEDDY: Right. But what about the Holocaust? When news of that reached the States, do you remember that? Do you have a memory of your parents discussing that?

MR. KOZLOFF: Not during the war or afterwards—I was too young to have followed certain trickles of information.

MS. LEDDY: But people didn't really know during the war, right? It was a little bit towards the end that—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, when this was coming out . Afterwards, there were newsreels *The March of Time*.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: And documentation in *Life* and elsewhere of the atrocities. And, of course, that was very, very horrifying.

MS. LEDDY: And did you draw those?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, I didn't—couldn't. And I became interested in the general culture of painting, having gone to the Art Institute at an early age and just imbibing the marvels of its exhibition halls.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, what a great place for a child.

MR. KOZLOFF: Including *Sunday on the Island of La Grande Jatte* by Seurat, which was his signature master work at the Chicago Art Institute.

MS. LEDDY: And did that have an influence on you, too?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, it did.

MS. LEDDY: So you did show this interest in drawing and that gradually developed into an interest in art? And then you took classes at the Art Institute, but then you didn't go to an art college, you went to University of Chicago.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I went to the undergraduate college at the age of 16, having passed some of the primary exams that they were giving, allowing you to move according to your competence in certain subjects. So I was still in high school when I took those exams. And it was a liberal arts college of education, very hooked on Great Books.

And I was involved with art at the time and wrote a piece of art criticism on a painting by a local artist named Ivan Albright. It was a picture of a door with a wreath on it, and it was called *That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do*. It was a horror painting. And I wrote an essay about it, a short essay, which was published in the campus literary magazine when I was maybe 17 or 18 or so.

MS. LEDDY: I see. So that was your first publication of art criticism?

MR. KOZLOFF: Probably. Now, you should point out that Albright, who had a local reputation, almost achieved a national one when, as you might have seen the movie or heard of a movie called *The Picture of Dorian Gray*—

MS. LEDDY: Of course.

MR. KOZLOFF:—by Oscar Wilde. That was a novel.

MS. LEDDY: I've seen that.

MR. KOZLOFF: And there was a movie.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, I saw the movie.

MR. KOZLOFF: You saw the movie?

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, the point is that in Oscar Wilde's story Dorian Gray becomes older and more gnarled and disfigured.

MS. LEDDY: But only in the painting.

MR. KOZLOFF: Only in the painting as he commits more sins and crimes.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: And then they showed the final picture and it was horrifying desiccation in color. It was a black and white movie, and they showed it in color and you jumped out of your seat. It was by Albright.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, how interesting. And is that the one you wrote about?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, I wrote about a painting in their collection. This one was specially commissioned by the movie makers.

, He was a horror artist, by the way—a predecessor of the School of Monsters in Chicago.

MS. LEDDY: You know, I think I actually saw some of them. They're still at the Chicago Art Institute, right? I was there about a year ago.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, I think I saw some other ones he did.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, there are a few in the collection.

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: There was a restaurant that had a whole series of murals by him and his brother too. So he was a local character.

MS. LEDDY: That's great. So you did that, and then I guess I would ask then only the question of which artists you most admired during that time.

MR. KOZLOFF: This particular formative period, you mean, in the 1950s in college?

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I started out with Leonardo and Dürer. And I couldn't be kept away from examining their work, thinking about it, reading about it, and so forth. It goes back right to the beginning—Old Masters.

Then later on at the Institute growing up, and at the Arts Club which was a private club that had exhibitions in the Gold Coast, I became aware of modern art, but rather eccentric versions of it, un-New York, very anti-New York in its tastes. For example, Miró, the surrealist, Francis Bacon, English eccentric, Joseph Cornell, the box maker, Jean Dubuffet, and others that are anomalies, but powerful.

MS. LEDDY: But not the abstract expressionists—

MR. KOZLOFF: Not the abstract expressionists.

MS. LEDDY:—in New York, yes. But it's interesting though.

MR. KOZLOFF: I also grew up with two incredibly insightful, narrative, realist paintings of an American grain. One was *American Gothic* by Grant Wood—canonical. And the other was even now, the most haunting picture—*Nighthawks*, by Edward Hopper.

MR. KOZLOFF: Edward Hopper and Grant Wood were the great epitomes of American regionalism and melancholia.

MS. LEDDY: And you're saying you grew up with them, meaning they were reproductions in your house, or they were reproductions?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, they were the originals in the Institute.

MS. LEDDY: In the Institute, I see.

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ANNETTE LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Max Kozloff at his home in New York City on May 19, 2014 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Okay, so, you went to University of Chicago when you were 16. And you loved it. And you were talking about the educational philosophy of the chancellor Robert Hutchins, a proponent of the Great Books Program.person—

MR. KOZLOFF: Right.

MS. LEDDY: So you had the whole history of Western civilization taught in a kind of integrated curriculum.

MR. KOZLOFF: They were highly tailored courses determined by a curriculum of intellectuals who were working against the idea that education was primarily responsible for turning out utilitarian and pragmatic business people. They were all for the usefulness of high culture's intellectual accomplishment. And so we read the classics, little knowing that that was an elitist attitude in its own right, too.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughter] So you started with the Greeks and—and you worked up—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, and there were moments of intellectual discovery and adventurism and excitement, mingled with teaching pedagogy which was very prejudiced and high-flown and arrogant and opinionated. The intellectual atmosphere of the college was curiously repressive, even though it pretended to be very liberal. For example, there was a literary quarterly that came out, produced by students in the graduate English department. And the faculty Senate was exercised by one issue which contained a chapter from a book by William Burroughs on drug addiction.

MS. LEDDY: *Naked Lunch*?

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right, *Naked Lunch*. And so the book was banned for distribution on the campus itself. I was very exercised about this, and that's when I began to realize that my college education was not so liberal as I thought it was or as it pretended to be.

MS. LEDDY: And did you have professors there who were really important to you?

MR. KOZLOFF: There was one professor who taught graduate art history in the art department, whose classes I secretly and then overtly audited. His name was Joshua Taylor and he was a professor of modern art and I was hooked by his lectures and—

MS. LEDDY: And what was his approach or philosophy?

MR. KOZLOFF: His approach was directed towards the instruction of looking, itself—the legibility of works of art, the translation of visual into discursive experience, the philosophy of finding correct language—that is, descriptive and effective language—to transmit to readers. And he wrote a book called *Learning to Look*, which was very important primer for my early advances into dealing with art on literary terms.

MS. LEDDY: Well was it formalism? Was it a formalist approach?

MR. KOZLOFF: In retrospect, it would probably look formalistic now. But for me it was something of a revelation at the time. Then I became involved a little bit with the art community of Chicago and Chicago artists. Started taking drawing lessons and studio experiences from the models during these early college years. And sometimes they were out of campus in out-of-the-way business sections. And in one class I remember a fellow student was named Claes Oldenburg. And I got to know him a little bit, and then there were a few other artists who became rather familiar and well known in the—what was later called the- Chicago School, or sometimes called the Monster School. That's when I first met Leon Golub, too.

MS. LEDDY: Oh

MR. KOZLOFF: Who became a longtime friend.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, two important artists were in your really early years. And were you then practicing—were you working as an artist at that point, too, even though you were a student?

MR. KOZLOFF: No I was still a student doing undergraduate college work but I was moonlighting as an art student. Not really formally trained and looking forward to being trained as an artist, thinking that this was more and more possible. But then suddenly I met a young sculptor named Richard Hunt. And I liked his welded steel sculpture and decided to write about it, which I did, and sent the piece I wrote off to the national art magazine called *Arts*, then edited by Hilton Kramer. And he didn't take it up, but I got excited by the fact that someone who was running an art journal of a general sort had a look at my first effort here. So I did maintain some friendship with Richard. But when I left I was leaving the whole Chicago art scene, too, to go to New York. But that was not ‘til much later, 1959.

MS. LEDDY: So it seems to me that—Okay, so you graduated with a B.A. in 1953, right? And at that point you went into the service, right, for—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, that was 1954 to 1956.

MS. LEDDY: 1954. You went into this service. So Korea was over? Or were you sent to Korea as a post-battle—

MR. KOZLOFF: I had no idea what career I was going to follow at all. Because this was still a very formative period. I was—

MS. LEDDY:—20.

MR. KOZLOFF: I was stirring in terms of loving myself, engaging myself with art studies. And I read a book during

this time, which really changed my whole perspective on what might be done in this area. It was a book called *The History of Art Criticism*.

MS. LEDDY: And who wrote that?

MR. KOZLOFF: A man named Lionello Venturi. An Italian art historian who was prominent in the '40s and even the '30s. The book is right over here, and it dates from 1936.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughter]

MR. KOZLOFF: And I was shocked to have in my hands a book that suggested there was such a thing as a history of art criticism. I didn't know there was anything of the sort, that art commentary actually traced back into the 18th century in the hands of writers like Winckelmann and Diderot and others. So I became familiar with these names. And I got very involved with the analysis, the historical analysis of these commentaries on the art of their time. It wasn't until much later, rereading Venturi, who was an influence upon my professor, Taylor, the one I mentioned—they knew each other—that I realized that Venturi was a student, or an admirer of Benedetto Croce, the Italian philosopher, of an idealist sort, tracing back to German idealist philosophy. And then it was possible for Venturi to speak of a universal history of art and universal values and meanings, which became less and less contentful for me as I'd learned my way around living artists, especially the kind who, having fought in the World War II, had come back with charnel memories, which they integrated into their art from late '40s into the '50s. So upon graduating college in 1953, the first thing I wanted to do was to get with art. So I went to the Art Institute—to school at the Art Institute—and studied there for a semester. And then something more interesting and remarkable happened. I was able to take a course at the Institute of Design, known at the time among its friends and loyal adherents as the New Bauhaus. It was founded by Moholy-Nagy. And it had an old Victorian mansion as its home on the near-north side. We went there and took the fundamental foundation course.

MS. LEDDY: From Moholy-Nagy or from someone else?

MR. KOZLOFF: From someone else. But to give you an idea of the curriculum there, which was illuminating to say the least. In this foundation course, there were two assignments. One was we had a large newsprint tablet, and we were to draw everything in this complicated room that was around us, full of paraphernalia and odds and ends, like a broom closet, but not to take our crayon off the page.

MS. LEDDY: Like a contour drawing.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, contour drawings. But they're overlaps, and so everything was becoming transparent and illegible. That was one exercise. The other was to go to the zoo and make a sketch of an animal, any animal which caught our fancy. And then we would get the assignment when we came back. We came back with our little sketches. I made a drawing of an alligator. And the teacher said all right, now here's your assignment. You should take your sketches, you're going to make much larger translation of your sketch into a full-fledged portrayal of the animal you chose. But you have only one instrument to do it with. And here it is. It was a 3" roller. A roller. We were to use Speedball industrial colored inks to do the job. There was no pencil, there was no brush, there was no ink, there was a roller. So I suddenly realized that German Bauhaus instruction, pedagogy, had migrated to Chicago in all the fields in art and design, photography, and so forth. This was an eye opener, as I began to realize there was something called Modern Art. And then I was drafted into the US army for two years.

MS. LEDDY: Yes. I see, so it was college and then it was art school for maybe a year.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was briefly. I couldn't extend it, because my parents were unwilling to afford the tuition for art schools. I didn't have enough savings from small jobs.

MS. LEDDY: So how did you take this class at University of Chicago? I mean at the Chicago Art Institute?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I had some savings from small jobs.

MS. LEDDY: I see. For that one course, but—

MR. KOZLOFF: But not enough to continue for a degree.

MS. LEDDY: Right. So you went into the service and where were you stationed?

MR. KOZLOFF: I spent two years abroad in Atlanta, Georgia.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughter] I See.

MR. KOZLOFF: In Third Army headquarters as a company clerk in the signals outfit.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughter] So that doesn't sound too dangerous.

MR. KOZLOFF: No, it wasn't dangerous of all. Except that it was a profound introduction to a racist environment in America's South. For example, the *Atlanta Constitution* was considered a very liberal newspaper for all the atmosphere and sentiment—negative and retrograde sentiment—in the South. It ran a column called Our Black Community. And then I read one day at the barracks, in a black newspaper, a column called Our White Community. And I realized that there were other points of view than the ones that were generally introduced to us. We couldn't go together, my black friend, who was a concert pianist, on the bus or to movie houses or restaurants together. Truman had desegregated the armed services, except that in Third Army headquarters, segregation was rampant throughout the city itself. MS. LEDDY: Oh. So during that time did you, besides doing this job and being in this alien environment, did you read or did you draw? Did you pursue those—

MR. KOZLOFF: I painted. I took painting classes at the University of Georgia Atlanta division [inaudible], making sure that they were offered on Saturday morning as an escape from the parade and the inspection we would have that day at camp. And I met the Atlanta art community through a teacher there and I became an abstract painter, briefly, anyhow, for a little while. And learned about, maybe, what was happening in the outer world from reading magazines. There was a magazine called the *Magazine of Art*, published in Washington and edited by a man named Robert Goldwater—professor—who was going to be my later professor at NYU [inaudible].

MS. LEDDY: And husband of Louise Bourgeois, yes. Right, so you got to know him first through reading this magazine?

MR. KOZLOFF: I didn't get to know until much later when I was his student, but—

MS. LEDDY: But you got some of his work.

MR. KOZLOFF: The *Magazine of Art* was rather nicely done. And I remember it fondly as a source of information and comment. And I knew about *Art News*, too. And looked at that and was affected by painting and painting style by some of the articles on the abstract expressions.

MS. LEDDY: So you were in effect an abstract expressionist for those two years that you were in Georgia.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, more interested in light than the people who were illustrated in the magazines. There was one, however, who made a difference to me. His name was Wolf Kahn. And Wolf Kahn is still with us. He was a prior—he went to the university earlier than I did—the University of Chicago—though he wasn't the art person. He did something which was called at the time Abstract Impressionism, affected by Monet and Bonnard. That excited me a lot and I studied his work.

MS. LEDDY: I see. All right so then you finished the service and you went back to Chicago, but you went to—you didn't go to the Art Institute, you went to university and why did you do that as opposed to going to art school?

MR. KOZLOFF: Because, very likely, my course had been determined for me.

MS. LEDDY: By your parents.

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, not by my parents. I like painting, I like drawing, I like being with artists, but I like writing more, and historical studies more. And I went back to the graduate art history program at university and studied with Taylor.

MS. LEDDY: Again. Yes, more with Taylor. I see. And what was your thesis on?

MR. KOZLOFF: It was on Bonnard

MS. LEDDY: Oh, interesting.

MR. KOZLOFF: And this was considered a little brazen, because Bonnard had only died a few years before 1947. So I was apparently dealing with an historical master's thesis on a relatively contemporary artist. That was considered very unconventional, but I was not to be deterred. I ran into it with all my lights flaring, so to speak, and totally receptive to whatever I could find out.

MS. LEDDY: And was that published at any point? The work—was any of that ever published, the work on Bonnard?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, no. The thesis was not published. But something interesting happened during the course of writing on it that was a game changing situation—two or three episodes that are worth discussing. One was that in the course of my research I went to Washington to the Phillips Collection to see the Bonnards that had been collected there by Duncan—by Mr. Phillips, who was devotee and fan of Bonnard's work. And there are

about 20 there.

And I was looking at them and taking notes on them in a general room, when I heard someone make a remark about one of the paintings. And I looked up and it was a very familiar voice, and it was a very familiar person. His name was Edward G. Robinson. Better known as an actor than as a collector. And he saw me taking notes, and he came over and he said, ”What are you doing?” He was curious. So I said, “I'm writing a thesis on Bonnard. And there are many here.” And he said, “Well, good luck to you.”

And I said, “Mr. Robinson, there is a Bonnard that the curator has showed me upstairs, not on public display, which I think you would be fascinated by. May I show it to you?” And he said, “Absolutely.” So I ran up, talked to the curator. We got this little Bonnard, and we follow Robinson in a room full of Rothkos. And I went up to him and I said, “This is the picture that I discussed before.” And he looked at it and he said, “It's very wonderful. But it seems to me he has much more to offer than Rothko here,” pointing at Rothko in an accusatory way. And suddenly I realized that I was being put on the spot because, unknown to Robinson, Rothko was one of my favorite artists. I felt I had to discuss and explain Rothko to this movie star. I can't remember what I said terribly much. It must've been pompous and academic.

But what happened was a crowd collected around us and there was a reporter from the *Washington Post* amongst them. Little did I know that she was taking notes and would make a little article about this encounter between the old and young, celebrated and unknown. And at the end of this little disquisition where Edward G. Robinson pretended not to hear me very well—maybe he did have a certain hearing impairment—I finally said something like, I hoped it made some sense, what I was saying.

And he said, “Maybe, maybe not. But what is your name?” I told him my name. And then I said to him, “But I'm surprised you don't know me.” He was taken aback by that because about this time I was feeling a little acerbic, a little sharp. I said to him, “I'm surprised you don't know me.” He said, “Why is that?” And I said, “Because I know you!” There was quite a laughter from everyone around in the room there. Later I met him in Chicago and we got on better terms with each other in describing and talking about our love of impressionism. Okay that was a couple years as a graduate student. I went on the GI Bill. And that paid my tuition. So the army was not a total loss.

MS. LEDDY: Right. And then after that you went on to get your Ph.D. at NYU, but then you stopped. And maybe we should stop at about this moment—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well the thought was I had to leave Chicago at a certain point because I had grown ambitions that were larger than could be satisfied by the city at that particular point. I wanted to teach, I wanted to write, I wanted to paint. And the theater of those possibilities existed in New York rather than in my home town. There were already departures by various Chicago people in an eastern direction.

So in '59, I left, after teaching a year at the downtown college at the university, and teaching in the humanities program in art for graduates, for adults. And maybe I had some possibilities as a teacher. But I had no job, and I had no standing when I went to New York. It was simply a gesture out of the dark into thin air. And I had very little money. But I had one friend. His name was Peter Selz, from Chicago. He was a curator of modern art at the Museum of Modern Art, and someone I knew. And I told him that I was looking for a job and did he know of anything? And he knew that Cooper Union was looking for someone to teach the survey of modern art at their art school. And he said he would recommend me. And his word was very authoritative, and they took me on immediately on his say so. So suddenly I had a full-fledged job teaching for my first year, able to establish myself in the East Village and survey what the art scene was. Made a big difference.

Then in '59—prior to this, just prior to this—I went on my first visit to Europe. And, landing in France, I made my way to a small Norman village called Giverny to see, if possible, Monet's garden and studio. I knocked on the door. A little old man opened it. I explained my purpose. He said, “Oh yes, by all means”—this in French—“please come in.” He showed me the garden, he showed me the studios—magnificent. And there were 50 or so Monets, laying against—small ones—laying against the wall, face to the wall, so you couldn't see them. But they were all torn in and kicked in and ruined. And he said ,“My father thought they were very bad.” So I realized I was talking to Monet's son. It was very exciting. And then I saw the Japanese prints, and I saw the large water lily paintings. That, too, was a major event. So here I came back from that and started teaching and going to school at the Institute of fine arts, NYU, for the graduate Ph.D. degree.

MS. LEDDY: And you worked with Robert Goldwater, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: I studied under Goldwater. That's right. And he was very sophisticated, very knowledgeable guy. I admire his writing on primitivism in modern art and his knowledge of the field that interests me the most, the 1890s to the pre-war, World War 1 period.

MS. LEDDY: So what did you focus—you didn't do your dissertation there, right? Because you stopped to become

a critic.

MR. KOZLOFF: There was something that happened.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, what happened?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I'm doing this work as a student in an old masters , continuing the earliest fascination because, when I was 12 years old, I bought the 3 volume set of Leonardo DaVinci's manuscripts and drawings. And I read a novel by a Russian writer, Dimitri Mergekowski on Leonardo. So I was a Leonardo addict from the adolescent period. So old masters as well as modern art completely enchanted me. So it was natural for me to be a student at the institute, where there were many people, professors, who had escaped from Hitler. They were German professors. One of them was a man named Walter Friedlander. He was the eldest. And I had decided to write my doctoral dissertation on an obscure and minor neo-impressionist artist named Henri Edmund Cross. His work interested me, but I knew that it was rather esoteric material. When I mentioned this to Friedlander, who was a professor of baroque art, he said, “I flatly disapprove.” I asked him why. He said it wasn't boring enough.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughter]

MR. KOZLOFF: When you get older you allow yourself to say certain things that when you were younger you might be more discreet about. I realize that I was being given encouragement, which was mistaken on his part. I got a Fulbright scholarship to go to France for a year—'62-‘63. By that time, however, something else had happened. Amongst the people at the Institute of Fine Arts was a young professor named Robert Rosenblum. And I enjoyed studying with him. He became famous around about this time for his book on cubism.

Robert Rosenblum was approached by the *Nation* magazine in 1961 to consider being its art critic because he had already established himself as a fluent writer on matters artistic and contemporary. But Rosenblum was to go off on his own fellowship to Europe for the next six months and couldn't take the job. Which would have been open because the previous writer, Fairfield Porter, had decided to leave and to go to his own studio and work. Rosenblum said, I can't do it.

But he had read an article in the college art journal on Rothko which knocked him out. It was a wonderful piece, and he recommended that they investigate the writer of that piece, who was an art student at the Institute of Fine Arts. I was the author of that piece. And so they interviewed me. And the editor was a man named Robert Hatch. He was the film editorand film writer there. He gave me a probation—three pieces I would write for them in as many weeks. And they would see whether I was suitable for them or not. I jumped at the chance, passed their test, and became their art writer, doing their art column during the '60s.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, that's where we're going to stop. Okay. Perfect.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was nice of Bob to do what he did.

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MS. LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Max Kozloff at his home, in New York City, for the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art, on May 28, 2014. Interview two. At the end of our last interview, we came to the point in your life when you chose the life of an art critic, over that of an academic. You chose not to complete the Ph.D., and instead you wrote for three art magazines over the next two decades. In addition, of course, to writing books. I'm just wondering about that decision. Can you talk about that? Did you have the sense that being a public intellectual was a higher calling than being an academic?

MR. KOZLOFF: I never strived to become what is called a public intellectual, but I did have ambitions to communicate to a public, often enough a lay public, about art, when I wrote for the *Nation*, above all. And then for the more specialized art magazines, to a narrower, more selective art crowd. But always with the idea of making myself clear to a readership. And that led to forms of expression that were not exactly popularized in plain English, quite often.

As a result, academic dominions and zones seemed to me too constricted. And too clerical, too bureaucratic. Too abstract, finally. And I didn't see a career emerging out of my prior training, in that regard. And my love of writing took over, and I decided that my writing was my niche.

MS. LEDDY: As an art critic, when you were just starting out, who were your models? Or mentors, or just who were the people you saw as ideal art critics?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, there were in the vicinity a number of people, precursors and elders, who provided examples of what had been written, and what languages were available. The obvious ones where the senior

critics active at the time. This is the late '50s.

MS. LEDDY: Like Greenberg.

MR. KOZLOFF: And Greenberg and Rosenberg, in particular. But there was also my former professor, Meyer Schapiro. And then there was Irving Sandler, who wrote for *Art News*. And Tom Hess, with whom I worked at Columbia University. I knew a number of French critics, and the British critics, who were senior to me, because I had research grants to study their work. So Andrew Forge and David Sylvester were friends of mine; these were English art critics from an earlier point. I was on less intimate terms with people in France. But I knew of their work, and studied it in translation of my own.

Closer to home, I would say, the *Art News* crowd was important to me. And there was a slightly older colleague, named John Ashbery, whom I knew in Paris, and whose work I liked. And he wrote—

MS. LEDDY: He's a poet.

MR. KOZLOFF:—for the New York *International Herald Tribune*.

MS. LEDDY: So that's interesting. You were really, I mean, most people say there was this total opposition between the *Artforum* crowd, and the *Art News* crowd. That one was the poets, and the other was the theory people. But you don't seem to have felt that divide in yourself.

MR. KOZLOFF: Not at that early point. *Artforum* didn't exist in '59 when I came here for the first time.

MS. LEDDY: Well, that’s true.

MR. KOZLOFF: And, you must remember, there was a period of transition from an older to a younger generation of writers on art. I think that my awareness of John Berger’s writing came a little later on. I think in the late '60s or early '70s.

MS. LEDDY: Do you mean *Ways of Seeing* and the other didactic books that he wrote?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. We all knew those books, and liked them and the television series that accompanied them. And they opened up possibilities for us. At least for me, anyhow.

MS. LEDDY: And how so?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, because of the discussion of Berger. The biographical and historical, sometimes the political value surrounding or contextualizing the art in question. And asking questions that had not been posed by the professoriate. Mainly, what material factors, not just sponsorship questions, influenced the artists in their mortal struggles to become heroic personalities.

MS. LEDDY: Well, I remember really feeling that way about Berger years ago. But then I recently looked at the book, *The Success and Failure of Picasso*.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And I have to say, it seemed like there were just long passages of Marxist rhetoric that I didn't remember at all. And somehow, I remember it being a brilliant book, but it was a totally different book than I remembered.

MR. KOZLOFF: If you wanted to revisit Berger's essays, you would find them rampant and sodden with ideological biases of almost an astounding count. But you have to remember, that some of us, me included at that time, were very indignant and outraged, alienated intellectuals against the American imperial order. And found themselves, therefore, very hospitably inclined towards Berger's rantings.

MS. LEDDY: But that was actually later. You're saying that's more around 1970, would you say? John Berger?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: So that's more around 1970. But if we go back to where we are, around 1961, when you start to write forthe *Nation*. Okay. You're not yet really a Marxist or a leftist, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: No.

MS. LEDDY: And it sounds that really your inspiration, is more someone like John Ashbery or Tom Hess—the poet writers. You're really looking at it more from the writerly point of view. Rosenberg, of course, was part that, as

well—did you have a relationship with Rosenberg? Was he a friend or mentor?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I knew them, because the scene then was a much more closed, intimate one than it later became. So these big time personalities were striving on a rather constricted stage. We found ourselves face to face at parties, and conferences, and the like. And Rosenberg and I, being rather big fellows, got along with each other on a statutory basis, so to speak. He liked to challenge, and be irate, and extreme, and hyperbolic in his discourse. And as a result, he could've been very intimidating. But I found out rather quickly in discussions with him, that he liked people who stood up, and confronted, and argued back. And so we had this kind of relationship of that sort.

MS. LEDDY: And did you have that sort of relationship with Greenberg, as well?

MR. KOZLOFF: No. I appeared in Greenberg's horizon as a supplicant, the first time off. I wanted to know if he would approve enough of my writing to recommend me for a fellowship that I was applying for. And I sent him my earlier pieces in the *Nation*. And of course. I was a successor to him at the *Nation*, because he had been writing there in the 1940s. And I thought that he might be, as a result, interested in seeing a younger generation colleague coming up, and what that might or might not be. And he said, he liked what I had to say about Larry Rivers, but not what I had to say about assemblage.

So he declined to endorse my particular plan. But I didn't hold that against him. I found him an ornery, authoritative, rigorously argumentative character. And worth talking to and respecting, because of his influence on some of my colleagues. And his general prior reputation of upholding the major abstract expressionists.

MS. LEDDY: He was one who knew that Pollock was—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. He's the one who knew.

MS. LEDDY: Right. But between the two of these, whose work did you like the best? Did you find the most persuasive? Most people took a position. They liked either one or the other, not so much as people, but I mean as critics. Who did you find the most impressive and persuasive?

MR. KOZLOFF: Actually, I was looking for such a figure to appear and attach myself to not as a dependent, but as someone who might, at the worst, be an acolyte. I couldn't find what I was looking for in either of those two examples. I was too skeptical.

MS. LEDDY: Oh that's interesting. And what made you skeptical?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I'll tell you what made me skeptical. I saw a lot of the major, if not the crucial challenge of writing on art, to be a question of language. How to find words proper and evocative enough to do justice to the visual experience that a work would provide. Especially work that moved me, or seemed to me important for good reasons. And this is an internal problem in the dialogue of a writer, with him or herself.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: It is not a question of insertion into a professional tradition. It is not a question of following the line. It is not a question of advancing this or that artistic personality in a hierarchy of artificial values.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: So I began to explore, no doubt in a limited and modest way, what possibilities language might offer in realizing this local goal. And to give you an example of a local solution, I wrote an essay, a piece on Bonnard. It was a searching piece, in terms of language, because I was particularly involved with this artist. And I found myself writing down, just a phrase apropos of a Bonnard painting. I said it was a “tapestry of soft concussions.”

MS. LEDDY: That's actually good.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's a strain on language. But it seemed to me rather apt for dealing with a canvas by Bonnard. Now, the problem of language is fascinating and haunting, because the subject of the conversation, the issue involved, is figurative rather than discursive. If I were a reviewer of books, I would no doubt have fallen into the temptation of describing, re-explaining the plot of a book. A novel, for example. I was glad that I didn't have to, or couldn't, do that for a painting, or paintings that did not have a narrative implication. If one were to look at the labels on the bottles of wine, one would find a description of what the thing tastes like inside. And it would be highly metaphoric. And it would ask the reader, or invite the reader—

MS. LEDDY: Fruity.

MR. KOZLOFF:—to remember fruits and berries and things like that. In other words, to refer to sensations similar to, but nevertheless extracted from, the ones in question. So that struck me as kind of a crutch with which to stumble into art criticism, so to speak. But I didn't want to avail myself too much of that particular usage, because it was already despoiled by it's commercial residency, you might say. So writing art criticism, for me, became an exercise in opening up my vocabulary. On a metaphorical, but also on a descriptive level. I've given seminars on this particular topic and issue.

MS. LEDDY: When I read your work, it seems to me that you're really fascinated with the interaction between the viewer and the work. It's almost like what, in literature, would be called reader response criticism. It's the psychology of the response. And the unfolding of the response. Does that seem accurate?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. If you color it with the biography of someone who read John Dewey, his emphasis on the experiential character of our awareness in the world, that influenced me very much. Along with the idealists, like the [INTERPOSING VOICES].

MS. LEDDY: He influenced so many people of your generation. Allan Kaprow, I mean everybody, it seems like. So many artists were influenced by John Dewey.

MR. KOZLOFF: He was an important American influence. It spoke to us because of the commonality of his reference to one experience.

MS. LEDDY: So anyway, I see why you would think that Greenberg and Rosenberg weren't doing that.

MR. KOZLOFF: They were more European influenced writers, if you get down to it. Idealism of the Hegelian sort, influenced Greenberg very much. Sartre, the existentialist, influenced Rosenberg, but I was too young to buy those influences at the first encounter.

MS. LEDDY: Right. But I guess Irving Sandler is not really that sort of critic. He's more biographical, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: He's biographical, anecdotal. He's the Vasari of the new [INTERPOSING VOICES].

MS. LEDDY: That's good. Right. And then we have the more academic, Meyer Schapiro. But you said he did influence you. But he's certainly a Marxist critic.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, the great article of his, "The Nature of Abstract Art," in the *Marxist Quarterly*, no less, was a tremendous model for me later on in the '70s. But it didn't necessarily show up in his teaching.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: I refer to him as a remarkable, an exceptional example of a non-authoritarian erudite. And there was a great deal of charm, and generosity, and openness, and curiosity in his persona, which was very effective at close range. So one tended to trust him and his pronouncements. And when he wrote an article about the Vanguard as the epitome of the hand- wrought, the manually induced aesthetic in the history of art, it was as an antithesis risen against the industrialized, modular technocracies that we found ourselves in at the time. That affected me deeply, too.

MS. LEDDY: What about Robert Goldwater?

MR. KOZLOFF: I respected him, and particularly his study of primitivism in modern art. But also his specialty in the area that I delved into, mainly 1890s modernism. French in particular. And I thought he was a refined, insightful writer. Especially when he attacked Greenberg at a certain point. And spoke up from the position of his own authority against—

MS. LEDDY: But that would have been much later, wouldn't it?

MR. KOZLOFF: I think I don't remember the exact date. But he wrote an article against Greenberg that was very good. *Partisan Review*, maybe.

MS. LEDDY: So these are your influences, and we've reviewed your academic training, at this point. And so then, 1961, you joined the *Nation*. And you were there for seven years. In retrospect, how you regard those seven years there?

MR. KOZLOFF: As a gift from some lofty place above me. But that's putting it in a cryptic fashion. In fact, nothing was more down to earth than the weekly meetings I would have with my boss, Robert Hatch. He was the film writer but also back of the book authority at the *Nation*. He was a pragmatic, very skilled, demanding editor, who shaped my writing. He would have no nonsensical, self-important, little clutters to weigh down my writing. So from a craftsmanly, an artisanship point of view, it was invaluable training.

MS. LEDDY: That's interesting. What about the prevailing political and aesthetic positions there, at the *Nation*, at that time when you started.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I would read the adjacent and actually lively columns written by my colleagues on the other arts there. I was particularly happy about the influence of the editor, Carey McWilliams, who came from California and was a radical, though a very gentle, courtly man.

MS. LEDDY: That's interesting.

MR. KOZLOFF: I approved very much of the critical spirit the *Nation* embodied, as a rather lonely radical magazine, during this time of reaction, patriotism, and jingoism, and war.

MS. LEDDY: And so you felt like you really fit in there, and it was a comfortable and productive, positive experience altogether.

MR. KOZLOFF: I fit in there mainly because they did not insist that I become a strident ideologue, and adhere to their view of seeing things. I didn't feel any pressure of that sort at all. I was just naturally, as it were, dissenting, in terms of a number of conventional ideas. So I was practicing that kind of outlier, marginal critique, which is the equivalent in my area of what they were doing in theirs.

MS. LEDDY: I see. That's great, then. What would you say were the most important pieces you wrote for the *Nation*. Which ones do you value the most?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, If I were to single out the most important pieces, and you were to read them now, you would have a very different reaction from the one that I had that inspired me originally to deal with the subjects at issue. Because, I would be really flaming along, like from some exhausted carburetor.

MS. LEDDY: You know, I did read one. I read one that somebody recommended to me, called "West Coast Art: Vital Pathology.” And it was written in August 1964. It talks about two types of artists produced in Los Angeles. The sterilized and the sweaty. Robert Irwin would be one of the sterilized, and Bruce Connor would be one of the sweaty.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. And Edward Kienholz above them all.

MS. LEDDY: And Kienholz, of course. Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: The hairy one. Yes.

MS. LEDDY: Right. Anyway, it was interesting because it actually referred to Los Angeles as pathological, or as having a pathological vitality. And actually, in some way, there's disapproval of Los Angeles and the culture there. And almost like a denouncement of it as pathological. At the same time, a real critical appreciation of the artists, and kind of admiration for the work that's coming out of this. So it seems a two-pronged, or almost contradictory statement, but I like the fact that there was no attempt to resolve those two positions.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I guess now, in terms of our conversation, this is the time to simply make reference to the word dialectical. Because it had been my particular direction and goal to maintain a dialectical vision of whatever I was talking about. How one term influenced, not necessarily purposefully or intentionally, another term. Both of them vital to an understanding of the topic. And this Los Angeles piece is probably an example of that dialectical attitude. It was the result of a taste to seek out opposing principles. I could attach my own values to them as I wanted, but what was more interesting, even fascinating, was to see a mutual affect upon each other, of these principles. These polarities. It wouldn't be unfair to say that I felt that way about the United States. About our experience during the '60s in this country. About the fabulous wealth, and comfort, and excitement, and ambition, and hard work represented by our people. And at the same time, the demonism of our technology, our imperialist affluence, our sinister, underhanded, opaque ways, and so forth. Our colonizing notions. If you really want to find a summary of these views, risen to a very, very high pitched tone of rhetoric, you would do worse than reading Leon Golub's writings. Who was a friend of mine, by the way.

MS. LEDDY: Why did you leave *The Nation* in 1968? What brought that about?

MR. KOZLOFF: That question is a little harder for me to remember or to respond to. By the late '60s, I was deeply involved in the other art magazines, particularly my own, *Artforum*. And teaching to support myself, and giving lectures. And the *Nation* was, from a financial point of view, a ridiculous hedgehog, or something of that sort. I couldn't do it. Also, I’d been away when I had my Fulbright and spent a year abroad,

MS. LEDDY: And what year was that?

MR. KOZLOFF: They had to find a substitute. '62, '63. That was earlier. When I came back, I resumed work there,

but something had changed in the editorial attitude. And they were looking for, I didn't know at the time, someone else. Maybe because I complained too much about the low pay, I'm not sure. But anyhow, they found Lawrence Alloway, who took over at a certain point. He was a good professional and colleague. And I felt less wanted there, or needed there, than I had in the past. I had feigned my confidence as a writer under the direction of my editor at the *Nation*. I needed him less now to go on my own. And I had a more professional career.

MS. LEDDY: And also, the reviews are relatively short. It seems like in *Artforum*, there would be more room to develop longer pieces.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. As I put it at some point, the editors of art magazines, of which *Artforum* became prominent, enjoyed gladiatorial combat, and devoted their huge space to see it worked out. I was one of those gladiators.

MS. LEDDY: But actually, I was going to ask you about Lawrence Alloway later, when we talk about *Artforum*, but since you've mentioned him. Here is somebody whose outlook is often compared to yours. Regarding the late '60s and early '70s, I often hear, “Max Kozloff and Lawrence Alloway thought…”, almost like you were your own team. Is that how you see it, or not?

MR. KOZLOFF: Actually, not. Just to provide you with the short answer. The longer answer is a bit more complicated and human. He came from another cultural *milieu*. He was a very sophisticated, knowledgeable guy, as many Brits are. And he had curatorial experience at the Guggenheim. He had an artist wife, who was a feminist. And we were in a close circle and got to know each other and exchange views. And I found many of his quite sympathetic. It's true. Particularly his disevolved formalist line.

MS. LEDDY: And his populism, right? And even that article, “The Long Front of Culture,” where he sort of dispenses with the high and low as categories.

MR. KOZLOFF: He was much more a populous and generous a critic than I was. He accepted many more idioms in an unequivocal way, just as topics of necessary conversation, to cover the territory. And he developed an idea of our world as a system, or a series of systems. Which provided some clarity to our dialogue with each other. However—

MS. LEDDY: *Network: The Art World Described as a System*.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, *Network*. However, when I was his editor, later on in the history of the magazine, I found that I was having trouble with his either unwillingness, or inability, to come up with a climactic view at the end of a summary of his main points. In fact, it would be anti-climactic endings, and very non-dramatic. And I somehow was a votary of drama. Even if they were only my own dramas that I was discussing. So that was a chasm or gap between our sensibilities.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, but more from the point of view of writing style, as opposed to content.

MR. KOZLOFF: His writing was a goodly machine. He was very well oiled, very efficient. And I stood in doubt of it.

MS. LEDDY: So now we come to *Artforum.* In 1964. Now of course, I've just read a 400 page book about that time. *Challenging Art*, by Amy Newman.

MS. LEDDY: Actually, I'm wondering, since that is a huge history of the magazine, maybe we could even discuss your reaction to that book. If you wouldn't mind doing that. Do you feel it gave an accurate picture of the magazine and its ideological disputes, and the relationships?

MR. KOZLOFF: Insofar as it portrays the individuals who populated that small scene, who worked together and fought together. How could it not be accurate, of at least the to and fro, the give and take of that moment. Since it is a platform upon which they spoke out, in their own memories. Which could be faulty, but just the same.

MS. LEDDY: Well, that's what I meant. I was just wondering if the book is really commensurate with your memory of the experience of being there.

MR. KOZLOFF: I wouldn't deny it's commensurate, if you want to say.

MS. LEDDY: Okay.

MR. KOZLOFF: From their point of view. However, from my point of view, the book had a very serious deficiency.

MS. LEDDY: Tell me.

MR. KOZLOFF: It's worth my using a few words to do this, because otherwise the viewpoint would not have come

out, and this is important for me. For me, Amy Newman missed the whole point of the period she's describing. Let's say, the late '60s under Phil Leider into the reign of John Coplans as the editor in chief. With me as his executive. What I mean when I say, missing the point, was the emphasis she placed on the formalist, combativeness of the late '60s, as if this was the most epitome, as it were, of the magazine's meaning for a later audience.

MS. LEDDY: Actually, that's a really interesting point.

MR. KOZLOFF: And she cites a number of pieces by Michael Fried as dynamic, game-changing, epical kinds of performances that will have an underlying influence upon the future. And I think that totally misrepresents what happened to *Artforum* after Fried and in reaction to a lot of what Fried was doing when *Artforum* became a politically responsive and rather embattled periodical, when Coplans came to the floor. And in particular, this was a very memorable situation, when he attacked the trustees in the Norton Simon Museum, in Pasadena, for corruption with some architects who were related to one of the board members who awarded them the design for a new building. So in other words, this is double dealing, and John wrote this article attacking the Norton Simon's trustees for this reason. They, in turn, slapped a big, multimillion dollar lawsuit against the magazine for libel. So this had to work itself out in the public arena of art world information. Because it was discussed here and there. And then John's attitude towards the establishment itself, after all, he came from that same California environment that you referred to in my piece. And so he knew the players and their foibles in la la land, so to speak. Very well, he brought that embittered attitude to New York, where there was no shortage of double dealing and inside trading.

MS. LEDDY: I'm sure.

MR. KOZLOFF: So he was anti-institutional, and that made *Artforum* a very controversial magazine. This is before I had any particular hand in the proceedings. I only made them worse, of course, when I introduced my kind of contextualist attitude towards reviewing art and art history. And don't forget this was the onset of feminism, too. I was married to a feminist wife who never accepted the quietistic attitude towards these polemics and dynamics. In fact, I was way behind her in this regard, and I had to be brought up to date later on about the going issues. But in any event, there was a feeling of civic responsibility that prevailed in the pages of the latter, later *Artforum*.

MS. LEDDY: Newman does mention that; she does talk about the shifting focus from formalism to—

MR. KOZLOFF: But in terms of space and in terms of attention, it's like a footnote compared to the main dynamics there.

MS. LEDDY: I don't know how much of that is because she spends a lot of time with Philip Leider. And that seems to have been Leider's view, that Fried was related to God, or something. And I also wanted to ask you about this: Leider seems particularly critical of your writing in that book.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, yes.

MS. LEDDY: Is that what he was like when you worked under him? When he was your editor? There's one part where he says that he decimated your piece on Jim Dine. Was he a savage editor?

MR. KOZLOFF: He wasn't savage. He was toxic.

MS. LEDDY: He was a toxic guy?

MR. KOZLOFF: At the beginning, I didn't realize it for what it was, that it had some personal animus, too. But above all, he saw me as an adversary to those perspectives he was so willing to embrace, as any Greenberger among the faithful would've accepted.

MS. LEDDY: But then he shifts from being a Greenberger, to being a Smithsoner..

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: Which is quite an interesting shift.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, he was learning. He was learning that certain fixed values were less than fixed and stable. That there were sources of stimulation and excitement outside that particular cradle of ideological bigotries, and so forth. But it didn't broaden him to become more flexible with his writers, necessarily.

MS. LEDDY: Was he a good editor? Did you learn from him, as a writer? Or was it really a negative experience of having somebody just—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, at first, I was in an open and curious response to this kind of editing. I had been given an early example, at the *Nation*, someone rigorous, unsentimental, and downright practical. And that's the way I thought of his editing, at first.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: But later on, I saw that there were other elements, or colors, that came into the editorial relationship that I couldn't use, and weren't so happy for me. Then the only thing that remained as an oddity between us, was our political point of view about American society. Later on, he became very conservative, and went to Israel and lived there and taught there. Still does, as far as I know.

MS. LEDDY: Yes. He works for a Hebrew magazine. So then when Coplans comes in, and that must be around 1970.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, he moved to New York when the magazine transferred here, too, over to Madison Avenue. He was still, maybe he was still in California or Los Angeles for a while as the Los Angeles editor—you'll have to figure out the date.

MS. LEDDY: No. I think it was around 1970 that he comes, he takes over, and Leider leaves.

MR. KOZLOFF: Leider leaves at that point. And I was out at the west coast teaching at CalArts, for its first year. So I was away from New York, and not contributing to the magazine very much.

MS. LEDDY: So anyway, Coplans was, for you, a better person to work under?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes Coplans was, Mr. Colorful, Mr. Piquant, Mr. Pepper. And I liked that very much. I thought he was feisty, unpredictable. But a man of resources. And energy, and broader vision, and more knowledge than Phil. So we were on more amenable terms than I was with Phil Leider, as a writer. And meanwhile, John was having trouble with his other writers who were centripetally running away from editorial concerns, and figuring out what they were doing in a post- Greenbergian era. There was some confusion.

MS. LEDDY: Yes. It was a time of crisis and change, certainly. But what was your relationship with some of the other writers, like Rosalind Krauss or Annette Michelson.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, amongst them, I knew Annette Michelson the most. Because I had met her in Paris, and she was part of an American expat group there, on art and other things. She was Miss High Culture, and I was interested in that, too. Her involvement with theoretical concerns was of less attraction to me. I still found it exotic, and was learning about it. Rosalind was a younger acolyte and friend of Annette, but I didn't know her very well, during the period of her earlier exchange with the editorship and her early writings. I knew Barbara Rose, certainly. And attended her salons, you might say. And they deserved the word “salons”, because they were meetings at her east side apartment with her husband in tow, Frank Stella.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: I found her very charming, and very lively. And I liked her work, too. Not that we agreed with each other all the time, but she wrote some important pieces. And so I thought that was a source of *Artforum*’s continuing involvement and relevance in the scene. And I got to know Stella's work and met him. Oh. There was a lot of anti-war protests going on in late '60s and early '70s, and no description of the art scene there would be complete without some attention paid to the matter of artists’ protests. It's interesting. You had Lucy Lippard, and me, and sometimes Barbara Rose , and a few other critics I don't remember now, involved in the general artists' protests and anger against the war. But you did not have Rosalind Krauss. You did not have Phil Leider. And you did not have Michael Fried in any of those sectors at all .

MS. LEDDY: I’ll bet not.

MR. KOZLOFF: I talked about the war with Greenberg, and I found out he was a big hawk on that subject.

MS. LEDDY: So under Coplans, you wrote the two articles that probably you're most well known for. "The Authoritarian Personality in Modern Art,” and "American Painting During the Cold War.”

MR. KOZLOFF: Right.

MS. LEDDY: Those are the two pieces that people - even now, 40 years later - still talk about.. And I'd just like to know how you look at those pieces now, and also how much of a role Coplans played in your writing these. Did Coplans give some sense of permission that allowed those pieces to come out, or was it that you just really wanted to do it, and he said Okay?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, as much as I can remember, he was pretty hostile to both pieces.

MS. LEDDY: Oh really?

MR. KOZLOFF: Particularly the authoritarian personality one. He was vexed by that, and beside himself as to what to do in his unhappiness with it. And I think the reason was, at least I recall thinking at the time, that the reason was that I had, inadvertently, intruded or intervened in some evaluations of artists that he had endorsed.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: You see. So in other words, I was discrediting many of his taste choices.

MS. LEDDY: Although, it's not really about their work; it's about these statements that they make.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, the authoritarian personality piece?

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was a very awkward production. I was inspired to write something down of this order by revisiting and rereading statements about modern art edited by Peter Selz and Hershel Chip. because it contains so many rather poisonous remarks. They were often nasty, arrogant, super entitled, hyperbolic statements. I was getting very tired of that kind of speech being repeated by young, innocent, American Vanguardists. Innocent Vanguardists.

MS. LEDDY: It is interesting when you read it. They seem so grandiose. And you wonder, did they think that was how they were supposed to talk, because they were artists? That was one thought I had.

MR. KOZLOFF: They developed their own literary tradition.

MS. LEDDY: That's right. That's true.

MR. KOZLOFF: And no one had looked at it from that point of view.

MS. LEDDY: I know. It's great. It's true. When you see the quotes all together, you definitely realize that there's a kind of culture there.

MR. KOZLOFF: I think your mouth drops open when you see how incorrect they were. But I wasn't talking from that point of view, which is academic. I was thinking simply, if you met such a person, such a speaker at a party, and you were conversing, and you heard these sentiments. How would you react as a human being and a social creature? Negative.

MS. LEDDY: You know, I was wondering about your use of the term authoritarian in that piece.

MR. KOZLOFF: Authoritarian.

MS. LEDDY: Yes. In other words, to me, not all those quotes reflect what I think of as authoritarianism. But then I was wondering from where you were deriving the term. Because I was thinking, let's take the way Adorno and Horkheimer use it in their study on the authoritarian personality. It's more like somebody who is very rigid, and very repressive. A kind of hostility towards spontaneity, and creativity, and this is not the kind of person that you're portraying. And so I'm wondering, where you got the term authoritarian, in the sense that you're using it in that piece. What would you have been reading at the time?

MR. KOZLOFF: Perhaps I can best approach the answer to your question, by reference to a relatively recent experience I had, the response to which might illustrate the answer. I am very hard of hearing, so I've been going to a center for speech and hearing communication. And what was called in the public domain, lip reading, but there was called speech reading, was being taught in a small class, and individually by a teacher. And it's very difficult to interpret what a person says if you don't hear the sound, by noticing the movements of lips, as they form the vowels and the consonants. And this particular teacher, a woman, was faulting me every time I never understood what she was saying. She was putting me down. She was chastising me. Disapproving. And I felt helpless and at a loss, given this particular pedagogical experience. And then I began to think, how much better, or possibly better, my record would have been had she been encouraging.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But it was not within her temperament to be encouraging, as a teacher. It was not within the temperament of these artists, I referred to, whom I was quoting, to be encouraging. Because they found themselves in a defensive position, as far as their own early careers were concerned, throughout. They had to

defend and rationalize their strategies, so they took very difficult positions. The nobility of offense and obstruction and obscurantism were paramount items in so many of their self imageries. And I recognize that. And I recognize it even more so, now. That they felt compelled, not coerced, but compelled to do something intimidating and difficult. For instance if, to use another metaphor, you were playing baseball with some team, and you threw the baseball around. That's very easy, but it becomes very difficult if you throw a pineapple around. and they were throwing their pineapples at the public, you might say.

MS. LEDDY: I see what you mean.

MR. KOZLOFF: You see? And the cardinal instance of this, from our present point of view, can be seen at the Guggenheim Museum right now. The futurism show. Where a Vanguard went to the right, rather than to the left.

MS. LEDDY: Right. Well that is authoritarian. But I see, there's a grandiosity, and combined with that, a kind of desire to crush the opposition.

MR. KOZLOFF: Humiliate and reduce.

MS. LEDDY: I see. Now, the second piece, the one about American painting during the Cold War. To me, of course those ideas have been so developed and worked on for years by other people, but it still is a stunning piece. It has clarity. It's so succinct in its statement. I felt like, well, nobody's really said it better. After I read it, it seemed that way to me. And I also wondered if that wasn't some kind of watershed piece for you. In terms of writing, just stylistically, it seemed something really that moves into a different stage of your writing. Do you feel that?

MR. KOZLOFF: That would be putting it ratherflatteringly. That is to say, I'm being the self, here. But I should explain a few odds and ends about that particular occasion. There had been a whole tradition of art writing on modern art, spearheaded by Alfred Barr. And Barr's theory of modern art was the prevailing theory, because of the prestige of his institution and the orderliness of his thoughts, and his intimacy with the powers that be.

But when I read his setting forth that history, in terms of coherent movements and concrete blocks of leading personalities and of stylistic formal analyses, I kept on feeling that something very serious had been omitted. Not intentionally, but because it wasn't part of the overview of the author in question, or the institution behind it. This was a rather ill-informed and still intuitive reaction to what was obviously a central intellectual foundation of our profession, of our practice. So I kept on feeling, somehow, left out in the cold and missing certain things that I felt when I looked at modern art.

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MS. LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy, interviewing Max Kozloff at his home in New York City on June 5, 2014, for the Smithsonian’s Archives of American Art.

After working as an art critic for a number of years, you became an artist, a photographer. This is a fairly unusual career path. Usually people start out as studio artists and then go into art criticism or curating, but you really reversed that. Can you describe how this process happened?

MR. KOZLOFF: In the short of it, I was faced with three choices of career futures all simultaneously pressuring me to figure out the direction I might go. One was painting, another was writing criticism, the third was art history scholarship. And I decided to let inclination rule my focus in projects. And inclination, without much pause, singled out criticism. Although I didn't give up painting on the side.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, you were painting all that time?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, I was painting even in Chicago.

MS. LEDDY: And what style were you painting in?

MR. KOZLOFF: What style was I painting in? Well the style was proverbially sketchy and gesture-ridden. But light enthralled, so that it wasn't exactly fashionable at the time. It was simply a way I had of responding to Monet and Bonnard.

MS. LEDDY: I see. So it was somewhat Post-Impressionist.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I would say early Impressionism.

MS. LEDDY: Early Impressionism, Okay. I see. That's interesting that you were doing that all the time that you were writing the criticism.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right, that's right. Because I wanted to see certain works that artists weren't providing. So I thought I'd do it myself.

MS. LEDDY: And who were your models?

MR. KOZLOFF: My models? Well, as I said before, Monet—

MS. LEDDY: No no, I mean, but the models—you had figures in your paintings, right? Who would you paint?

MR. KOZLOFF: Figures, no!—I wouldn't go so far.

MS. LEDDY: No? I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: No, they were nominally abstract paintings.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, I see. So you didn't have like, you know, Joyce model for you, or anything like that. You would just use whatever was available?

MR. KOZLOFF: It came out of the head.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: And the mind. And the senses. It didn't come out of history or literature or criticism.

MS. LEDDY: Okay, so all along you had been doing this. And then you came to a kind of fork in the road.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And what precipitated this fork in the road? Was it *Artforum*, problems at *Artforum*? Or just—

MR. KOZLOFF: There were different factors at the end that were involved in the singling out I made of criticism as my main line. One was the fact that I could make a little living. However modest and poverty-stricken, there was some income from it. And the collateral revenue came from lectures given to me on the virtue of my writing. It was a smaller, less competitive field then than it is now.

Secondly, I enjoyed writing criticism because I felt it was a challenging form of literary genre. That is, it entailed psychological self-examination, professional introspection, and outward contact in descriptive vigor dealing with its objects. And that, I felt, was something that had not been seriously considered by earlier critics, even those I much admired.

So I'd launched into this kind of dialogue with myself that eventuated as criticism in national magazines like the *Nation*.

MS. LEDDY: And then you came to the end of that? Or was it the changing world of art criticism? Because really it was in the '60s that we had this huge expansion of the university system and more and more people who were writing for these magazines were really academics.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. The academic system which produced the arts scholars was the only formal means of turning out people who have sufficient expertise to deal with contemporary problems.

MS. LEDDY: Although that hadn't been true before.

MR. KOZLOFF: Let alone older ones, you see.

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: I both appreciated and lamented this fraught premise. I had looked upon it as Ukraine might look on Russia.

MS. LEDDY: Invading your territory, yes I get it.

MR. KOZLOFF: You see? And I felt that there was something to be said for a formalized hyper-structural investigation of art problems. But I didn't feel that they were so congenial to my way of thinking or approach to works of art. Older as well as newer ones.

MS. LEDDY: So at what point would you say that a kind of collision between your career path and the development of the criticism world—at what point did that occur? What year would that be?

MR. KOZLOFF: Actually it's easy to single out the year of change and crisis. And there's an anecdote involved in it. I was working for my doctorate at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. And it consisted of both an oral and a written sector. With the written sector, it asked a question of how to deal with the iconographicprogram of a famous work of nineteenth-century art, Courbet's *The Painter's Studio*..

MS. LEDDY: What you wrote about.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right. And what happened is I wrote this essay about the iconographical complexities, which did exist in this work, a signal,i critical, catalytic work of modern art, or pre-modern if you will. Submitting it to the faculty committee, it was a 2,000 or 3,000 word essay, written in 10 days or so, those were the rules. And it turned out that the professors had all gone on vacation. At this time of year it was maybe June or July. So they weren't going to be able to read it until they'd returned in the fall.

Meanwhile I decided that this was a really good essay. I would have it published somewhere. So I sent it to a publication called *Art and Literature*, edited by a man with a magnificent name, Rodrigo Moynihan. It was a literary magazine. They liked the essay and they published it.

Now, the professors came back in the fall and they disapproved of it mightily. Their thinking was that it was not sufficiently annotated or documented with footnotes and sources and that it was too subjective and far-off and speculative and so forth. And so they were about to fail me. At a late date.

MS. LEDDY: Unbelievable.

MR. KOZLOFF: Until one of them, a man named Peter Janson, decided to give me a second chance. He said, you probably know what their problems were. I know you're quite sufficiently qualified to write what would be satisfactory to them. Do another job. We'll submit to you a question and you can work it out without sacrificing your career as our student here at our department.

MS. LEDDY: This is Janson who wrote the art history textbook that everybody reads. Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right. *Key Monuments*. Nice man. Anyhow, what happened was they got together and made some decision and gave me the new question. It was the same topic. The same topic. And I knew what they wanted, so I wrote as dull and dehydrated an essay as I possibly could. And they accepted it with enthusiasm. And then I ran into Janson afterwards and he said, I'm glad to hear that you're back in the fold. And I said, I'm leaving. Goodbye.

MS. LEDDY: Really? That is so interesting.

MR. KOZLOFF: Thank you for your effort, professor, but I'm through.

MS. LEDDY: Wait a minute, so this is the one that was republished in *Renderings*? It's the first essay?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, that's right. It was a kind of paradoxical departure.

MS. LEDDY: That is incredible. So that was in 1961, then.

MR. KOZLOFF: No, that was—no, no, that was '64.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, it was later? Because you—

MR. KOZLOFF: I was already doing criticism.

MS. LEDDY: Right. So you just continued—so you passed your orals and your written exams. You were advanced to candidacy.

MR. KOZLOFF: I was nominally still a candidate for a doctorate degree.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: But I decided not to apply myself further to whatever their standards were—

MS. LEDDY: And what would you have done your dissertation on?

MR. KOZLOFF: A minor Neo-Impressionist artist named Henri Edmund Cross, who was a friend of Signac and Matisse a little bit in the early 20th century. Very early. And an interesting artist that hadn't been studied, and I had a Fulbright to go over there and to spend a year researching his work, which I did. But I didn't come to any conclusion about whether to pursue it or not. So it was left in the air.

MS. LEDDY: So then in '64, you have this experience where you decide not to continue in academe..

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: And then at what point—and then you continued, you start writing for *Artforum* around 1964, right? And then you keep going until '74, is that right? Or was it '76. *Artforum*.

MR. KOZLOFF: I'd have to look up the exact dates which bookend my stint there as its executive editor. I think it was '75. So for two years, to '77. It could have been a little earlier. Those were the years of various steps in the editorial staff that I occupied until eventually becoming the dispenser of policy and the editor of final claims.

MS. LEDDY: And that was under Coplans?

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: And then why did you leave?

MR. KOZLOFF: Why did I leave? Because there was a political crisis.

MS. LEDDY: Is this the Lynda Benglis photograph?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, not that. That was an hors d'oeuvre compared to the real crisis. It was the *entree*, you might say. The real crisis came when *the* boss, namely John Coplans, found it very difficult to deal with his divergent and chaotically antagonistic staff of writers. And to organize and put out monthly issues with some coherence, he found that they were providing difficulties.

In one particularly contentious meeting at his apartment, the debate became so strong and heated, as if it were in the US Congress, for example, that I got up in some irritation and displeasure and moved my chair closer to his, away from my fellow writers and colleagues. Later he told me that that gesture meant a great deal to him. He'd decided he would hire me as his lieutenant. Because I was the most pacific and probably reasonable of his workers, you might say.

I accepted. It was a half-time job, but it became rapidly full-time. And I got very excited by it. We found ourselves in convergent courses politically. He was anti-establishment. He was someone who had no tolerance for fools or pomposities or vague and arrogant pronouncements. No fooling around, practical guy with resources and responsibilities. And I liked that as a model.

But, it precipitated—my joining him in this regard, this executive regard—it precipitated some controversies in the magazine and amongst its constituency, its artists, its readers, its institutional readers, lay readers. Because we became politically aligned with a critical position against going practices in the art world. For instance, above all, the ingoing support that ad revenue gave to highlighting the artists that the galleries represented. We wanted to cut that down.

We also wanted to cut down the issue of favoritism, where staff writers would write about their friends or allies. Giving them special attention, you see.

MS. LEDDY: So you mean it wasn't the way it is now, where it's mostly ads, giant ads, that are, you know, really flashy—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, *Artforum* was always—although not chronically, as it is now—a trade publication in commercial terms. But it was possible to reject the excesses of commercialism without suffering the idea that one was a sanctimonious bastard. At that time.

This was a few years after my piece on an American painting during the Cold War, and Eva Cockcroft's follow-up piece about the CIA. And this annoyed and angered Charlie Cowles, who was the magazine's publisher. Finally he decided that he had had enough of the difficulties and the buffetings that *Artforum* was suffering due to its reformist position.

And so he went to John Coplans and told him that he was letting him go at the end of his contract, which would conclude very shortly.

MS. LEDDY: That's right, Cowles fired Coplans. Yes, that's—mhm.

MR. KOZLOFF: So, John announced to us in the office, or three or four of his devoted followers and associates, that he was obliged to leave within a few months, at the end of his contract. This affected me in a very negative way, because I needed his support and alliance to continue under fire from different sectors. But also because I thought that the criticism implied by letting him go was indirectly aimed at me, too because I was the essential

author of many policies that were not exactly bringing in revenue or relieving spirits in the gallery world.

So I decided to leave, myself. And I had lunch with Charlie Cowles to announce this fact. He wasn't expecting it. No one else really had this idea in mind when I finally made it public. And so people were taken aback, friends as well as inimical sectors out there, too. Charlie wanted me to stay because I was knowledgeable about the continuities, and they had had a drawer full of pieces we had commissioned. And I knew how to press the buttons and so forth.

I had, in other words, enough technical background to continue. But I didn't think that was sufficient warranty for my staying because I thought he was tacitly underlining the fact that he was going to have another editorial staff, which he put into place shortly after I left.

MS. LEDDY: I see. And so that was the moment where you had to decide if you were going to go forward with criticism or become an artist?

MR. KOZLOFF: It wasn't. There was no question I was going to continue writing criticism. But in different locales and sites, such as *Art in America*.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, then you went to *Art in America*.

MR. KOZLOFF: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: I see. And so were you on staff there, at *Art in America*, afterwards?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, not really. It was just simply I suppose the equivalent of an adjunct writer there.

MS. LEDDY: What is it called, the contributing editor? That? Was it that kind of position?

MR. KOZLOFF: I don't know what their formal term was. I don't think it was called contributing editor. I was just a little outside, but they would take pieces I would suggest and edit them and then publish them.

MS. LEDDY: So you weren't under contract or anything.

MR. KOZLOFF: No.

MS. LEDDY: And then—but that wouldn't be enough to make a living. So you did that and?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I was teaching, too.

MS. LEDDY: And you were teaching. And then, where were you teaching at that point?

MR. KOZLOFF: I taught at various schools. Yale University, New York University, Washington Square, Cooper Union at the very beginning, Queens and the city university system, Indiana University, places like that.

MS. LEDDY: And CalArts also.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, Los Angeles.

MS. LEDDY: So you didn't have a regular, tenured position?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, I was a wandering faculty person. Adjunct.

MS. LEDDY: So you're adjunct there and adjunct at *Art in America*. And then, is that when you started writing books about photography?

MR. KOZLOFF: I had begun to write more frequently on photography than in the past. A few pieces were in the *Nation* in the 1960s. But then I started to pick up a little bit more fuel to write about photography by '74, '75. And John Coplan's was a photographer and a collector of photography—

MS. LEDDY: He did those things with the fingers, right?

MR. KOZLOFF:—and he was very interested in seeing the magazine take up that theme. We had a special photography issue, which I edited and am still proud of.

MS. LEDDY: Yes, very nice, I've seen that.

MR. KOZLOFF: People began to notice that the medium was making a more robust appearance.

MS. LEDDY: It was starting to be integrated into art or the art world in a certain way.

MR. KOZLOFF: I'm sorry, what?

MS. LEDDY: Photography was at that point moving into the art canon.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well the Museum of Modern Art, under the tutelage of its director of photography, John Szarkowski, was making aggressive moves and significant exhibitions which drew attention to the medium. And so we had a new dialogue. There were symposia, there were special essays, there were great shows here and abroad.

And it was the moment. The moment came for investing photography with serious analysis.

MS. LEDDY: That's—and you were there.

MR. KOZLOFF: I was there, ready for it. Curious. I had been an American tourist with a camera abroad for a while, but now I decided I could become a street photographer—working in color—and so there were personal as well as professional and intellectual reasons bound up with the re-pivoting of attention away from art to photography. And I was not alone.

MS. LEDDY: When you did this, did you take classes in photography? Did you have formal instruction?

MR. KOZLOFF: None whatsoever.

MS. LEDDY: So completely self-taught.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, completely self-taught. But I should say not completely, because there was one exception. I wanted to learn how to print my own pictures. So I approached someone I knew with considerable mastery of the subject, and who was friendly. A man named Joel Meyerowitz, who took a little bit of his busy time to teach me the fundamentals of color development and printing in his dark room. He counseled me to buy the right equipment, which I did. And I set it up and then I started to learn on my own, but from his hints and notes.

MS. LEDDY: Well, what a teacher. At what point did you begin to think of yourself as a photographer as opposed to a critic?

MR. KOZLOFF: I don't know is it to be said there was a point in time. Some moment when I thought of myself one way and then subsequently in another. I just realized that I was more animated and integrated into thinking about photographs as a viewer. And then suddenly realizing it was as a viewer of my own work, too. And that—there were traditions and idioms in the medium that I was following, and I became more self-consciously involved with those idioms. Cartier-Bresson, above all.

MS. LEDDY: Well I see that influence in the movement and all these intersecting choreographies. Now do you find—some people find the roles of artist and critic to be adversarial, right? I mean the critic judges the artist and the artist mocks the critic and it doesn't work out. But you didn't find that.

MR. KOZLOFF: I wouldn't go so far.

MS. LEDDY: It was hard. It was hard?

MR. KOZLOFF: The more I felt little inklings and proddings of ambition—ambition, that is, to show what I had been doing—the more suspicious a character I became, without real acknowledgement amongst those who are looking around at these various moves. It's true I had some shows at the beginning with one of the dealers, Holly Solomon.

She gave me three shows in the 1970s. And I had some shows abroad, too. One in Israel, one here in New England, up in Rhode Island. And they received some, but not too much, attention, these exhibitions of early work. Mostly of store windows. New York store windows.

I had been affected by the work of Atget, and had written on Doisneau and Brassai and Cartier-Bresson. So I was affected by French tradition in street photography.

MS. LEDDY: So what was it like to be reviewed after you had been the reviewer for so long?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I put myself in the mental position as it were, or as best I could, of the writer. Suppose that a colleague of mine—a writer, fellow writer—took to making art or imagery of some sort and had the gall, the chutzpah, to show it. Would I respond to it as—in the form of a review? And I had to acknowledge the fact that I would be very reluctant to do so. To give credit to—it was not exactly a mean-spirited reaction, but one that

seemed too odd to me. Because I was involved with those who were perhaps completely absorbed professionally and creatively in the work of one idiom. Rather than having sidelines.

I taught people who were writers but who were also painters or artists. I knew people who did both, and respected their work. I didn't, on the other hand, anticipate that I would be given any serious treatment for this baby work that I was doing at the time. But in fact, in retrospect, it wasn't so premature after all, or immature after all.

MS. LEDDY: Well I think it's a very brave thing to do. I mean, to set out on this—

MR. KOZLOFF: It turned out in retrospect that there was a tradition of writers who did art, who painted or drew. Going back to Ruskin, at least.

MS. LEDDY: I think there are a number of, even today, you can think of people who are writers for—

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh many, many.

MS. LEDDY:—art magazines.

MR. KOZLOFF: One of the greater artists of the nineteenth century, in this case French, was doing better as a writer than as an artist. His name was Victor Hugo.

MS. LEDDY: That's right. Well Okay. So I know it has a French feel, the street photography. One thing I wonder is why you selected color over black and white. Because at that time when you were starting, black and white was so fashionable.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. The debate about color versus black and white is a feature of polemics in the field in the 1970s. They were sparked by John Szarkowski's show of William Eggleston at the Museum of Modern Art.

MS. LEDDY: Personally he's one of my favorites ever. Of all time.

MR. KOZLOFF: Here was an artist who had submitted his work to the museum where it found favor before it got down to the professional world itself. And Szarkowski decided to make a big to-do about the fact that this was work in color. And I, who had been working in color for some time, did not consider color a sensational activity, but rather a natural, easy breathing, appropriate way to respond photographically to the outer world. But then when I looked at the Eggleston show and read his comments, I saw that, number one, he was thinking of Eggleston as a legatee of Walker Evans.

MS. LEDDY: Well, that's certainly true.

MR. KOZLOFF: And therefore as a continuer of a certain tradition of American vernacular imagery. But that the color was to be credited and admired for being in the same tradition as Evans, if Evans had been in color himself. In other words, it was a colorized Evans, so to speak. In other words, bland. Non-argumentative. Archaically rigorous. And sort of polemically incidental, you might say.

In other words, this was Americana seen through tints and through palettes as well as it was in structures and textures. And I wrote a very indignant article about these particular claims, not liking Eggleston at the time, and realizing that there was an aesthetic and poetic use of color that had been ignored in the literature and by practitioners. Then I began to realize, looking through the literature—that same literature—that there were very graphic and articulate complaints about the use of color amongst a number of famous practitioners who had used color on the sly. For instance, Ansel Adams, Robert Capa. People who did color, as it were, in the backyard or—

MS. LEDDY: As a sideline.

MR. KOZLOFF: And I thought that this was time for them to come out of the. And to talk about the aesthetics and the dynamics of color as an expressive vehicle. It was round about this time, or perhaps a little later, that a colleague, a photo historian named Sally Stein, discovered a huge trove of color photographs from the FSA in the 1930s. And a few others. They were quite marvelous. And suddenly the Depression got color in its cheeks.

MS. LEDDY: That's funny. Right. I mean I guess it was also that color was so associated with advertising. And then it was hard for people to read it in a different way and to see it, to extract it from that.

MR. KOZLOFF: They were not wrong in sensing the excitement color generated amongst advertisers and commercial firms and corporations and so forth. On the other hand, we shouldn't forget the importance of the history of color photography on the date 1907 which was the day the Lumière brothers patented autochromes. A very special, early, practical color medium in film. And to look at the autochromes now—they were being

published in books at the time, in the 1970s—is to be excited by the fact that we regain an earlier epoch, known to us only in black and white or sepia photographs, in something like their original complexion.

It was glorious, it was beautiful, it was breath-taking, it was palpitating. And I got very excited and wrote about the autochromes for color positives. And added my sense of their achievement to our future as practitioners.

MS. LEDDY: Well maybe this is a—let's go on to a different part of your photography practice, which is your source of inspiration. I know you've talked about the photographers that inspired you, but it also seems connected, at least from the works that I've seen, to travel and to exposure and to foreign cultures. Would you say that's true?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. One of the shows I put forth with Holly Solomon was called actually *Travel Photographs.*

MS. LEDDY: Oh, it was?

MR. KOZLOFF: And so you're not wrong there at all, because there were enormous continuities in both black and white as well as color photography of site relocations. And new contexts. Now that of course was part of the momentum of exploration in the whole medium itself, which was—

MS. LEDDY: Right, it's very closely associated with colonialism in both—the development of photography is often associated with colonialism.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And that's another question I had for you: how do you feel your work relates to that?

MR. KOZLOFF: I can't say that I ever suffer from guilt as a neo-colonialist.

MS. LEDDY: I wasn't accusing you, of course. I know, I just mean that there's that whole tradition that has received a certain amount of criticism. In other words it's an opening up of the world, and, you know, when you look at the French, like the colonial photography that was enclosed with little chocolates and things like that. You see that it was a kind of opening of people's mind to the world, but at the same time it's through this kind of colonial filter. And so then travel photography seems to be always somehow implicated in that, even though it doesn't need to be.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, look. My coming of age in thinking about these issues actually took place in a foreign country, India. I had visited India with my camera on three separate occasions. I had some professional appointments, on one of these occasions, and then I came back again enthralled and fascinated by Indian culture. The story of it would not be complete without my mentioning and highlighting the fact that I had a mentor, a photographic mentor, who was Indian. His name was Raghubir Singh. He was one of two principal contemporary Indian photographers I knew. His work had been published in a few volumes before I began my own work. He was a maestro, veteran. And personally very generous to me and instructive. We met in Bombay on one occasion. And I went with him while he photographed into the Crawford market, a major—

MS. LEDDY: How great.

MR. KOZLOFF:—mall over there. So I saw the way he worked. As a magician of color he had very few equals. So that made a difference to me from the beginning. But what I noticed is that people sometimes looked back at him while he took out his Leica. As if to say, me no Leica. However, I was wrong about that. And wrong on certain cultural levels which I laterhad to think about. One was, India was a seeing culture. Everyone was looking at everyone else because they were spectacles to each other, and were visually keen and alive to the panoply of amazing colors of their own traditions. Secondly as Raghubir Singh himself told me, in a rather contradictory way, no one paid too much attention to him when he had his Leica but if you took a big 8 by 10 view camera with him with a tripod—which he rarely did or maybe hardly at all—they would understand that their picture was being taken, and they would pose for him. Something he didn't want. He couldn't put up with it.

So in other words, the visuality of India began to sink into my own feelings about the rest of the world. And Mexico and South America, where I visited—some areas in France, and Asia, they became my substitute Indias, as it were.

MS. LEDDY: And did you find the people in those countries as willing to be photographed?

MR. KOZLOFF: Did I find those people—

MS. LEDDY: The people in those countries as willing to be photographed as the people in India.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, if I went through the prints that I made from those moments, those journeys, I do come

across a number of faces that are scowling at me or shocked or in some kind of disagreement that they find themselves under the lens, or before the lens, of a stranger. A gringo, whoever it might be who is not of their own culture.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But there are also people who were smiling and enjoying the attention given. So it's by no means a—ideological, stereotypical response that one gets when moving through foreign territories with a camera.

MS. LEDDY: Well, you know, these for example—here, I mean, I would just like to understand something about—what do you feel when you're taking these shots like these two? What are they saying about these cultures, to you?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, the one on the right—

MS. LEDDY: Which I like very much, this one with the woman with the yellow hat. Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: I'm looking for—excuse me, that one over there. There were crowds of people over there. I should explain. We were in Hawaii, which is not exactly a foreign country but not exactly mid-America either. Because of its tropicality and its ethnic mixtures. And we found ourselves on Waikiki Beach, which is a major resort area, international resort area. And there were all these crowds of Japanese people there. When we inquired, I found out that they were exterminators, they were professional exterminators in their country. And they were on vacation as a whole group. And what were they doing? They were taking each other's pictures

MS. LEDDY: So you have pictures of them taking pictures?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes. Not all of them, but some of them were sashaying around in Hawaiian dress, and having a lovely time in a foreign clime. Like I was, except that they were my subjects.

MS. LEDDY: A lot of them do have humor. They're amusing moments.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well actually for me photography is never entirely released from comedy. There's a comedy of manners, there's a comedy of timing, there's a comedy of misalliance, comedy of exaggeration. And so on. There are only a few great humorist photographers. Robert Doisneau was one, Elliott Erwitt was another. But there should be more and there probably are more. Richard Kalvar was. I want to be one of them, but I still don't have the wit yet. Maybe.

MS. LEDDY: But you said that now you're not taking as many photographs, you're moving more towards painting again.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes but that might be just a mood.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: And my inability to manage digital systems.

MS. LEDDY: File management. The great challenge of our time. It's hard.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: Okay. So now let's move to photography criticism. I have—these are the books that I've noticed: *Photography and Fascination*, 1979. *The Privileged Eye*, 1987. *The Social Scene*, 2000—I mean an essay in that—*New York*: *Capital of Photography*, 2002. And *Theater of the Face: Portrait Photography Since 1900*, 2007. Now, are there more?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: It's a lot. But what are the others?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well the main one that should be mentioned is a book called *Now Becoming Then: Duane Michals*. It's a monograph on Duane Michals.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, Duane Michals. Yes that's right. I do remember that one now. And when you wrote that in—the early 1990s?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, something like that.

MS. LEDDY: Now when you look back on these books, what would you consider to be your finest work among

these photography books?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I would hesitate to single out something by calling it the finest. But I do value, in retrospect, a few moments, a few turning points in thinking about the medium. For example, the first book, the collection of essays in *Photography and Fascination*, was originally to be called “Photography and Voyeurism”, which I thought was a more titillating title, and not irrelevant.

However my editor and publisher thought that this was a bit too provocative. So we changed it to Fascination, the titled piece in the book which was invented for the book itself. And which was a survey of the psychological dynamics initiated or inaugurated by various idioms [inaudible] of the field over its history. Ending with a weird smile. What was it?? It was the smile of a young woman in a Weegee photograph, taken at the beach, of a dying man, or maybe almost drowned. She was his girlfriend. His prone body is being surrounded by medical personnel trying to revive it and by horrified onlookers. Until one of them, a man named Weegee, appears, and the girl looks up; she sees a man with a camera, and she smiles.

Now for me that was an opening into the paradoxes and ironies of photographic culture, as it was an inappropriate smile. That Weegee recorded even though it belonged in another scenario.

MS. LEDDY: And so one thing that seems interesting to me is how you said from the beginning, your interest in art always had to do with, in a way, the reception of the viewer and the interaction of the viewer with the work. And that that process has always—response criticism, in a way—has always been your central starting point for your discussions as a critic. And it seems that that continued with your photography criticism, and maybe even intensified.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well it became more intensified, or magnified, right. Somewhere I am on record as having said that, to remove one's attention from the art world to look at photography even at the beginning of interest in that topic, was to switch from the sideshow of the art world to the major visual communication of modern culture. Photography itself is the ascendant, prevailing genre of communication between us through images.

So I thought I was entering a vast arena, a zone of familiar but at the same time enigmatic appearances. And needless to say, they had political intonations, too. One of the attractions of photography for me at the beginning was that closeness to the medium would provide that discussion of certain political issues. Issues that ramify through international conduct, our own culture and the historical record of humanity itself.

MS. LEDDY: In the years since you began writing about photography—which would be in the 1960s really but then more intensively beginning the late '70s—photography has changed just enormously during that period of time both technically and aesthetically. So how would you define those changes?

MR. KOZLOFF: How would I define those changes as you've described them? I wrote an essay whose title was “The Digital Worm in the Photograph of the Apple.” An early attempt on my part to assess the impact of digital photography on the worldwide practice of the medium itself and our notions of veracity and credibility and honest witness, to be exact.

Because digital photography, at that early stage of its recognition, was being heralded by a number of academics and even practitioners as a way of recreating a new form of contact with the world that was as fictional as it was material and objective, if not more fictional. I had friends who became apologists of the digital revolution. I just plain resented the idea—and this, just personally—of being relegated back to Americana status because of my devotion to film, the negative and film.

The problem for me was that the prestige and accomplishment of negative, or positive, photography, film photography anyhow, up until 1990s had installed in so many minds, including my own, a respect for its observation of the real world. And now with digitization, one could find all kinds of unacknowledged betrayals or excitements that resembled photography but were done in a different way.

So I had a major problem with the digital revolution. First of all, because of its claims to become fantastical or freely invented or full of license. After all if people really wanted to use those possibilities, they should paint. That's what I thought.

MS. LEDDY: Well, but now that every person has a camera in his or her phone and everyone is a photographer, do you think the meaning of photography has changed?

MR. KOZLOFF: Strangely enough, I don't think the changes have been significant in terms of the expressiveness of photography. But in the sociology of the medium, it certainly has changed. From its beginnings the medium had been implicated in democratic ideas of distribution, that is the manufacturers wanted to distribute their wares so that people with modest means could utilize cameras for their own enjoyment and pleasure. And I approve of that, so I can hardly disapprove of phone cameras today.

MS. LEDDY: True.

MR. KOZLOFF: But I can go on with this.

MS. LEDDY: That's fine, thank you. The other thing I'm wondering though is, you've talked about the changes from analog to digital, but also within what's called fine art photography, of course, there have also been many changes. For example, conceptual photography is one huge field now, or area of photography. And I'm wondering how you—I mean that also can have a certain documentary or political aspect. I mean I think of someone in fact like Allan Sekula. What is your relationship to that kind of work?

MR. KOZLOFF: It's complicated because, as you know, I started out as an art critic. And to be a critic of contemporary modern art is to become acquainted with, to come to terms with, and to process and elevate if necessary or indicated, some really rather far out, fanciful strategies. Collage, for example. Constructivism, in its time. Abstraction. In other words, various moves and developments amongst artists associated with avant-garde impetus, who made it difficult for the viewer to understand what the content was.

Sometimes it was being withheld deliberately in a facetious way, the content I mean. Sometimes it was in the gesture of adapting the work of art to the vagaries of chance as in Marcel Duchamp. Anyhow, anyone, myself included, who had been professionally involved with this tradition, was certainly habituated to considerable whimsy, you might say. And obscurantism, absurdism and nobility were all mixed up together, you see.

Now there were political intonations, political aromas, you may say, about these various moves. Some were—many were in opposition to bourgeois mores and liberalism. There was an anti-liberal tradition in modern art, as we know. Comes digital photography, and its ability to take surreptitious photographs from unexpected angles of otherwise obscured or hidden events, this has enormous political potential, positive and negative.

MS. LEDDY: You mean like Rodney King.

MR. KOZLOFF: Right. Don't you think?

MS. LEDDY: Certainly, Yes. Surveillance, in a certain way.

MR. KOZLOFF: Now that brings in the contextual volatility of photography in its practice zones. We don't anymore have to think of the schooling of the photographer. The content of the photograph was once determined by elite processors or gatekeepers such as I was for a long time and maybe still am a little bit. So that has changed. It might be that I grow tired of repeating things that I discovered earlier in photography, and don't find as many ramifications nowadays as I did then. But I still like to read about it and look at photo shows and make discoveries. Digital or not.

MS. LEDDY: Okay. I think we maybe need to talk a little bit about aspects of your teaching career. And you've mentioned that a little bit, but I do want to talk about CalArts. And especially now that we've come to this idea of conceptual photography, which I associate so much with CalArts. But you were at CalArts at the very beginning, when it started. What was that like?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well you have to remember this was the tail end of the '60s, the beginning of the '70s. It was ironic that this funky, far out, hyper-intellectualized, irresponsible group of teachers and art aspirants were being housed in an abandoned girls' Catholic school in Burbank. And there was a huge Buddhist component there, too. Hare Krishna version.

And we had to bow and scrape at the Critical Studies program and hum and do our Koans or whatever they're called. And some of us were not pious, including this speaker. Very impious. There were nudities running around the campus, too. We were past the stage of John Cage and Marshall McLuhan. But we were listening to Herbert Marcuse. And not being disrespectful to Walt Disney because Walt Disney owned it and sponsored the CalArts program itself.

I had a visiting professorship in the Department of Critical Studies, which was separate from the art school itself. That is to say, the practice in studio sectors. So I was considered to be, amongst a few others, an unofficial guru of the mind. Although some of the art teachers themselves were not without intellectual accomplishment, such as John Baldessari.

MS. LEDDY: And who were the other people in Critical Studies at that time?

MR. KOZLOFF: Who were the other people—

MS. LEDDY: In Critical Studies at that time.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well there was a woman named Alison Knowles. And then there was Miriam Schapiro—oh, no, this

was—they were in art. Then there was Dick Higgins. He was a Fluxus type. MS. LEDDY: And Dick Hebdige, was he there, too? Dick Hebdige.

MR. KOZLOFF: I don't remember that. There was another art, or photo, critic there, Ben Lifson. And then there were the Harrisons. Helen and Newton Harrison, who were teaching. Some of these faculty came from San Diego, UC San Diego.

MS. LEDDY: But these are all art people. These are all artists. Most of the people you're mentioning right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Right. Well I'm not sure in this at all. Memory is vague. I think that there were people from various disciplines in the department of Critical Studies. Music and Theatre were alsovery important and powerful at the time. And

MS. LEDDY: And Allan Kaprow was there?

MR. KOZLOFF: Allan Kaprow was certainly there and made a very big presence for himself. He had a lot of students and was very popular.

MS. LEDDY: And Michael Asher, was he there at the time?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, Michael Asher was there, as I remember him. And David Antin I believe was there. Very important figure. I knew David very well. I associate him with CalArts and I think he was there, but I might have been at San Diego.

MS. LEDDY: Well, they were at San Diego for many years, but they might've been there at the very beginning, I don't know.

MR. KOZLOFF: I was brought there by Paul Brach, ahead of the painting department or art department dean.

MS. LEDDY: And did Joyce teach there, too?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, she didn't. She came with me. She didn't teach there, but she was active in her own work and studio. And also in feminist organizations and in the Woman's House, where we were friends with Miriam and Paul. And Sheila de Bretteville and Peter [inaudible] and all the architects in this area, too. Sheila de Bretteville later became the dean of Design at Yale. MS. LEDDY: And so, it just became photography. I mean CalArts has had an enormous impact on photography, art photography in our time. How do you perceive that? Since you were there at the beginning when it was starting.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well it was a very wobbly situation. Because it was a new place, it had to figure out its physical plant, its academic policy, its entrance requirements. It had to be accredited still for the degrees it wanted to give. So people were simultaneously unclear, undecided, and very, very authoritarian. Because they wanted their particular view to be ascendant and take over. And so there were types like this scattered about through all the departments.

And I found it rather unsettling and a little imbalanced, because it would go teeter one way or the other. But we had some students—I had two good students who are famous now.

MS. LEDDY: Who?

MR. KOZLOFF: One was David—Joyce?

[Side conversation]

JOYCE KOZLOFF: Yes?

MR. KOZLOFF: Good. Who were my two students at CalArts? Fischl.

JOYCE KOZLOFF: What?

MR. KOZLOFF: Eric Fischl. And David—

JOYCE KOZLOFF: What?

MS. LEDDY: His students at CalArts. Eric Fischl and David—

JOYCE KOZLOFF: David Salle.

MR. KOZLOFF: David Salle.

JOYCE KOZLOFF: I think he had some of the interesting women, too, but he doesn't remember.

MS. LEDDY: Who were they?

JOYCE KOZLOFF: Well I'm not sure. But I think that—

MR. KOZLOFF: David Salle, okay. He was an abstractionist then. Very intelligent. And there's a few others. But also I think the—Allan and Martha were there, too. Is that possible? Allan Sekula? And Martha—

MS. LEDDY: Allan and Sally, you mean.

MR. KOZLOFF: No, he's faculty.

MS. LEDDY: Sally Stein? No. Allan Sekula and Martha Rosler, is that what you mean? Martha Rosler?

MR. KOZLOFF: I knew them from an early point—

MS. LEDDY: Oh, because that's right, they were together before he was with Sally. I forgot about that. I think she was there, but I don't know the years. Because a lot of people—

MR. KOZLOFF: I remember discussions we had with each other in Los Angeles, but it might have been later.

MS. LEDDY: Well certainly those are very—with regard to photography, would have been very important discussions.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was considered, sure, it was considered very dynamic and important.

MS. LEDDY: Since we've had this intervention, I wanted to ask you—your marriage to Joyce—did that have an impact on your transitioning from being a critic to being an artist? Do you think it was living with an artist; did that affect you or give you more of a sense of permission that you could make that change?

MR. KOZLOFF: Actually it was a rather different situation than the one you might have been thinking of just then. We were in adjacent, rather than competing, fields. Which made a helpful difference when the spouses are really competing with each other for the limited attention available in their professional field—because I was writing and she was painting her work. On the other hand it was helpful in another way, because I was like the house doctor. I could be called into the studio to give learned impressions and comments, you see.

MS. LEDDY: Did she do that for you when you started doing photography?

MR. KOZLOFF: No because I was too high-brow in my hermetic ways, so to speak. I mean she would see what I would do or make some comments on it. But I didn't need to have someone looking over my shoulder because I thought my work was not hubristic enough, as it were, or not claiming special attention. It was simply something I did, let's put it that way. When writing, I would show my writing to her and get comments on that and support.

MS. LEDDY: And did you consider yourself a feminist? Do you consider yourself a feminist?

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh. There are certain women in the world who would not say so. I don't know as I have the gumption or history to disagree with them. However, as feminism is one of the number of topics in a professional's liberal, left-wing outlook, I include myself amongst those who call themselves feminists in that regard.

MS. LEDDY:. Do you think that living with a feminist has affected your teaching, for example?

MR. KOZLOFF: In some slight ways it might have done so. Not that I visibly or conspicuously altered the cast of characters I would find in my writings or teachings to include more women artists, or photographers. So there was some, probably, some increase there. I began to think that there were more women artists of note than I had previously given credit for.

And so I wanted to look into their work. And then there were some remarkable, brilliant ones, ones I wrote about more than once, like Diane Arbus. I want to write a book now, maybe, on—Käthe Kollwitz, a German artist. I think her work is fascinating.

MS. LEDDY: Expressionist, more or less, right? Yes. She's great. But that's not photography, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, no. I don't feel obliged to write on photography exclusively anymore. My latest book was on Vermeer.

MS. LEDDY: So that's kind of past now. Your focus on photography has—

MR. KOZLOFF: Not by any means given up or resigned. Because I've got some assignments that are right within the field right now. But I don't feel that I'm in rapid mode to be at the forefront of photo studies anymore. I think I've done some things.

[END OF kozlof14_3of3_sd_track01.]

MS. LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Max Kozloff in his home in New York City on January 20, 2015.

MR. KOZLOFF: [Inaudible] Is it doing the right thing?

MS. LEDDY: I think that's right. Okay, the record button is on. If you ever see it go off then we're in trouble.

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay.

MS. LEDDY: But this one is on, too, so I think we're okay. Is it close enough to you though? That's what I'm worried about. Let's move this, and put it down here. Move this up so it doesn't weigh it down so much. I think that's pretty good. Okay, and maybe let's put this here, so it's actually even closer to you. Okay?

MR. KOZLOFF: And what is this?

MS. LEDDY: That's the backup. That's my iPhone.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh.

MS. LEDDY: So what I've noticed is if this fails, which has happened, that is good.

MR. KOZLOFF: Continues.

MS. LEDDY: This is actually better—funny. This is a pretty expensive digital recorder, but truly the sound on that iPhone—

MR. KOZLOFF: Is—

MS. LEDDY:—recorder is better. It's very—

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay, good.

MS. LEDDY: But I'm required to use that, because that's—even though it's mine, it's the same as the one that they use. It's an archival quality one, you know. Okay, so first—okay, so let's try to open this subject up. The first thing I want to know is how you met Joyce. How did you meet Joyce?

MR. KOZLOFF: How did I meet Joyce? The circumstances were simple. I lived in an apartment in the Upper West Side of New York City. And one day, eating at a local restaurant, I saw an acquaintance of mine, the painter Stephen Greene. We fell into a friendly conversation. He invited me to visit the studios of the art department of Columbia University nearby where he happened to be teaching. I agreed. I thought there was an interesting junket that we had. We went through different studios, examining them physically and looking at the light, meeting some of the students. And one of them I saw was doing some painting in abstraction. We were introduced. It was Joyce. Later after some other business around and about, I went over to her and asked her if I could ask her a question. She said, "Sure, what was it?" But she looked up at me rather strangely. It turned out later that she knew I was a critic and had attended one of my lectures and thought I was intimidating.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] Were you writing for the *Nation* then?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: So what year was that?

MR. KOZLOFF: 1966, at the end of 1966.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: I said, "Would you like to come out to have lunch with me?" She felt very relieved.

[They laugh.]

MR. KOZLOFF: I wasn't asking her anything about some arcane, pretentious art matter.

MS. LEDDY: And so why did you ask her out? Was it to—was it, she just was really cute or—

MR. KOZLOFF: She was cute, but there was something more than cuteness about it, and that was she wore these rimless glasses that they associate with French intellectualism.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: So I thought she must be smart, too.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: And so we began to hit it off and she lived nearby, Riverside Drive. And then courtship, and that eventually took place. And by February, no less, we had decided we were going to share our lives.

MS. LEDDY: So how long—that was fast, right? I mean it was how many months? Five, six months?

MR. KOZLOFF: Two.

MS. LEDDY: Two months.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was very—rather quick, that's right, when we made this decision. Then, of course, we went through the painful period of learning about each other afterwards; that is to say in more detail.

MS. LEDDY: When did that happen? After you were married?

MR. KOZLOFF: From February to July.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Where—when we got married at her parents' house in New Jersey. And—

MS. LEDDY: Well, how do you explain this kind of instant chemistry?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well I had been this aging bachelor for a bit of a while—a sum of years as a matter of fact.

MS. LEDDY: So how old were you?

MR. KOZLOFF: I was, let's see, 34.

MS. LEDDY: Wow, that's very young, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Thirty-four.

MS. LEDDY: And she was?

MR. KOZLOFF: She was nine and a half years younger, almost 10 years younger.

MS. LEDDY: So 24 or—

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right. So she was—

MS. LEDDY:—25, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—she was still a student working for her master's degree in fine arts, fine arts.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: MFA. She had a known teacher Theodoros Stamos—

MS. LEDDY: Oh yeah?

MR. KOZLOFF:—when we met—

MS. LEDDY: Stamos.

MR. KOZLOFF:—and who we—he befriended us, aside from Steve Greene and some of the others. She was an abstractionist then, and I felt that there was a great deal of potential in her work and maybe I could aid her on to some crystallization of her ideas. But that was not a motive at first. It was just simply a kind of convergence of ideas, sentiments, values, and notions that brought us together in a harmonious way. And we got married in July, July of '67.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And—but didn't you rather soon after that go out to California?

MR. KOZLOFF: What about California?

MS. LEDDY: Didn't you go to Los Angeles around that same time—together?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I don't recall exactly that insignificant trip. We went together when I was appointed on the faculty of—at the California Institute of the Arts.

MS. LEDDY: And that was?

MR. KOZLOFF: '69, '70, or '70 and '71. Well it had to be because—

MS. LEDDY: Okay, so it was about three years after you were married—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, right.

MS. LEDDY:—you went out there.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: So—and then that was also the time when Joyce reportedly had the first meeting of feminist artists in your apartment in—

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY:—in Santa Monica—

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY:—I think.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: So—

MR. KOZLOFF: Our son had already been born in—

MS. LEDDY: And your—

MR. KOZLOFF:—1969.

MS. LEDDY: So your son was born—

MR. KOZLOFF: My son, Nikolas.

MS. LEDDY: Nikolas, okay. Now tell me about that. So I mean here you were 34. You are suddenly married.

MR. KOZLOFF: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: Very suddenly married and become a father. I mean how—you know, we've heard so much about your development. Like it seems that your life is so focused on your work and your criticism and your career as an art critic, and then how did this whole personal dimension work with all that?

MR. KOZLOFF: Chance factors entered into—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—our marital relationship—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—that ameliorated and furthered certain ideas and goals we'd had. For example, major event: Joyce showed her work to Tibor de Nagy, an old pioneering gallery in

New York—with some distinguished people in its stable. And Tibor saw Joyce's slides, liked them very much, and asked her if she'd like to have a show. This was very shortly after our marriage, and it really built us up into a very sort of anticipatory situation where her professional prospects began to look rosier and rosier. And she had a show. It was well received, and we circulated and we made professional friends. And we were crossing over

and coalescing in certain activities, because I was painting a little bit myself, though by no means with her assurance, and her work was getting more distinct and away from the earlier student days where she was doing sort of minimalist abstractions. She was becoming more complex, see.

MS. LEDDY: Well she was part of Pattern and Decoration, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, that was not until ‘75.

MS. LEDDY: That was in ‘75. I see. So this is a transitional period.

MR. KOZLOFF: But she did have a residency at a workshop with June—

MS. LEDDY: June?

MR. KOZLOFF: June Wayne, director of the famous print workshop Tamarind, in Albuquerque.

MS. LEDDY: Okay.

MR. KOZLOFF: Anyhow, that affected her outlook versus her aesthetic outlook. She learned photography and she became more complex and multifarious in her elements and motifs, which were leading on to something a little later on, as you’re thinking about. At any event, so while she was evolving I was teaching and leaving *Artforum*—excuse me, leaving the *Nation* at the end of the ‘60s—

MS. LEDDY: And we’re moving into *Artforum*, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—and then I was already attached to—associated with *Artforum*.

MS. LEDDY: So you guys were like a—sort of like a power couple, as they say, in the art world?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, some unhappy presentiments of our presence as a power couple, as you put it—

[They laugh.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—might have been evident around there, because I was looked upon as something of a presence that—who had to be watched, you know, by the differentiating principles and outlooks and power mongerings of the—that present scene in the 19—late ‘60s and early ‘70s.

MS. LEDDY: And that was because of your connection to Joyce, you think?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, it wasn’t. It might have been something that rebounded on her reputation, because she was associated with me. She retained my last name and Kozloff is—

MS. LEDDY: That’s right.

MR. KOZLOFF:—a family.

MS. LEDDY: Do you—did you think that did negatively impact her? Like, that other critics wouldn’t review her because they had a relationship with you?

MR. KOZLOFF: There was—I don’t think there was any evidence of prejudice—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—or negligence, or undue favor either. But she did have this lucky stroke of getting represented in a good gallery early on.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Very shortly after she left schooling—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—you see. And then I had a number of friends and associates and colleagues who were movers in the art world in different levels, including galleries and the like, that did not impinge upon her activities, because she was visibly evolving and crystallizing her own vision, which began to take on a very visible form in 1973. Why do I say ‘73? Because one of my students—I was teaching—I had been teaching at the Graduate Student Center at 42nd Street of the New York City University system; I had a seminar in art criticism. And it was concluding at the end of the spring semester when I told the students that I was taking a vacation with my wife.

We were planning to go to Mexico, and a trip we'd looked forward to with great enthusiasm. And one of my students, a young woman, said, "My mother owns a villa in a small town beneath Mexico City called Tepoztlan, and she's eager to rent it to whoever might like to spend a couple of months there during the summer. And I could contact her," said my student, "If that sounded interesting to you." And it sounded very interesting to us. And so this took place. We went down to the mother's villa. It was this complex of houses with a staff, including horses.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: And we were riding around in this valley and enjoying Mexico. And I should mention that I had an ulterior purpose in going to Mexico, which was to investigate and to study, and eventually to do an ambitious text on Los Tres Grandes, the three Mexican heroes, painters—

MS. LEDDY: [Unintelligible.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco—

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF:—whose work was to be found in great quantities in Mexico City, the capital, which was about 60 miles above Tepoztlan, a very picturesque village. My student's name by the way was Hayden Herrera.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: And when we went to look at the Rivera residence at Coyoacan, a suburb of Mexico City, we learned about Frida, his wife.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And later on I told Hayden, who was looking for a graduate master's thesis—doctoral thesis, excuse me, on an appropriate target, that it should be Frida.

MS. LEDDY: Well good advice. That book was on everybody's shelf for 20 years.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right.

MS. LEDDY: You know.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right. So it was the first biography in English—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—of Frida Kahlo, and Hayden relished it with great enthusiasm. And Joyce was behind the encouragement we gave her to go and to study Frida, which she did, and learn Spanish. And her husband is from a Latino family. So in other words, there was a kind of a Mexican accent that went into our lives at this time, most important for Joyce, because I had later discontinued the impetus I had for writing other than a few articles that I liked, but not books on the Rivera-Orozco duo, so to speak, because we went to visit a number of churches as the old gringo tourists might do, and ambling around Mexico City but elsewhere in Puebla. Particularly in the Puebla area.

MS. LEDDY: I love Puebla. Isn't it an amazing town? Wow.

MR. KOZLOFF: So we saw the tiled churches.

MS. LEDDY: Like 135 churches..

MR. KOZLOFF: Joyce went wild over them. And to tell you the truth—

MS. LEDDY: They're so strange looking.

MR. KOZLOFF:—I was excited with it, too.

MS. LEDDY: But they're so weird.

MR. KOZLOFF: I think that that particular contact with that—mostly 18th century, colonial—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—architecture changed Joyce's artistic vision.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, that's so interesting. Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: It was a prelude to a Pattern and Decoration phase in her work.

MS. LEDDY: I can see how that would be true. That is such an interesting, you know, moment. Yeah, I see. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.].

MR. KOZLOFF: You see, because we quickly understood that there was a Mozarabic, as it were, influence—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—upon these churches, coming from the Spanish mainland, and transfigured by Indian artisans and native visions into this glorious, decorative ensemble.

MS. LEDDY: Glorious, I don't know. I mean, truly, I look at those churches and they are so ugly to me. The exterior is so ugly and so tortured. But then, inside they're actually quite spectacular.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, we became conversant, particularly Joyce—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—with the Churrigueresque style,—

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF:—but not pronouncing it correctly, which was this—then the Plateresque style behind that and so forth.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: So Joyce became rather scholarly, but also tremendously enthusiastic about this discovery, this hemispheric discovery, which changed her life. And when she proposed her first Pattern and Decoration paintings to Tibor, he was quite taken aback.

MS. LEDDY: Not his thing, huh?

MR. KOZLOFF: He hadn't been prepared.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: But they got accustomed to it and they were enjoying the differentials in the atmosphere of Joyce's work.

MS. LEDDY: But it is more of a gallery for abstract art. I mean, did she—didn't she switch then to Holly Solomon, no?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no.

MS. LEDDY: No.

MR. KOZLOFF: She was working with Tibor for—

MS. LEDDY: The whole time.

MR. KOZLOFF:—quite a while—

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF:—for some few years. And then she was taken on later by—

MS. LEDDY: You mean where she is now, Bridget Moore?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, before that.

MS. LEDDY: Before that.

MR. KOZLOFF: Barbara—

MS. LEDDY: Gladstone. Gladstone?

MR. KOZLOFF: Gladstone. Barbara Gladstone.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, she was with Barbara Gladstone. Oh I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: She was with Barbara Gladstone, the gallery. That's what it is.

MS. LEDDY: I see. That makes sense. Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: For a few years.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And so—but then by '75, she was making contact with similarly oriented artists with different idioms, however, and they became this little band later to be called Pattern and Decoration.

MS. LEDDY: Right, Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]. Yeah. So to go back to—okay, let's talk about your fatherhood and your—the birth of your son.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, that? Okay. That occurred in 1969. A boy child. And I was all unfamiliar with how to be a father, but I had some instincts and I was very charmed by this little creature. And so I learned some techniques of infant care and got to be—I became somewhat familiar with a domestic routine, though my part in it was far less than my wife's, of course. Then, in 1974 we left the Upper West Side, 106th Street, and moved down to SoHo.

MS. LEDDY: Here?

MR. KOZLOFF: Here, to this loft. And it meant that our child would be going to local schools in this area. He went to the Little Red School House—

MS. LEDDY: Oh, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—over on Bleecker Street.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And then later on to St. Anne's in Brooklyn.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: So we wanted to give him the best available education that we could find, but it was mostly private, as it turned out.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: There was this phase of public school for about a year. And he grew up to be a very tall child. And adolescence was difficult, as it often is for American children of that age, teenage. But he got through that and revealed certain scholarly instincts that took him on to working for a Ph.D., which he achieved.

MS. LEDDY: Oh.

MR. KOZLOFF: At Oxford, actually.

MS. LEDDY: In what?

MR. KOZLOFF: After getting a master's at the university—Miami University and so-forth. And now he's a blogger and a journalist and an historian of Latin American matters. But most recently, he went to Ukraine. He's been writing about the difficulties there. And then, even more recently, he started taking photographs with his iPhone—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—panoramas in color, street scenes, which are amazing because he deliberately staggers the view so that the—at a different unselected moments, or selected ones as the case may be, results are quite amazing because you see people jiggered through space as if they were folds in an accordion's bellows. They're repeated, they're fantastical, but they're given with the same descriptive fluency and finish as a non-tampered photograph might give it. A recent visitor—excuse me, a recent viewer of these photographs said that Nick's

work, without any history of photography to inform him, resembles a combination of Joyce's and mine together. [Laughs.]

MS. LEDDY: I was going to say, it sounds he's—like he's definitely following in his parents' footsteps in many respects.

MR. KOZLOFF: So that's one thing that happened.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] But when you—so here's the thing. You were married in '67 and then you had a child in '69.

MR. KOZLOFF: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: And then in '71 you went to California.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And at that point Joyce became a feminist, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, yes.

MS. LEDDY: And how did that—I mean, how do you understand that sequence of events? Was it from being married and having a child, or what? How did this all connect to you, or did it?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I'm not sure, at this point in time and looking back, that the metamorphosis that Joyce had into an activist, feminist activity or practice was abrupt, as you might think. I think it was building up. She was beginning to question earlier the role of the father and the mother in raising children, number one. The division and apportionment of domestic activities, the responsibilities and freedoms that have to be negotiated and worked out between two, essentially, partners in a marriage. And we had differences. And they came to a certain head when she met other women, comparably inclined to establish, to announce, to acknowledge women's prerogatives in marital and in social situations. I could only follow from a certain distance, because I was concerned with my own activities and privileges, too, you see.

So then, while I was aware of her moving in this rather political dimension, I can describe a few things that happened. I wasn't necessarily with her in a companionable way. I was carrying on my own activities. And so there were certain openings that began to appear to us. Childcare, for example, and equality for women in the employment market. Growing up here, I was certainly sympathetic to that. However, there were more underground and—or submarine activities where I wasn't really, terribly accelerated. One of them was something that was typically linguistic and difficult. When you would be writing something about this or that artist, you might say, "His employment of this device or his response to that one, and so-forth; it was never "his or her response."

MS. LEDDY: Right, right, that was hard for people.

MR. KOZLOFF: That's right, so I wouldn't have said his or her. I didn't put that in until much later. So it was always a masculine artist in the personal pronoun, you see?

MS. LEDDY: Right, right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But things were changing linguistically and psychologically while I was still adhering to this particular little mannerism.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: Until later I didn't.

MS. LEDDY: So would she tell—would she challenge you and say, "Why are you doing that in your reviews?" .

MR. KOZLOFF: I think that she brought to my attention a number of lapses and shortcomings in my approach to the idea of feminist independence and strength. Of course, this was a time when a number of books were being written, too, that fed the political spirit of feminism at that point in time. And the—at Cal Arts there were strong, intelligent, vivacious women faculty, who were building together a kind of common understanding of where they might take their awareness of their own consciousness as women.

MS. LEDDY: Well, do you think that they regarded you as, you know, a sympathetic kind of male because of your relationship with Joyce? Were you given a free pass, as it were?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, they were concerned with their own sorority of fellow feeling, you might say, which was obvious and necessary. There were certain men in this circle; they were not disrespected, but I don't think they were brought by their own initiative into this dialogue the women were having with each other. There was—there were architects and painters and so forth, and they were the witnesses on the edge, but they were not participants in the center for a good reason: because they were men. What are you doing?

MS. LEDDY: Just checking to make sure this is all working right. Okay, all right. So—but you know, here's the thing. Describe what was happening—say Joyce would say, "Okay, tonight we're having a meeting of women artists, and we're going to get together, and you know, figure out, you know, how to combat this inequality"—you know, you would be obviously hearing about these things going on in your life, and how did you react to this?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, did you remember some of the events of those days? One of the chief issues brought up by the women in concert with each other, and with some degree of rather feisty enthusiasm, was the fact that women, proportionally speaking, were not as represented in museums and galleries—

MS. LEDDY: Like the Guerilla Girls, sure.

MR. KOZLOFF:—as in the numbers in the art world demanded.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And this was, when you began to look at it, incontrovertible.

MS. LEDDY: Right. I mean, exactly. The idea that one woman had had a museum show in a given year. But you knew all these—about all these things that were going on, and you know the—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, there was something that happened. The Guerilla Girls decided to do an action. This is much later. And they were already known to the outer art world and media world as people in masks.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: Gorilla masks.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And they decided to have an event where they would appear at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden jungle in their masks with weight lifters and macho men, who were showing off their muscles, and they would show that they were friendly with the men. And they needed a photographer.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] So you got to do it. Well that's kind of a great assignment.

MR. KOZLOFF: I had to do that job. That was a very amusing job. I did it. And it appeared—it appeared in *Artforum*, but by then I was a much more converted creature to feminist ideas.

MS. LEDDY: But when it first started, I mean you knew that these—they were planning to, for example, put a certain poster up in your neighborhood here. And you—were they working on things while you were here, and you knew that it was going on, it was a secret and all of that?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well—

MS. LEDDY: Or were you in the dark actually as to what was going on?

MR. KOZLOFF: You mean in terms of what their actions, their activities?

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, their activities, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, there was Women's House at Cal Arts.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: And then there was A.I.R. and SOHO20.

MS. LEDDY: Right, and there was *Heresies*, too. It—Joyce was also a part of *Heresies*, right? Heresies.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, *Heresies* is major.

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Major contribution they were working on.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Joyce was very instrumental in *Heresies*.

MS. LEDDY: Right, and so you were—she's involved in all of these things, and you are on the outside peering in, or did you just kind of "It's her thing" and you just didn't participate?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I was in generic sympathy with—

[They laugh.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—what they were doing.

MS. LEDDY: So you were being—you were really supportive of it. You just didn't—

MR. KOZLOFF: I didn't—

MS. LEDDY: You didn't want to—

MR. KOZLOFF:—I didn't get specific, you see—

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF:—because it—number one, of a hesitation, I didn't want to intervene with my outside opinions. Number two, I wasn't so conversant with a number of their positions, although I was generally encouraging of them, you might say.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.], right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But from a formal point of view, I wasn't an insurrectionist, you might say.

MS. LEDDY: And you don't see yourself, in any case, as a political activist, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Not in the cause of feminism.

MS. LEDDY: But do you see yourself as an activist in any political cause?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, there were political events, in which I was—

MS. LEDDY: You mean the Vietnam War for example, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—an activist. Yes, mostly about that.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]. And also race, right? I mean, civil rights also.

MR. KOZLOFF: Civil rights.

MS. LEDDY: Yep.

MR. KOZLOFF: And one point of major active defiance we were being jailed in Washington overnight for a protest.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: It was very funny, because the authorities could not get us to move from the Capitol Building.

Arrested us en masse, and they were photographing us one by one until they came to me. They couldn't do it so well, because I was too tall for them. So they had to raise the camera.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] But so, really, it seems like in some marriages feminism—the feminist activism of the wife—led to some kind of break up. I mean, I've heard so many stories about this. But it seems like in your case, maybe what happened is that you kind of kept a certain—allowed a certain space between the two of you for separate activities, so she could do that. It didn't necessarily come into the private sphere in the same way.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, to say that there was a certain space that either was created or pre-existed her stances in feminism, that would not be incorrect. However, there was something that I now recall that was influential coming from that direction towards mine. And that was consciousness raising.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, did you go through those—

MR. KOZLOFF: Because there were meetings with women that they would do—

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF:—they would deal with their problems, their domestic problems, their political problems, their psychological problems in a committee-like forum. And I would, I think, hear about some of those doings from Joyce when she attended.

MS. LEDDY: But you didn't attend, because sometimes—

MR. KOZLOFF: No, because they were for women.

MS. LEDDY: No, but sometimes they were for both. Like I know Allan Kaprow, for example, was part of this whole thing.

MR. KOZLOFF: Probably.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: But what I do remember is male consciousness raising groups.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: And I was a participant in one or two of those.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: They were directly, if not abjectly, influenced by the women in this regard.

MS. LEDDY: Was that here in New York City?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, that's right.

MS. LEDDY: And so, who were the other men who were—

MR. KOZLOFF: They were fellow artists or critics or—mostly artists.

MS. LEDDY: Like who?

MR. KOZLOFF: That would be difficult for me to summon up. But they were local artists.

MS. LEDDY: Was it like Leon Golub? Was it Lawrence Alloway? Was it those people?

MR. KOZLOFF: No, no, my colleagues, my professional colleagues, not. These were artists. I was one of the very few, or the only critic—

MS. LEDDY: Oh.

MR. KOZLOFF:—in some of these groups that I remember. They went on—what was very strange about them is that in the group the men would be quite frank and open up about their problems and their sense of male identity or their problems with their mates or partners. And so this was to be welcomed, this candor, these exchanges. But should we meet each other on the street?

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Mum's the word.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, well that's how it's supposed to be, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah.

MS. LEDDY: That it happens privately, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: [Laughs.] That's right.

MS. LEDDY: But your feeling is that it was in response to the women and the ways—in some way, an attempt to deal with the threat of this new era or—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, in my case, I think it was just that I saw the merit of being open with one's fellows and—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—seeing what their experience was like.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Learning from it and getting some perspective. And that's what I thought was the merit of what the women were doing with each other, too.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But we were secondary in terms of timing; successors, not—

MS. LEDDY: Right, it happened—

MR. KOZLOFF:—initiators, no.

MS. LEDDY:—afterwards, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: Right. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And I guess I've asked you this before, but just again, you know, in the end you feel that this close exposure, to feminist activism did eventually, bit by bit, affect your point of view and your critical stance, or do you feel it did not?

MR. KOZLOFF: Hard to say in this regard, because it was part of the intellectual and psychological atmosphere in which we moved; that is, upcoming insurgent feminism—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—which of course, was in the end not really satisfied and still isn't—

MS. LEDDY: Right, completely, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—in terms of its goals.

MS. LEDDY: Certainly, many things have changed.

MR. KOZLOFF: But nevertheless, it altered the political atmosphere, I think, for the better. I remember trying to include more women in my itinerary of critical subjects.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: But I was by no means in the forefront as compared to certain others, like Lucy and Lawrence particularly.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Right, right. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] But was it different? I mean, was the feminist context at Cal Arts and in Los Angeles different than the one here?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I think it was more strident out there—

MS. LEDDY: Really?

MR. KOZLOFF:—because there was less consciousness of improvement, of possible improvement out in the West.

MS. LEDDY: Why is that?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well—but the fact is that, whether it be the Los Angeles County Museum of Art or the Museum of Modern Art, the targets were similar, and retro in both East and West coasts. So the women had to do, redo as it were, the same itinerary of challenge and ideology. Then I became aware, to be sure, like everyone else that there was a history behind this, the women suffragette movement—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—and certain conservative facts of western political history were very shocking when they came

out.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: For example, that only in 1920 were women given the right to vote in places like Switzerland and elsewhere.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: You see?

MS. LEDDY: Right, right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But I don't know if it has affected my actual professional practice in writing terribly much.

MS. LEDDY: I mean, this is a—moving away a little bit from this topic, but it's somehow related. When you think back on pieces that you've written over the course of your life, are there—do you feel that your opinions have changed, or are there pieces that you wish you could rewrite, that you feel are completely wrong when you look back on them, or positions that you took that you feel are wrong?

MR. KOZLOFF: You mean revisions of taste, retrospective revisions of—

MS. LEDDY: Taste and judgment, yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Well, I used to go around speaking of one of my earlier pieces, the first piece actually, almost, on Pop Art published in *Art International*.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: I used to refer to it with great pride, as famous in the annals of philistinism.

[They laugh.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Because it wound up, after a serious responsible analysis of the first Pop Art, with a put down, a crashing, which was unbelievably [inaudible], you know, because I was a humanist art critic and here were these people doing Pop Art. It was on advertisements and there was very little transformation, and I thought, "How can they possibly be positive about things that were so ugly, crass, consumerist, foolish, and stupid?"

MS. LEDDY: So the humor in it, and the irony and all that was not—

MR. KOZLOFF: I missed the burlesque and the irony entirely in the first piece, almost entirely. But I revised my opinions during the '60s writing favorably on Lichtenstein and Warhol, and my favorite of pop art, Oldenburg—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah. Such a great guy. Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—in the '60s. And others, too.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] So you changed your—so that would be an example of a point of view that you would—that you had changed.

MR. KOZLOFF: That was an important change.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Anything—

MR. KOZLOFF: But there was always a current of opposition and tension in my criticism, vis-à-vis establishment and mainline opinions. And there was a reason. The reason is that I'm a liberal in instinct and most of the more significant changes, movements, repositionings, and ideologies of modernism were anti-liberal and still are—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—or were anyhow. So I felt—

MR. KOZLOFF:—very much on the edge, my own edge—when looking at works that obviously had great personal or aesthetic merits, but were lacking in—and in some denial of—the values that I upheld and were precious to me.

MS. LEDDY: And you still feel that way.

MR. KOZLOFF: I sometimes still feel that way, but less so now.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Mellowed more.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Or just got used to that stance, right, within art, which is such a part of post-modernism, isn't it?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I've written about this, and whether it be in art or more recently in photography, it comes out in what I've written, that feeling for the ambiguity of the artistic statement considered from multiple points of view, which I tend to entertain.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And lately this particular stance has come to seem more evident and inevitable than it was at one point; that is, art is understood as an ambiguous development—

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF:—and something that evolves and evokes equivocal reactions, which are part of the experience and necessary to evolve and bear witness to. And my work has always been about that in some ways.

MS. LEDDY: Well, I mean, your work seems to always take into account the experience of looking, and the development of that experience, right? It's a little bit foolproof as a—

MR. KOZLOFF: A little bit.

MS. LEDDY:—a little bit foolproof, as an approach, because what you're really saying is "These are the stages of my response to this," and who can ultimately argue with that, you know?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, also there was an anti-judgmental—

MS. LEDDY: Yes.

MR. KOZLOFF:—dimension to what I was writing, too.

MS. LEDDY: Sometimes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Because I didn't like hierarchies. I didn't like lists of more important as compared to the less important.

MS. LEDDY: Right. But what about, say for example, that article that I read where you attack the Los Angeles Light and Space artists. We talked about it in the earlier interview. You had the idea that Los Angeles was this culture that was incredibly objectionable in many ways, but somehow this pathological culture produces this great visual art. Do you still have that point of view?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, it all traces back to a deep, instinctual, neurotic fear I have of driving.

[They laugh.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Because you can't do anything else if you want to get anywhere, even in today's Los Angeles, let alone then.

MS. LEDDY: I know, it's terrible.

MR. KOZLOFF: And to see a city and to experience it, well, being in a car, as all the Los Angeles natives were, is to keep a distance which was situational, circumstantial, rather than intrinsic and internalized. And I always wanted to keep the intrinsic and the internalized in some kind of literary visibility.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And the idea of driving around in the city and stopping here and there, and walking on deserted streets, sun-shocked by the light—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—was not exactly a pleasant anticipation in my part.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: So I think I had instinctual and physiological distastes for California experience. I wrote an article on this subject, much more sympathetic, called “California Noir”. There was a show that was taking place in Denmark at the time they—

MS. LEDDY: Oh, *Sunshine and Noir*, right.

MR. KOZLOFF: *Sunshine and Noir*, yeah.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, Peter Plagens, yeah. Also, you remember, didn’t he write the essay?

MR. KOZLOFF: He might have done something [inaudible].

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, Uh-huh. [Affirmative.].

MR. KOZLOFF: I had difficulties with an early Los Angeles artist named Chris Burden—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—who shot himself. Well, had himself shot.

MS. LEDDY: Right, in the arm, yes.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, it’s in the arm. But later after complaining about this as an example of the decadence and degeneration of American art, Los Angeles version or not, at the show *Sunshine and Noir* there were some Chris Burdens and they were gigantic police uniforms.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, I love that one. Do you like that?

MR. KOZLOFF: I liked it very much and—

MS. LEDDY: Very good.

MR. KOZLOFF:—commented on it—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—because it—I have to agree with his political point of view that the cops were—

MS. LEDDY: It’s very impressive when you walk into a museum and you see those uniforms, you know, just the uniforms themselves.

MR. KOZLOFF: So there were constant revisions, I think—

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—as in every critic’s itinerary and repertoire.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And so these were some of them.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, uh-huh. [Affirmative.] That’s true. And then I was thinking about this: that your latest book is on Vermeer, and this seems like such a movement back for you since you—I always think of you as reviewing, yes, maybe some early 20th century, but mainly being centered in the present, in contemporary art. And so, what brought you to Vermeer, and what do you argue in that book?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, although this might sound hard to believe—

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF:—I took up the subject of Vermeer to write an essay or study at some length out of an instinct to enjoy myself, just to give myself pleasure and for the fun of it. It didn’t seem to me that there were unsolved aesthetic problems in dealing with Vermeer, although I was naïve in that subject. But rather that, to deal with something beloved and be able to enter into that affectionate relationship with whatever eloquence I could

summon, was a worthwhile thing to do and a relaxed professional moment of my career. Also, it did have consequences and ricochets with my interest in photography. I had asked myself, what was the difference between a Vermeer and a photograph? Because of all the great old masters his form came closest to the idea of what a photograph might be.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, how so?

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, in the text itself, in the piece of writing I did, I made repeated allusions to the extraneous in Vermeer's work. That is to say, things that while they might physically, visibly have impinged upon his attention, were not necessarily included in the work of his fellow Dutch 17th century genre colleagues, because they were involved with more narrative proposals—than was the case with him.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And then I realized that the absence of narrative interest or storytelling literarily in Vermeer's work was tied with the idea of his including things that weren't necessary to tell stories, but which were there, nevertheless, within his optical range. And then taking the one major painting by him that became exemplary of these interesting problems and provocations to the art of painting, the artist in his studio, which is in Vienna,—

I began to realize that when he painted the chandelier in the—up above, or when he was looking at the reflections in the mullion windows, he was revealing to the viewer a heightened finish that could not possibly have been the case where the person viewing, is taken into consideration—that is to say, the person viewing is a fiction, because everything is distinct. Wherever you look, wherever you gaze, they have—the appearances are revealed to us at a maximum intensity of description, and finished description, which would not have been the case if I had been the girl walking into the studio, and looking around; I would have seen this but not that.

MS. LEDDY: So that feeling that you get in looking at Vermeer—almost like your eyes have some kind of hyper-ability to see. That's what you mean—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, and it's a timeless thing because it's got to do with qualities of distracting human attention. It's got to do with his obsessive magnificence of inclusion, and I contrast that with Velázquez's *Las Meninas*—where it's always the instantaneous. Now the difference between instantaneous and the Vermeer point of view, the difference between timeless and time-specific observation. And photography does both of those things at times. I found myself saying something apparently paradoxical or perverse about Vermeer, namely that first, he gives us the essential by providing the extraneous.You see?

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And then there's something else, too. There's a convention in his work that seems to be aligned with the going decorum of a drawing or painting; namely that there's a theater, that's there's an audience looking at a stage close up—they're all given front row seats, the viewers of these interiors with people [inaudible] or making lace and so-forth close up. But the difference between Vermeer and his colleagues in this regard is that Vermeer simply accepts that you're not in the front row seat. You're in the house. You're there. You've got a privileged view point as one of the inhabitants of the house.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Uh-huh. [Affirmative.], that's true.

MR. KOZLOFF: And this establishes an entirely different—psychological atmosphere.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.], that's true. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KOZLOFF: You see? And I tie this with photography in my own mind, not necessarily in the text that I wrote on Vermeer.

MS. LEDDY: I see, but—I see what you're saying. There's a kind of distortion that is at the same time a hyper-vision. It does seem like photography.

MR. KOZLOFF: It does.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Anyhow, I had a pleasure writing that [inaudible].

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, well that sounds great. You said that now you're working on—what was it?

MR. KOZLOFF:—Something that the Museum of Modern Art had commissioned me to

do—

MS. LEDDY: Oh.

MR. KOZLOFF:—called *Newer Documents*. An appraisal of the 1967 *New Document* show that Szarkowski put on at the museum featuring Arbus, Friedlander, and Winogrand. I reviewed it in the *Nation* at the time.

MS. LEDDY: Cool.

MR. KOZLOFF: [inaudible] You see this is the different view—50 years later.

MS. LEDDY:—the range—that you go to Vermeer; then you come back to photography—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, they're not exactly the newest, most contemporary topics.

MS. LEDDY: No, but I mean, in other words you—cover so many centuries and different media, and it's—you're not—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well—

MS. LEDDY:—you're not like limited to just a certain 10-year period, as so many critics are.

MR. KOZLOFF: Maybe not, but it's—once again, it's just a circumstance to my temperament and interest that I've known in a looser period. I have time to consider topics that might not have come up in my agenda earlier.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: For example, I'm going to write—I'm thinking of writing, or hope I would write a study of Katje Köllwitz.—because I think she's a remarkable artist and interesting person.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: But I have to do a lot of more research yet. This is still in the works.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: But it's not got much to do with Vermeer or Winogrand. [Laughs.]

MS. LEDDY: No, it's true. There's another thing I want to ask you, and this is about when you first came to New York City when you had your first teaching job and you got an apartment, and you felt that you could take in the scene. But you didn't exactly say what that scene was. And what I'm trying to get in some way is your sense of how the art scene in New York has changed, which of course is a very big topic. But you know, say something about that since you've been here through all these changes, I think it would be really interesting to hear your view.

MR. KOZLOFF: You mean in the professional atmosphere as it presented itself to an observer?

MS. LEDDY: In the art world in New York City, how that has changed.

MR. KOZLOFF: All right. There is an editorial change and there's a museological change. And there probably is a studio change, too. But let me talk about the first two, okay?

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay, the editorial change has to do with the publications devoted to art-making. And in the 1960s they were at a very early development stage. There was a journal called *the Magazine of Art*, which had a brief period in Washington, D.C. It was serious as I recall.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Gave us news. There was *Art News*.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Frankfurter and Hess.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And doing good pioneer work.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: Then when *Artforum* came along in the arts the scope of attention widened in the art world. We were aware of the fact that there were eventful duelings in the city, and it was an art center and the presence of the attentive art magazines was justified. And for that matter the art—the editors employed some rather ambitious and artful people to do the reviews or carry on their more extended studies. It became paradigmatic when *Artforum* came here in 1965 or something like that and established itself as a New York City-based magazine, no longer just west coast, provincial, San Francisco, Los Angeles. That was attractive to a number of recently graduated art history students who had their degrees and who worked for the magazines with their full knowledge, dealing with controversial and difficult contemporary art. In retrospect it was an interesting period, not without its gladiatorial touches—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—because there were a lot of disagreement and division; sometimes a civil war going on between the young critics who were affected by Greenburg, and those who weren't, or those of an older generation who were, as you've read no doubt, more poetically inspired by Rosenburg and Ashbery and others.

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—which I think would look rather more sympathetic now than it did at the time.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: Anyhow, in any event, if we look at that particular moment and jump ahead to the scene now, I think it's a dispiriting spectacle in terms of publishing. *Artforum* is obese, rigged, and journaled with fat hands everywhere and rather dinky, meager intellectual content in the pieces that are published, without much editorial attention given to them, or very little. And *Art International* is no longer with us. *Art News* is more consumer-oriented in terms of—

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF:—antiques and outcropping of markets in different places. And so I think the editorial atmosphere has degenerated considerably. On the other hand, one area where it's picked up is in the *New York Times*. I do admire the critics there, Roberta Smith and Holland Cotter; even Ken Johnson from time to time. You don't like him, though, do you?

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: No, he's not to be liked. But in any event, sometimes I agree with him. In any event there—that's a better position than John Canaday in the olden days of *New York Times* art reviews.

MS. LEDDY: Well that's certainly true.

MR. KOZLOFF: So that is—that's better and Cotter is really very good.

MS. LEDDY: Yep, I like him.

MR. KOZLOFF: And that was editorial and about the media. Then there was—what did I say before?

MS. LEDDY: And museological.

MR. KOZLOFF: Museological, oh right, yes, okay. I wrote a piece called "Museums" in the late 1960s, discussing the architecture of new art museums, which had been originally influenced by classical models.

[Audio break.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Then in the '60s it became medieval and I refer to—I think it was Denver, and here the Whitney and fortress-like places, rather unforgiving and unfriendly, but very reassuring as far as security was concerned, unlike the Palladian model in Washington, D.C., in the National Gallery, and so-forth.

MS. LEDDY: Right, right.

MR. KOZLOFF: Nowadays the architectural issues are similar to the financial and administrative issues at the museums. We catch news of how their boards are in difficulties with their financiers, or their financiers are

leaving, or they are demanding too much attention. Los Angeles was a crucible of these internal feuds among the museum personnel.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, yeah. It's the Pasadena Museum.

MR. KOZLOFF: Pasadena Museum and so forth. Now the movement of the Whitney to Chelsea is problematic. The movement of the ICP to the Bowery is also in some difficulties. The museums are in arrears. They can't decide what their role is, and maybe they've exhausted certain channels. And I think the word 'crisis' is perhaps a little exaggerated but not irrelevant to discuss interpreting—

MS. LEDDY: But isn't museum attendance really high, higher than it's ever been, and there's—it's much more of a kind of boom in terms of attendance and—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes, yes.

MS. LEDDY:—it reaches a much wider audience than it ever did.

MR. KOZLOFF: That should be discussed.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And it would seem to be a positive sign, but I don't think so. And not that I disapprove of the public attending at greater numbers museum exhibitions in an area that I've dedicated myself to, but rather just going to these museums becomes incredibly distracting because—

MS. LEDDY: Oh, it's so—

MR. KOZLOFF:—they're like airports and—

MS. LEDDY:—can't see anything, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF:—there are supermodels and the atmosphere of allowing for—excuse me, concentrated attention has shrunk a lot.

MS. LEDDY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.], that's true.

MR. KOZLOFF: It's difficult to communicate or really address, by museum, works of art now—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—throughout the whole museum world, I think.

MS. LEDDY: And what about just the wave of art, the kind of art that's being made and the art market, and all the things that everybody complains about. I mean, you were there really for that movement, and you've been an observer during the entire—

MR. KOZLOFF: Well—

MS. LEDDY:—really the creation of the art market in New York City, and you know.

MR. KOZLOFF: See, I think that there's an incredible paradox involved in these events that we're discussing and these movements and currents, because I don't think the art has become more available intellectually or—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—sensuously to the general public. It's maintained a lot of its gestures of distance and aloofness and—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—insularity—

MS. LEDDY: Yep.

MR. KOZLOFF:—which is part of what modern art had been, and post-modernism, too.

MS. LEDDY: Right.

MR. KOZLOFF: But the public flocks; they go. They attend in huge quantities and they read the wall labels, which are recondite, as far as I'm concerned, arcane—I can't follow them too much. And I should be able to, and I have difficulty. And the reason is, is I put myself in the position of the late visitor—

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

MR. KOZLOFF:—to the museum.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, you try to imagine if I knew nothing would I understand this. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KOZLOFF: And I would try to imagine what someone who is a literate person, but not in the art world, would imagine and how that would be communicated to that person, and I find it mysterious.

MS. LEDDY:—The general public just is absolutely mystified.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I have a general complaint about the way museums give exposition to their exhibits. And one of the difficulties I think is, when you read that little text or larger text that are supplied for the publics' edification, you ask—you can ask yourself quite rationally, "Who wrote that?" Because it's not a human being. [Laughs.] It doesn't—it's not an—

MS. LEDDY: [inaudible]

MR. KOZLOFF:—individual voice.

MS. LEDDY: Although, you know, one experience I had recently was the Jeff Koons show,—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY:—which, I mean, I was so bored by the show, but the wall text was fantastic. Like you actually wanted to read what was said about the work—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah.

MS. LEDDY:—more than you wanted to look at the work. It was—that curator did a great service for Jeff Koons. I mean, it was amazing.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, I'm afraid I didn't see the show.

MS. LEDDY: But that's just a very unusual example. Usually I have this feeling of it just confusing people.

MR. KOZLOFF: Well, let me give you an example of what I consider to be a revealing and lively wall label.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay, I revert to an actual personal anecdote, which if the artist in question were ever to be given a new retrospective, might find a respectful place, should I have curated the show, of course. It has to do with the artist Joseph Cornell.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] I'm so glad we've come to this.

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Suppose there was a new retrospective, and I was asked to curate it, which wouldn't be the case. But in any event, it would've caused me to remember the contact I had with Joseph Cornell when I called him up some time in the 1960s, asking if it would be possible for me to come out to see the works in his private collection. I was impelled to do this because I had written a very favorable review of his work when shown at the Guggenheim, I think it was, in the 60s.

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

MR. KOZLOFF: And he knew about this article and he said yes, and he gave me his address, which was in Queens somewhere, Utopia Boulevard.

MS. LEDDY: Queens, Flushing, yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah. And he said, "Oh by the way," he said "I wonder if you could do me a favor?" I said, "Sure,

Mr. Cornell. What would it be?" And he said, "Would you go to the such-and-such delicatessen over on 3rd Avenue and buy me two cans of Il Sole sardines?" Did I tell you this story?

MS. LEDDY: You did tell me this. You did but I don't—I'm not sure it's on the tape, so let's—

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay, then I told you the story.

MS. LEDDY: Keep going. I don't think it's on the tape. Keep going.

MR. KOZLOFF: Okay, okay, okay. So I was mystified by this, but I was certainly glad to do him the favor, because he was going to show me his own work at close hand. So I went to the store he mentioned, and I asked for these Il Sole cans of sardines and gave me—the attendant, he gave me the sardines. I looked at them and I reached—I saw immediately why Cornell wanted me to buy them: because there was an old picture of the sun, like Medusa with coils of hair coming out, and in a 19th or 18th century engraving style, which I had seen in a previous combination of boxes by him. So I brought them up and I didn't realize that he'd gotten a number of typographical sources from commercial purchases and different specialty items in stores. He himself was a strange man. Very reticent, mysterious, repressed perhaps, but passionate underneath. And oh, there were boxes all over the place. And then he said, "Let's go down and look at some more boxes." And they were exciting. And I'm making comments and he said, "Would you like one?" And I said—

MS. LEDDY: Really?

MR. KOZLOFF:—"Are you serious?" in asking the question, and he said, "Absolutely." and I said, "Sure, sure I would love one."

MS. LEDDY: So he gave you one?

MR. KOZLOFF: So he's looking through his collection of boxes and materials that he would put in them. And then he said, "You know, I gave a box to one of your colleagues," and he didn't know that she was one of my old schoolmates, Susan Sontag.

MS. LEDDY: Oh.

MR. KOZLOFF: And she had written favorably about him, too. So he was trying to familiarize me with the fact that he could give boxes away to people who showed their admiration for his work, which I thought was interesting. In any event, he picks something up and he said, "This will do." And it wasn't a box, it was the back of a box. It was just a piece of—it was a cigar lid, to tell you the truth, you know.

MS. LEDDY: Oh. [Laughs.]

MR. KOZLOFF: Which he had painted a little bit and he gave it to me. He couldn't bring himself to give me a complete box. [Laughs.]

MS. LEDDY: Well—but she got her whole box, Susan Sontag?

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah.

MS. LEDDY: Well.

MR. KOZLOFF: So—but that, I wouldn't put that part in the museum catalog.

MS. LEDDY: [Laughs.] No, but the part about the sardines is great, you know.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, about the face?

MS. LEDDY: The part—yeah, it was. That's—

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh well, suddenly I realized that it was a Cornell face staring at me from a sardine box.

MS. LEDDY: Well, you know, if you look in the archive under his—remember, I showed you how all his whole archive is scanned—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY:—in the Archives of American Art? He gave us everything. And part of it—

MR. KOZLOFF: Who, Cornell?

MS. LEDDY: Cornell. And part of it all is his source material, just the little things he collected that he used in his boxes, but that he hadn't yet used. And if you just look at even the pictures of animals that he collected—

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY:—it's so—I mean, his aesthetic comes through so strongly.

MR. KOZLOFF: Very much so.

MS. LEDDY: It's so beautiful to see those.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah, yeah. Well, I'm at a point where it was a sadness, because his brother had died.

MS. LEDDY: Robert Cornell, the—yeah, he's in the archive, too. Pictures of his train collection, and him with his train collection.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: Because you know, he—there was something a little strange about him, right?

MR. KOZLOFF: Anyhow, when he was trying to find someone to catalog at the—to archive his works. And I think he picked on someone I knew named Alexandra Anderson, Allie Anderson.

MS. LEDDY: Oh, yeah. You mentioned that.

MR. KOZLOFF: And she was a budding writer and a nice looking woman, and with secretarial capacities I think. I think he did employ her, but I—she's still around somewhere. We can find out more [Inaudible].

MS. LEDDY: I wonder if she has some more material.

MR. KOZLOFF: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. LEDDY: Maybe? You know, this—I think we're done, but there's one other thing that I remembered that Joyce told me. You didn't tell me this. But she said that, you know, you were friends with Leon Golub for a long time.

MR. KOZLOFF: Leon Golub, yes.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah, Golub.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yes.

MS. LEDDY: And then something happened between you and you're not friends now. Well now he's dead, I know.

MR. KOZLOFF: Something did happen and we became at odds with each other, and a long-time affection and friendship we had was broken asunder, and that lasted for some years. And then in his 80s some 10 years after this, Leon, who was living nearby on LaGuardia Place, and Nancy became more friendly, and we saw each other but I want to say it ended up strained and distant, so it wasn't the same anymore.

MS. LEDDY: Was it about something political that you had the conflict?

MR. KOZLOFF: Not worldly political, art world political.

MS. LEDDY: I see.

MR. KOZLOFF: Yeah, he wanted more support than he was getting.

MS. LEDDY: I see, yeah. Well, you know, they are also—their papers are in the archive, too.

MR. KOZLOFF: There are people—

MS. LEDDY: Their papers are in the archive.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh, they are?

MS. LEDDY: Yes, all—everything.

MR. KOZLOFF: Oh.

MS. LEDDY: He gave all of his papers and so did she. So you're reunited again when you—[Laughs.].

MR. KOZLOFF: Well that's interesting.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah. They—

MR. KOZLOFF: I'm glad to hear it, because I'm sure they had some fascinating material.

MS. LEDDY: They do. It's very nice.

MR. KOZLOFF: They were fascinating people.

MS. LEDDY: Yeah.

MR. KOZLOFF: What was I going to say?

MS. LEDDY: I'm going to stop it, okay?

MR. KOZLOFF: There was this movie about them in which his personality kind of came through very—in which—

[END OF INTERVIEW.]