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Oral history interview with Suzi Gablik, 2015
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Suzi Gablik on 2015 February 27-March 1. The interview took place at Heritage Hall in Blacksburg, VA, and was conducted by Jason Stieber for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

JASON STIEBER: All right. This is Jason Stieber interviewing Suzi Gablik for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The date is February 27, 2015. The time is 1:45. We are at 3610 South Main Street in Blacksburg, VA and this is disc one. Okay, Suzi, could you say your name and spell your name.

SUZI GABLIK: My name is Suzi Gablik, S-U-Z-I; G-A-B-L-I-K.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And where were you born and what's your birthdate?

MS. GABLIK: My birthdate is 9-26-34 and I was born in Manhattan.

MR. STIEBER: Great. And what are the names of your parents?

MS. GABLIK: Geraldine Violet Schwartz was her maiden name, and my father was Anthony Gablik.

MR. STIEBER: Anthony Gablik. And was Schwartz spelled S-C-H-W-A-R-T-Z?

MS. GABLIK: Do you know, I'm not exactly sure but I think it's—I'm not sure.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. It's fine. It's fine. And do you have any siblings?

MS. GABLIK: None.

MR. STIEBER: None. Are there any other members of your family that you were close to when you were growing up? Aunts, uncles, grandparents?

MS. GABLIK: I was close to one of my aunts, my aunt Melba [Rice]. And she lived in Chicago when I was young and then she moved to California and I would stay with her a lot. When I was older and my career evolved and so I was often doing gigs in California and so I stayed with her a lot of the time.

MR. STIEBER: Was Melba your father's sister or your mother's?

MS. GABLIK: My mother's sister.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so—and was she married?

MS. GABLIK: Was she nice?

MR. STIEBER: Was she married?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, she was married.

MR. STIEBER: So her last name wasn't Schwartz?

MS. GABLIK: No, her last name was Rice.

MR. STIEBER: Rice. Okay. Fantastic. What—how would you characterize your father?

MS. GABLIK: Well my father was Hungarian and I think of kind of peasant stock which was kept to very much under wraps by my mother—[laughs]—in New York City. And he was an artist and he actually painted surrealist paintings, mostly in the manner of a kind of cross between [Roberto] Matta and Yves Tanguy. He did something very interesting. He had some kind of a chrome silver vase, and then he would get shiny papers, and put them up so they were reflected in the vase, and then paint what he saw.

MR. STIEBER: Interesting. And did he have any formal training?

MS. GABLIK: I think he did. I don't know much about it. He came to America when he was 19 by mistake because the First World War broke out and he was on a ship coming over here. I think he had trained really to be an architect if I recall, and the ship got re-routed because the war started. He was headed for Egypt. And in fact, the most extraordinary thing I remember about my father was that there was a large painting, the length of a sofa, that he made in a beautiful frame, of Titian's Venus on the couch [*Venus of Urbino*, 1538] —or—and it looked totally like the original—so—not that I'm sure I ever saw the original but—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Maybe in a book.

MS. GABLIK: —it was a very, very sublime copy of a Titian.

MR. STIEBER: Where in Hungary was he from? Do you know?

MS. GABLIK: Budapest.

MR. STIEBER: From Budapest. And do—

MS. GABLIK: On the pest side.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Do you know why he was going to Egypt?

MS. GABLIK: I think my father was hoping to study and become an architect.

MR. STIEBER: In Egypt?

MS. GABLIK: God, I don't know.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, okay.

MS. GABLIK: I don't know exactly what he was going to Egypt for.

MR. STIEBER: So he was on the Mediterranean? His ship was on the Mediterranean when he got rerouted?

MS. GABLIK: I don't know any of the details of the any of that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, okay. Interesting. And what did he do once he got to New York?

MS. GABLIK: Well the only thing I do know is that he arrived virtually with no money and certainly no English, and that he was considered one of those early self-made immigrants.

MR. STIEBER: What did he do professionally to make money?

MS. GABLIK: Well, while I was growing up, he was a commercial artist in advertising, mostly designing, you know, full or half-page ads for movies. He did the designs for *The Red Shoes*.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, how interesting. You mean the set designs or the advertising for the film?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. He made the layouts and did the design for ads in newspapers.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And was he instrumental in your developing an interest in art?

MS. GABLIK: Oh yes. I think so. My father and I used to go regularly on Saturdays to visit museums, and I always thought it was magical that my father could look over at a painting and say, "That's a Gauguin. That's a Matisse," and I would say, "How do you tell that, Daddy?" or I think I called him Pop.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: "How do you know that?" It seemed very mysterious to me that he could just look and know who did the painting.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Where did you grow up in Manhattan? What—where did you live?

MS. GABLIK: On the west side in the '80s, two different, you know, apartment buildings.

MR. STIEBER: And where did you go to school when you were very young?

MS. GABLIK: P.S. 9.

MR. STIEBER: P.S. 9, okay. And what was that like? Was it a good experience? Were you an interested student?

MS. GABLIK: Well you are going to find a kind of vacuum about me and my early childhood. I only—I don't remember a whole lot and to tell you the truth, I mean I would not have realized it until you asked the question, but I really don't remember anything about grade school.

MR. STIEBER: That's perfectly fine. I don't really either.

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.] Really?

MR. STIEBER: I don't, actually. Some of—most of my very strong memories early on are from before I even started school so that's a question. What is your earliest memory?

MS. GABLIK: Oh boy.

[They laugh.]

MS. GABLIK: Gosh. I have always found it difficult to say—to answer questions like when did we first meet or where did we meet or, you know, who introduced us or whatever. And my first memory—well, the one thing that comes into my mind. I can't tell you if it's my first memory. Is that my father used to put me on top of his shoes and I walked around and I just loved that. I thought that was the funniest thing in the whole world. He would walk and I would walk on top of him.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Right. What about your mother? What did she do?

MS. GABLIK: Make trouble for me.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] From the beginning?

MS. GABLIK: No. Actually, I think things were not so bad until I started to get, you know, kind of pubescent and teenage and start to become a little irregular as in relation to the ideal daughter she wanted who would marry a nice Jewish boy and—"Oh yes, you can be an artist if you want to but you better find yourself a husband who can support you."

MR. STIEBER: Right. Well tell me a little bit about her background. Where did she come from? Where did her family come from?

MS. GABLIK: Well she was born in, I think, New York City, too, and one of three sisters and she, I think, never had a career or anything like that. But as I was growing up, she used to—

MR. STIEBER: So she was one of three?

MS. GABLIK: One of three sisters, yes. And she had—one of her sisters was a twin, a non-identical twin but they weren't very much alike.

MR. STIEBER: She was the other twin, your mother?

MS. GABLIK: [. . . I think Aunt Melba -SG] was the oldest. I'm not sure.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, okay. Do you know—do you remember the years of birth for either of your parents?

MS. GABLIK: I'm sorry.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember the years that your parents were born?

MS. GABLIK: I don't.

MR. STIEBER: It's okay. It's fine. Okay, so your mother was—

MS. GABLIK: My father was 20 years older than my mother. I do know that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So your mother was a stay-at-home mom and a housewife?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Did she have any interest in art or literature or philosophy?

MS. GABLIK: I don't remember her having much interest in anything cultural or anything else, for that matter.

She was good at following the stock market. She would invest the family money and she did spend a lot of time studying all those pages with numbers and things. That was a mystery to me, too, what all that was.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: But no, I think they were a very ill-matched pair, actually, in my opinion. They didn't have much—many interests in common, and my mother tended to resent the time that my father spent painting, especially as he didn't have much success with his art, although he was really quite a fine painter, as I said earlier.

MR. STIEBER: Did he make attempts to sell his work, to exhibit it in New York, or anywhere?

MS. GABLIK: He had, well, one show that I remember but I can't tell you the name of the gallery at this point. And I don't think he had—

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember how old you were at the time?

MS. GABLIK: That he had the show?

MR. STIEBER: Yes. No? Okay. Were you a teenager or a young girl?

MS. GABLIK: No. I would have been younger.

MR. STIEBER: Younger? Okay. Great. Well let's move on to high school then. Do you remember any particular teachers with fondness or derision?

MS. GABLIK: Well I had one art teacher but I can't quite remember her name but she took me under her wing and I just remember that, you know, she was someone special to me at the time. And I remember another teacher called Miss Bowe because she was an older woman and she wore this frightful yellow wig which made all the kids kind of laugh at her behind her back.

MR. STIEBER: Can you remember how that was spelled?

MS. GABLIK: B-O-W-E.

MR. STIEBER: B-O-W-E. Okay. Great.

MS. GABLIK: She was kind of like your classic old maid type.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. What was New York City like when you were growing up?

MS. GABLIK: Well I remember one fun thing which was Christmas time going to see all the department store Christmas windows. I guess it was a bit calmer and less frenetic and not nearly as developed as it is now with quite so many chic stores. There were department stores, I think, more than boutiques and stuff like that. And my mother was into bargain shopping. I think there was a store called Klein's. I remember it used to be called Klein's Basement was where you went to find good stuff for very cheap prices.

MR. STIEBER: Klien's, K-L-I-E-N-S?

MS. GABLIK: K-L-E-I-N-S.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Klein's. And what sort of books were you reading when you were a teenager?

MS. GABLIK: Well the one outstanding thing I remember in relation to that was that I used to go to the public library a lot and at a certain point, I can't tell you exactly when, maybe nine or 10, I was allowed to go by myself and walk there. It was about five blocks away from our house on Amsterdam Avenue, I think. And my biggest discovery and recollection was the day I found a D.H. Lawrence book and I think it was *Sons and Lovers*, and I went crazy for that book.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And I just read it from cover to cover nonstop.

MR. STIEBER: What about it inspired you so much?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I think it was the way he treated the sexual side of things and the relationship between I guess the young man and this strange love affair that I can't remember much about that he had with some young woman.

MR. STIEBER: That's a very young age at which to come across a book like that and to have it appeal to you so much. That would have been the '40s?

MS. GABLIK: Why?

MR. STIEBER: That would have been the late '40s? The late 1940s?

MS. GABLIK: You got me. [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: All right. Interesting. Anything else? It seems from your journals it seems from a very young age you had a very strong connection to language and to writing so—

MS. GABLIK: Yes. At around—I studied French in high school and that was another good connection with a teacher. And I was quite good at pronunciation and also learning, at least romance language. I don't know about anything else. And I developed an interest in French poetry and I started at age 18 or so translating Baudelaire and Rimbaud a little bit.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And then when I graduated college at 20, my parents, since they were not going to allow me to go away to college, allowed me to have a graduation present of a trip to Europe with a group of other students or something. And at that point I had discovered Rimbaud and Baudelaire and I was doing translations. And when I got to France, I looked up this poet called Jacque Prévert and I translated some of his poems. And I guess maybe at age 20 or 21, I got them published. I was very proud of that. Three poems of his published in a magazine called *Accent*.

MR. STIEBER: When you were 20 or 21?

MS. GABLIK: That's my impression.

MR. STIEBER: This is after you had graduated from Hunter, is that right?

MS. GABLIK: Or about when I graduated, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I graduated from Hunter at 20 [1955 -SG].

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Let's come back to Jacque in a second—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —because I don't want to forget that. So remind me when we get past Hunter College. But I want to back up to Hunter College. You say that your parents wouldn't allow you to go away to University and you mean leave New York City. Is that so you could get out from under your house, your parents' house?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. They would not let me do that, or my mother wouldn't and my father was a just go along to get along; "Do whatever you have to do to keep your mother happy."

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Where did you want to go?

MS. GABLIK: I think that I had my heart set on someplace called Reed College in Oregon.

MR. STIEBER: I actually have a friend who's going there. I just visited the campus. It's beautiful. But it's very expensive.

MS. GABLIK: Expensive.

MR. STIEBER: Very expensive now. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Well, there may have been other possibilities but I don't particularly recall. In any case, none of them was—I mean, I had no choice because the idea was to not let me live life on my own.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So you entered Hunter College. What year, do you remember?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. In what year?

MR. STIEBER: What year did you start Hunter?

MS. GABLIK: 1951.

MR. STIEBER: And what did you study?

MS. GABLIK: I did a double major of art and English.

MR. STIEBER: And you lived at home with your parents while you attended? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And that's when I made some of my first artist friends. I had Robert Motherwell as a teacher and Richard Lippold.

MR. STIEBER: So you met Robert Motherwell in class for the first time. Is that right?

MS. GABLIK: I think so.

MR. STIEBER: And what was his class like?

MS. GABLIK: Oh—[laughs.] It was very unusual. He mostly was not in the classroom. I think he didn't really respect most of the students or think they were serious.

MR. STIEBER: Was it a painting class?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. So he would sit in his office which was next door and if anyone needed or wanted him, he would come but he didn't hang out in the room or kind of interact a whole lot with the students. And I guess that was before artists really started being able to earn a living selling their paintings so he had to do that. So anyway, I fell in love with him.

MR. STIEBER: Did you—now when you say you fell in love with him, what do you mean? Do you mean that you—

MS. GABLIK: I would put it in terms of I had a crush on him.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. But did you respect his work as well as his teaching style?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes? Okay. Did you take only that one class with him or did you take more than one?

MS. GABLIK: I took a painting class and I also took a philosophy—we did a whole course on [José] Ortega y Gasset's *The Dehumanization of Art* [1925]. And I think you have in your papers of mine a notebook from that class—

MR. STIEBER: Yes, we do.

MS. GABLIK: —of the notes that I took.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. And what about Richard Lippold?

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was making these sculptures with kind of gold thread and he had to teach me to use a—now I can't think of the word for it but with the heat coming out—a soldering iron

MR. STIEBER: A torch?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, to—you know—make metal stick together.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: Exactly. And that was quite a drama because that equipment scared me to death. I was holding this thing with this fire leaping out of it.

But he was a really, really sweet and attractive man, too.

MR. STIEBER: So this was a sculpture class you took?

MS. GABLIK: I guess so.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And when you say you studied art and English, did you study studio art and English or did you study art history and English?

MS. GABLIK: It was really studio art.

MR. STIEBER: Studio art, okay. Or perhaps there wasn't a separation at that time at Hunter? I don't know.

MS. GABLIK: Probably not the way it is now. [Not separate. I took art history too. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. Can you remember any particularly piquant conversations with either Motherwell or Lippold? Or encounters, parties?

MS. GABLIK: Well yes, I mean, there was the fact that I did get an opportunity to get closer to Motherwell. I guess he took me as either the only or one of few serious students in the class and we became friends. He knew I was very unhappy and miserable at home, and he actually gave me a key to his house and he said, you know, if I ever felt I was ready to leave or could leave, even if it was the middle of the night, that I could come and live at his house and be a kind of au pair and help with the kids and so on.

MR. STIEBER: Interesting.

MS. GALIK: But I never did it because I knew my mother would make such trouble for everyone and I didn't ever feel comfortable. He said he didn't mind, but I did.

MR. STIEBER: What kind of trouble would she have made?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I know in the case of Richard Lippold, she somehow knew that he was gay. I guess maybe he introduced me to his friend at the time, Ray Johnson, and she somehow got wind of that and I know she would have gone and reported that.

MR. STIEBER: Ray Johnson, the mail artist?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. And I don't know, you know, she would have made a fuss about a teacher interfering in someone's private life, and trying to steal the child and have them work for him or something and kidnap me or —

MR. STIEBER: Steal you away from—

MS. GABLIK: Exactly.

MR. STIEBER: —into their Bohemian world. [Laughs.].

MS. GABLIK: Right.

MR. STIEBER: What kind of artwork were you doing while you were at Hunter?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I always had a leaning towards collage which, of course, was not far into Motherwell and so— I'm trying to think if I can remember anything I did as an early work but nothing is popping into my head.

MR. STIEBER: What about other media? What kind of work did you do in Lippold's class?

MS. GABLIK: You know, I have no recollection of anything.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Just the soldering iron scare?

MS. GABLIK: Exactly. [Laughs.] And being afraid I would burn my face or something.

MR. STIEBER: Right. What about reading? What kind of reading were you doing at Hunter? What authors—

MS. GABLIK: Reading.

MR. STIEBER: Aside from the French symbolist poets, what were—

MS. GABLIK: I don't know. I guess I had maybe started to develop my taste for some kind of philosophical style reading, especially after getting into Ortega y Gasset. I love that book.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. You—

MS. GABLIK: I was very intrigued by the idea that, you know, artists had decided not to replicate the real world anymore and to remove all sign of humans, you know, never paint people. And of course, when I was growing up and working during that period, there was this big conflict, almost a kind of cold war between realist painting and abstract painting, and the abstractionist looked very much down on artists who just painted what was out

there. I remember also having a dream at that time, and in the dream, I came to some kind of a crossroads and I knew the crossroads represented abstraction on the one hand and realism on the other, and the choice you made over which way you went could be fatal. [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: Interesting. This was a dream?

MS. GABLIK: That was a dream.

MR. STIEBER: Wow.

MS. GABLIK: Yes. It was that dire at that time, the struggle.

MR. STIEBER: And where did you fall? On which side of the debate or were you on the fence?

MS. GABLIK: Well I don't think I ever really was into replicating the real world or even developed a skill for that although I could draw quite well. I had a nice feeling for line and things like that but I wasn't a perfect renderer by any means like my father—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —who made the Titian.

MR. STIEBER: And were you aware of [René] Magritte's work at this point during the time of all this foment between realism and abstraction?

MS. GABLIK: I unfortunately can't remember at what point knowledge of Magritte entered my life exactly.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. That's fine.

MS. GABLIK: But I went over to do my book about him when I was about 25 so it was somewhere between graduation or before and after that. I mean, maybe—I think Motherwell wrote some things on surrealism so he may have shown Magritte's or something in his class but I don't specifically remember. [I probably learned about him at Hunter. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: If your father was working in kind of a surrealist mode, do you think he introduced you to any of the surrealists?

MS. GABLIK: Well he was more on the side of the abstract surrealists.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, is that right?

MS. GABLIK: His work was—did I mention that already?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: It was kind of a cross between Matta and Yves Tanguy sort of.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: So they were invented shapes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. So you graduate Hunter College in '55?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And your parents send you to Europe with a group?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: What kind of group was it?

MS. GABLIK: I think it was a student group. An organized group.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: Where you were more or less supervised.

MR. STIEBER: Chaperoned?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: And where did you go on the trip?

MS. GABLIK: I think I went to England, and Scotland and Wales, and France and—maybe Italy. I'm not sure.

MR. STIEBER: And what do you remember seeing that particularly stood out?

MS. GABLIK: I suppose the Eiffel Tower and—

MR. STIEBER: That's okay. What was—how would you characterize the company you were with?

MS. GABLIK: The company?

MR. STIEBER: The other students, the chaperone.

MS. GABLIK: No recollection of any particular people that I connected with that had any lasting effect.

MR. STIEBER: How long was the trip?

MS. GABLIK: I think it was for a couple of months, the summer.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And you say that you looked up Jacque Prévert?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. And I learned to have wine with my meals for the first time.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] So Prévert, was he in Paris?

MS. GABLIK: He was outside of Paris somewhere. I can't quite remember where.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. But you met him in person?

MS. GABLIK: I guess I had written to him and we met up. I think he came to wherever I was and he gave me a little children's book he had written and I think I may have translated that too, but that never got published.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember the title? No. Okay. And did you maintain correspondence with him after you came back from the trip?

MS. GABLIK: Not that I remember or not in any significant way.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And how did your parents feel about your publications of the translations?

MS. GABLIK: I think that that happened after I left home.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, I see. Yes, that's right. It would because you left home almost immediately after returning from the European trip. Okay. So tell us about the end of the European trip and your return to the United States. What happened?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: You met somebody in Holland, is that right?

MS. GABLIK: Well I met somebody on the ship coming back who was Dutch. He had two weeks in New York—

MR. STIEBER: What was his name?

MS. GABLIK: —before the boat was going to—it was Holland America line, turn around and go back to, I think it was Amsterdam where it came from or Rotterdam. [Definitely Rotterdam. Jan lived in Amsterdam. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: And what was his name?

MS. GABLIK: Jan Vander something.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Such an important figure in our lives and we can still forget their names. Isn't that funny?

MS. GABLIK: Well whatever I might have left as a legacy, I'm not famous for my memory.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: I have never remembered well—

MR. STIEBER: That's okay.

MS. GABLIK: —even when I had no excuse.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: People would come and say, "Oh, I met you, so and so, in this place with that person and don't you remember?" and I would say, "No," and they would say, "Oh, we went out to dinner and you had a steak and I had a hamburger," and I would just look at them totally floored. For my part, I had never seen them before.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] There's a line that you quote, a line of Magritte's that you quote in your book on him where he says, "I hate my past and everyone else's as well."

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: So you were in good company. So how did you meet Jan Vander whatever on the boat? Can you relate to me the—

MS. GABLIK: Oh, Jan?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: I don't know particularly. I have no specific recollection of him suddenly coming up to me or me eyeballing him or anything like that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. But there was a strong attraction between you two?

MS. GABLIK: I think there was, yes. Certainly on my part.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. So you land in New York in the late summer or early fall of 1955, and what happens?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I got back home and of course it seemed even more restrictive and boring. I had seen something of the world and as I say, learned to drink wine with my meals for the first time which was not something I was able to repeat at home. And I had this young man in tow a little bit who had two-week vacation until he had to get back on the boat and so we went out a few times. And my mother started to try to stop me from seeing him, which upset me hugely because out of all the young men, of which there were not many, I have to say, that I'd ever brought home, he was the most respectable and fit the kind of picture my mother would have had of a young man and he went out of his way to include her and be nice to her. And she said that she didn't want me to see him anymore because I would get too attached to him and then he would leave and I would be miserable. So on those grounds, she just tried to stop me from seeing any more of him.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And how did you respond?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I said I would like to leave and she said—or actually, I think she said to me something like leave now, not when it's convenient for you. And I asked her if I could take my clothes because I had just been living from a suitcase full of clothes so I knew I could do that, but I expected her to say no. But she said yes. And so I packed my bag and I left.

MR. STIEBER: And where was your father at the time and what did he feel about all of this?

MS. GABLIK: He was always in the background and he never had an opinion that corresponded with mine and they always allied themselves against me so I had no ally in either of them, really. Maybe he wasn't even at home.

MR. STIEBER: Backing up just a little bit, while you were returning to the United States, had you any idea about what you were going to do when you got back to New York?

MS. GABLIK: Well I just knew that my parents expected me to get a job. That's all. I don't think I had any idea what kind of a job or what—in those days, there were agencies and you just joined an agency and—Hi Tacey.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so you leave your parents' house and where do you go?

MS. GABLIK: I phoned my French teacher who actually was the widow of a French architect called Pierre Chareau who built something called The Glass House in Paris. And she [Dolly Chareau] had an apartment in New York, and she held a salon, I think it was weekly or monthly or whatever, and people got together and you were only

allowed to speak French once you stepped across the threshold into her place. I knew she had this room that had been her husband's study and she saved it for mostly artists [. . . -SG] who were at some kind of crisis point in their lives and needed a place, a refuge, so I called her up [from a pay phone on the street -SG] and I said, "Dolly, I'm in trouble. I need somewhere to stay," and she said, "Okay, come along, darling," or something. And I think she thought that I was going to stay a night or two or whatever. I said, "I just had a terrible fight with my mother," and so I went there and with my one suitcase that my mother allowed me to take and all my new clothes and just stayed there. At a certain point, my mother came on the rampage to get me back. It was like 10 days before my 21st birthday and I was scared to death that, you know, until I got my official age requirement to be independent, that she could still snatch me back.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And Dolly knew that. And then she came one night—my mother—on the rampage to get me back and she was so rude and so horrible to Dolly for helping me out and all that that Dolly realized that—why I couldn't stay at home anymore and why I needed to leave so badly. So she was unable to wrench me out of Dolly's clutches—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —and thus my independent life began. And I stayed with Dolly quite a few months until I got on my feet. Got my first job.

MR. STIEBER: Had you been introduced to Dolly by your mother or some other means?

MS. GABLIK: Oh no. [Laughs.] My mother didn't know that kind of person.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. How did you discover Dolly?

MS. GABLIK: Well—I think an artist that I knew introduced me to her and we hit it off. And I had studied French in school and was very good at it and so I took to this salon situation like a duck to water and started going to her salons. And she liked me a lot.

MR. STIEBER: Describe her.

MS. GABLIK: Well she was a large kind of severe but jolly woman, very much in the French style. And she just hosted this salon regularly and the same people tended to come to it. And I guess we talked about, God knows what. It didn't really matter so much as long as we talked in French.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Do you remember any of the other attendees?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I think I met my first real lover there, Harry Torczyner, who was a collector of Magritte's.

MR. STIEBER: There was a connection to Robert Motherwell as well, right?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, right. You are right. I think it was Motherwell that put me on to Dolly.

MR. STIEBER: And did he attend the salon as well?

MS. GABLIK: I don't think he did, no.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. But he just knew her from the summer.

MS. GABLIK: Yes. He was friends with her. He had actually stayed with her once which is how I knew about the fact that she took in artists who were in crisis.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: He went there one time when his marriage, one of his marriages, ended suddenly or painfully or whatever.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So you stayed with Dolly for a few months. What did you do during those few months?

MS. GABLIK: I think look for a job and then get a job.

MR. STIEBER: What kind of places did you—where did you look for a job and where did you ultimately end up?

MS. GABLIK: [. . . -SG]. At the George Wittenborn Bookstore which published, I think, were the publishers of *The Documents of Modern Art* [1944] and also a fine arts bookstore. [Motherwell was one of the editors of *The Documents of Modern Art*. - SG]

MR. STIEBER: And what did you do at the bookstore?

MS. GABLIK: What did I do there? I think I probably sold books and stole a few.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Do you remember which ones?

MS. GABLIK: I think I stole one on—one of *The Documents of Modern Art* on Hans [Jean] Arp, but—

MR. STIEBER: Okay. That's hysterical. Did you have much interaction with George Wittenborn?

MS. GABLIK: Much attraction?

MR. STIEBER: Interaction.

MS. GABLIK: Interaction.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: Yes. He was always trying to grope me in the back room—[laughs.]—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —while his wife was working in the front room but I didn't care for that at all.

MR. STIEBER: What was his wife's name? Do you remember what his wife's name was?

MS. GABLIK: What his wife's name was? [Joyce. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. How long did you work there?

MS. GABLIK: I'm not sure but a decent amount of time. A year, two years maybe.

MR. STIEBER: And did you make enough money working there to eventually move out of Dolly's place?

MS. GABLIK: I guess so because I did. I found an apartment through some friends who were moving elsewhere and they had a very nice rent-controlled apartment and I moved into there.

MR. STIEBER: And where was that?

MS. GABLIK: On East 62nd Street and First Avenue.

MR. STIEBER: So this would have been about 1955, beginning of 1955?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. [Not the beginning. -SG] All those events took place in '55. Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So how did you spend your free time when you weren't at work? When you weren't being groped in the back room or stealing books? [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: I guess I went to art exhibitions and to movies and saw friends. I don't remember anything out of the ordinary.

MR. STIEBER: Were you writing or making art?

MS. GABLIK: I guess I started journaling pretty young and I don't think I did any art at Madame Chateau's.

MR. STIEBER: But what about when you moved to 62nd and First Avenue?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, I think I did.

MR. STIEBER: But you can't remember anything specifically?

MS. GABLIK: No, it was a very small place. I think I remember having a little easel and it was only two rooms and so I think I made a little studio in the second one. [I lived in two apartments in the same building; roommates in the first; none in the second. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: And do you remember who your roommates were?

MS. GABLIK: Who my what?

MR. STIEBER: Did you have roommates or was this—

MS. GABLIK: Not in that place.

MR. STIEBER: Not in that place. Okay. So you worked at George Wittenborn's bookstore for a couple of years. Where did you go after that?

MS. GABLIK: I think I went to work for an encyclopedia.

MR. STIEBER: And what were you doing?

MS. GABLIK: Editorial work.

MR. STIEBER: And at this point, what were your ambitions? What were you thinking about for your life? Did you want to be an artist?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I started out thinking I would be an artist. [I envisioned a career to support myself in publishing. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: And had you met any artists at this point? What was your circle like?

MS. GABLIK: Well I think I started to meet a lot of famous artists at that time who were not famous yet like Jasper Johns, Bob Rauschenberg, and—who, as you know or may remember, in the annals of art history, supposedly I introduced them to each other.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: But I don't remember that even. And I remember that I used to only feel really okay when I was down in Greenwich Village and I thought that was my element. And I remember going a few times to the Cedar Bar and those were the days when all the artists hung out there because they had a lot of free time because they—you know, they didn't sell their paintings so much so they hung out together and moaned and groaned about how hard it was to be an artist in our [. . . -SG] society where artists were not really respected. [The art market did not exist as it does today. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember meeting anybody in particular there or just—

MS. GABLIK: Well I remember meeting Franz Kline but nothing special about it. And I probably also met [Willem] de Kooning somewhere along the line and probably that was about it.

MR. STIEBER: What were they like?

MS. GABLIK: Well I didn't really get to know them. I just met them in passing.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. What was your economic situation like at this point?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I was poor as a church mouse. I got my first bed at the Salvation Army and it was about as wide as that bed there and I used it. It doubled as a sofa during the day. I didn't have much furniture.

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever get visits from your parents while you were living away from home?

MS. GABLIK: My father came to see me once and my mother never came.

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever speak to her again after the row?

MS. GABLIK: I tried for a couple of years to make friends with her and see her a certain amount. We would go out and we would meet for diner and she would make scenes in restaurants and start crying and saying, "What did I

ever do that was so terrible?" And it was very unpleasant. And eventually I couldn't stand it anymore and I also realized by the fact that she never came to check out any of the places that I lived, because I, by then, had moved to another place to—that she was not a proper mother. That, you know, one of the things that mothers do is want to make sure that their kid is in an okay situation.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And she did not approve of my leaving so she never came.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So after you did editorial work for an encyclopedia, where did you go?

MS. GABLIK: I think that's when I probably headed for Europe.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So tell me that story. How did you get the idea?

MS. GABLIK: Well I got the idea because I didn't have any money to go so I applied for a grant and in order to get the grant, I dreamed up the project that I thought might be unusual enough. I certainly didn't think, at that point, that anyone would pay me to go paint in the Academy of Rome or anything because I hadn't accomplished anything. But I somehow had by then connected with Magritte and his work and I realized there were no books in English about Magritte and I thought well this is a project that when they see it will be something that they will see fills a gap in the story of art in America. And so I applied to go there and write a book, even though I had no experience or knowledge of how you do that. But I did want to get out of America and see the world. So that was, I thought, my ticket to somewhere, but I did not get the grant.

MR. STIEBER: Which foundation did you write the grant to?

MS. GABLIK: [. . . -SG].

MR. STIEBER: Oh, not Fulbright.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, Fulbright.

MR. STIEBER: So you didn't get the grant?

MS. GABLIK: I did not get the grant.

MR. STIEBER: What happened then?

MS. GABLIK: Well, it's a little fuzzy but I think I had met Harry Torczyner at the salon. And we became friends and then I had an affair with him. And he had a art collection and he asked me to come to see it one day, the only time I ever went to his house because he was married. I told him that most everything he had was not interesting, and that he should get rid of it and start collecting Magritte's because he had two little Magritte's and I said you should change over and just become a collector of Magritte. And then I also suggested since he was Belgian and a lawyer and went to Belgium regularly on behalf of some of his clients, that he look up Magritte when he was there and just go to see him, which was something that I had learned from Ray Johnson. You know, if there's a person of interest to you, just call them up and say, "Can I come and visit you?" and see what happens.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: So he did that and he came back with a letter from Magritte asking me about the contents of a hamburger—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —what was really in a hamburger, because he read a lot of American detective novels and people were always going out to eat hamburgers.

MR. STIEBER: Did he read these in English or in French translations?

MS. GABLIK: Did—

MR. STIEBER: Did Magritte read these novels in English or did he read them in French translation?

MS. GABLIK: I imagine he—he didn't speak English at all.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, okay.

MS. GABLIK: He had only one phrase that he memorized in English which is "time is money."

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And that's all the English he knew.

MR. STIEBER: Let's back up a little bit because you mention that Ray Johnson taught you to just phone people up when you went anywhere. How did you meet Ray Johnson? Through Lippold?

MS. GABLIK: I believe so.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I believe so.

MR. STIEBER: Describe him.

MS. GABLIK: Well when I first knew him, he was absolutely wonderful and kind of elf-like and very playful and very adventurous but as the years went on, I think he got kind of bitter. For one thing, Richard Lippold left him for some other new love and of course Richard also had a wife at the time that they were together. But I think he also left the wife for this new love. And then Ray always felt a little embittered that the art world never really took him up in any big deal way. He always tried to make outsider kind of art, street art, and things like that. I remember his moticos, which were little collages made on cardboard with the collage pasted on top, cut out in all different shapes, and I had a friend at the time, a girlfriend who a photographer, and we went out, the three of us one day, and we would go around the city and arrange these moticos on steps or on piles of old wood or something, lumber yard things, and photograph them. That was his outsider answer to not having a gallery—

MR. STIEBER: It was the beginning of your career as a curator.

MS. GABLIK: —and the beginning of street art kind of stuff.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember your friend's name, the name of your girlfriend?

MS. GABLIK: The photographer?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Elizabeth Novick, N-O-V-I-C-K.

MR. STIEBER: Great. Okay, so Harry Torczyner goes to Belgium and calls up Magritte. Then Magritte writes you a letter and you respond?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: And then what happened?

MS. GABLIK: Then we started a correspondence and he was intrigued by the idea of this young American woman friend of Harry Torczyner [lawyer for Magritte -SG] because they became fast friends very quickly, and Harry became a kind of intermediary and sort of agent for his work as well as buyer of his collector. He—let's see, I lost my train of thought there—sorry. [He became Magritte's lawyer and a big collector of his work. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: That's okay. So we were getting to you going to—

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. Magritte became intrigued at the idea that this young American woman friend of Harry's wanted to write a book about him and he was all in favor but I didn't have the money and that's a story I tell in *Living The Magical Life* [my memoir -SG]—

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: —where out of the blue I got this call from a warehouse in which I had stored a Persian rug that my mother gave me, the one thing she ever gave when she got a new rug for the dining room. But it didn't fit in my tiny apartment so I had it in storage in a department store called B. Altman. And one day I get this call and they tell me that they had had a fire in the warehouse and that my rug was destroyed and that I would get \$800 by way of recompense for the loss. And at that time, that was a fair bit of money. It would have been the equivalent of a few thousand now. So it was enough to buy me a ticket on this Norwegian freighter and get to Antwerp.

MR. STIEBER: The Hina [ph]. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: On the good ship Hina.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] So you wrote to Magritte and his wife and said you were coming to Brussels?

MS. GABLIK: That I was coming to Antwerp.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, Antwerp, yes.

MS. GABLIK: Which is where the boat went.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. And did you receive a response from them or did you just get on—

MS. GABLIK: Oh yes. We were in correspondence at that point, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Good. So describe the journey to Antwerp.

MS. GABLIK: Well—[laughs]—a lot of water and I made friends with the sea captain and that kind of helped to pass the time.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember his name? It's in your journals so I will be able to recover it. Okay. And any of the other passengers stand out for you?

MS. GABLIK: I don't remember anybody specific from that trip.

MR. STIEBER: How did everybody pass the time?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I don't know. Eating a lot. They had nice food; I remember that. It was Norwegian so you know they have those big spreads for breakfast with cheese and meat and beautiful bread and everything. And then we got into Antwerp and I remember it was—night was quickly falling, and I was in the process of trying to cajole the sea captain to let me stay on the boat overnight because it wasn't leaving until the next day, because I thought it was too late to try to go find a train and arrive at midnight in Brussels to the Magrilles. It didn't seem a good idea at all when suddenly someone came down to where I was in the ship said, "Someone is on the platform calling your name." And I said, "Impossible," you know, "no one knows where I am," because—he knew I was coming and approximately when but the freighter didn't have a scheduled arrival time and I hadn't given any information about that but I guess maybe Harry had given him the name of the boat and they checked out and they came to get me. So there was Georgette his wife and René and their little Pomeranian black dog Lulu.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] In a car? They drove to Antwerp?

MS. GABLIK: No. Magritte never drove. [Magritte could not drive, never learned, -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Neither of them drove. So I'm not quite sure. Probably we took a train.

MR. STIEBER: I see. I see. So you travel back to Brussels with the Magrilles.

MS. GABLIK: That night.

MR. STIEBER: That night, and stay in their house?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: For how long?

MS. GABLIK: About nine months all together.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right. And describe your first few weeks in Brussels.

MS. GABLIK: Well I guess it was a matter of getting to know each other and becoming part of the family. They had no kids. We hit it off very well immediately and the fact that I could speak French helped because he didn't speak English, like I said. Neither of them did. I got to know his friends. He had a sort of salon every Saturday night. The friends would gather, mostly at his house to view the new painting and give it a title, so—

MR. STIEBER: Describe René Magritte for us.

MS. GABLIK: Describe him?

MR. STIEBER: Describe him, yes.

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was a combination of rather dour, you know, kind of Belgian, in a way. A little heavy, slow, and extremely witty and sarcastic. He looked upon me as I think some of my ways as very surprising. You know, he would look sometimes. I can't remember a specific incidence but, "Oh, you like to do that?" and he would raise his eyebrows and then snicker.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: But we became very good friends and we got along very well.

MR. STIEBER: And what about Georgette? Can you describe her?

MS. GABLIK: She was very ordinary Belgian housewife. No particular art expertise or knowledge, but they were very cherishing of each other and seemed very happily married and Magritte only used his wife ever as a model for his paintings.

MR. STIEBER: Really? Okay. And were you very excited to be back in Europe?

MS. GABLIK: To be?

MR. STIEBER: Back in Europe.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, very much so, yes. I really felt in my element. Always have felt an attraction for Europe and England.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So how did you organize your work time when you were in Brussels working on the book and on your research?

MS. GABLIK: Well I guess I wrote mostly in the mornings or did my research and so on and then we would have a big meal at about one o'clock cooked by Georgette and—

MR. STIEBER: It's okay. It won't pick up on the mic. You are fine. Don't worry, you are fine.

MS. GABLIK: —and probably a bit of a nap and then usually Magritte liked to go downtown to play chess and—or else go to the movies.

MR. STIEBER: What kind of movies did he like?

MS. GABLIK: —and then we often went and had a little meal out in the evening. Moules-frites. French fries and mussels.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Yes.

MS. GABLIK: It was one of the best things I ever had. I always thought the food in Brussels was better than Paris.

MR. STIEBER: It is good. There are a lot of mussels and chips in D.C. now so it's a fun dish for me, too. And who did you meet while you were living at the Magritte's?

MS. GABLIK: Well he had a circle of friends and admirers and as I would say, they would come Saturday nights to look at his new painting and give it a title. And that was—or I don't know—play games of some kind. So I met most of his friends and became very close to a man called Louis or Jean. He went under both names as a writer Scutenaire. We had a little flirtation going so he was my main distraction while I was there. He would sneak out from his job and take me to nice restaurants and we did have some fun times. And he also had the main archive because Magritte did not save much of the material to do with him and his career. And he was not very career-oriented at all. And Scutenaire, who had written a skinny little book in French about his friend Magritte, had saved every—all the documentation and kindly granted me access which really was the basis of my book, the things he showed and taught me.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. Okay. Who else did you meet?

MS. GABLIK: There were various other friends but to be honest, I don't really remember their names. There was one young woman in her 30s and she was having an unhappy love affair by the time I left. She was having one with one man when I came and then they parted company and she got involved with another man who was married who had promised to leave his wife for her and then at the last minute—

MR. STIEBER: That always turns out well.

MS. GABLIK: Huh?

MR. STIEBER: That always turns out well.

MS. GABLIK: —at the last minute got cold feet and didn't do it. And I think he said something like he couldn't leave his furniture and she killed herself.

MR. STIEBER: Oh goodness. While you were there?

MS. GABLIK: Actually, I think it was shortly after I left.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I had the news from Scutenaire who was very upset because he liked her very much. We both did.

MR. STIEBER: What was her name? Do you remember?

MS. GABLIK: She was a journalist though.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Belgian? Okay. All right. Did you travel at all outside of Belgium while you were there?

MS. GABLIK: I traveled with an old school friend of mine from Hunter College who was one of the few male students that ever went there before—I think it became coed afterwards. [He was one of the first co-ed students. -SG] And so—

MR. STIEBER: He's a painter.

MS. GABLIK: We hitchhiked, my one hitchhiking experience, to Paris.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And again, this is all about 1960 or so?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: And do you remember his name, the name of the—

MS. GABLIK: Alan.

MR. STIEBER: Alan.

MS. GABLIK: A-L-A-N; Schmer, S-C-H-M-E-R. Very unappealing name.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] And he's a painter right? Isn't that right?

MS. GABLIK: He was and I think still is a painter.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. So by the time you got to the end of your stay—actually, let me ask you this, when did you know you had to leave? What was the defining moment? Did you finish your research? Did you run out of money?

MS. GABLIK: Probably a bit of both. I don't have any clear picture of—a turning point that made that happen but it did.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So you returned when?

MS. GABLIK: To New York.

MR. STIEBER: And when?

MS. GABLIK: In 1960. I was there between '59 and '60.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what did you do when you came back to New York?

MS. GABLIK: Moved into an apartment that friends offered me, a rent-controlled apartment that was like a railroad flat, five rooms four in a row with no doors and then a kind of maid's room off the hallway.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember where it was?

MS. GABLIK: On I think 74th Street on the east side.

MR. STIEBER: Did you have roommates then?

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. That's a lot of space for one person in New York, at least now.

MS. GABLIK: Well it was then, too.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. And where did you work?

MS. GABLIK: Where did I work? I think I went to work—let's see, I started doing freelance editorial work and it was very touch and go. I worked actually—I worked for a paperback publishing company. In fact, I worked for two. One was a kind of sleazy one. I don't remember, maybe like Avon Books or something like that.

MR. STIEBER: Some kind of pulp fiction.

MS. GABLIK: And then I worked for another fancier publisher [New American Library -SG]. I can't—I'm trying to remember the name of that and I can't quite—doing editorial work.

MR. STIEBER: Were you doing copy editing or—

MS. GABLIK: That sort of thing, yes.

MR. STIEBER: That sort of thing? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And reading the slush pile of manuscripts, passing them on to the upper echelons.

MR. STIEBER: And were you attempting to finish your book on Magritte as well?

MS. GABLIK: Probably.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what happened with your manuscript?

MS. GABLIK: Well I tried like the dickens to find a publisher and at the time, I had written a long essay because what I envisioned that a publisher would want to publish a coffee table book and it would just have an essay and a lot of big photographs and plates. I don't recall too much about that struggle except that it was very unsuccessful and that because I had no name or reputation, and at that time—I was a female, something that mattered more than it would now.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Nobody took it on and when I left some years later, maybe eight or so, to go live in England, I buried the manuscript in a friend's attic with some other stuff that she let me store and just had to abandon the whole project.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. Did you carry on a correspondence with Magritte after you—

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I stayed friends with Magritte.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And one of the only few regrets that I have is that the book never got published in his lifetime.

MR. STIEBER: Right. He died in '67. Is that right?

MS. GABLIK: You probably know better than me but that sounds right.

MR. STIEBER: And you didn't publish your Magritte book until '70.

MS. GABLIK: Exactly.

MR. STIEBER: Well he still knows you published it eventually. Okay. So what did you do—are you good still? We are an hour and a half in.

MS. GABLIK: I'm beginning to flag a little.

MR. STIEBER: Would you like to—

MS. GABLIK: How much more time do you have on your tape?

MR. STIEBER: I will pause.

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MR. STIEBER: This is Jason Stieber, interviewing Suzi Gablik for the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution. It is—what time is it? Nearly 10 o'clock on February 28, 2015, and we are at 3610 South Main Street, Blacksburg, Virginia. Okay, Suzi, when we left off yesterday afternoon, you had just come back to the United States from Belgium, and you were doing some editorial work for a couple of publishers, doing copy editing and reading the slush pile. Do you remember the names of the publishers?

MS. GABLIK: The New American Library was one, and there was a previous one, which was something like Avon Books. I don't know if it was, but more the cheaper sort of paperback.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay. So, this is about 1960? 1961? Where are you living?

MS. GABLIK: I was living in a kind of railroad flat on East 74th Street, I believe it was, between Second and Third Avenue that I inherited—a rent controlled apartment that I inherited from some good friends who were leaving it, and it only cost \$100—

MR. STIEBER: A month?

MS. GABLIK: —so, and it had four open rooms without doors, and a little maid's room on the side of the hall.

MR. STIEBER: Very nice. And were you making art, at this point?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, I was. I used one of the rooms as a little studio.

MR. STIEBER: And what kind of work were you doing?

MS. GABLIK: I was always doing a combination of oil painting and collage elements pasted on the canvas.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And were you exhibiting your work anywhere?

MS. GABLIK: My first real dealer was a man called Charles Alan, the Alan Gallery.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And then he ran out of money, and killed himself.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, dear.

MS. GABLIK: It was very sad. And then I was accepted by the Terry Dintenfass Gallery.

MR. STIEBER: And about what year was this?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I guess it was in the '60s.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Let's back up and talk about Charles Alan. How did you meet him?

MS. GABLIK: My own what?

MR. STIEBER: Let's back up and talk about Charles Alan. How did you meet him?

MS. GABLIK: I don't remember for sure, but I may have simply taken some pictures around or asked him—perhaps somebody introduced me, and he came to see my work, and he loved it.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. He came to your apartment?

MS. GABLIK: Not entirely sure. [I think so. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Maybe? Okay. Okay. And what kind of person was he? Can you describe him?

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was not the most scintillating of men. But he was very sweet, and he had a good gallery, with a good reputation, although he was not, you know, up there in the stratosphere with famous dealers. He wasn't particularly hardnosed, but I remember him as being very honest and trustworthy, and a really nice

person.

MR. STIEBER: Where was his gallery?

MS. GABLIK: It was—I think it was 67th or [6]8th Street. It was on Madison Avenue [on the second floor -SG].

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And how long did you show your work there?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I really can't give you the answer to that, but maybe three, four years?

MR. STIEBER: Were you in some group exhibitions, or did you have a one person exhibition?

MS. GABLIK: Both.

MR. STIEBER: Both. Okay. Sometime in the '60s?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what about Dintenfass Gallery? Did you—so, after Charles Alan killed himself, you went around looking for another gallery to show your work?

MS. GABLIK: I think maybe Terry inherited—I guess, she may have been friends in some way, or connected, professionally with Charles. And maybe—I don't know for sure, but maybe she invited herself over, or he invited her over to choose some of the artists that he had that she would like to have in her gallery—

MR. STIEBER: And did you—

MS. GABLIK: —when he closed—when he closed his down.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. Did you have group and solo exhibitions there as well?

MS. GABLIK: With Terry Dintenfass?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right. And who were you hanging out with? And this—we were talking this morning, really, about this sort of eight year, nine year period between the time you came back from Belgium, and the time that you moved to London. So, who were you hanging out at this point? Who were your closest friends?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I had a very good friend, Hector Leonardi, who is a painter. And I think that must have been the period that I met some of the more famous artists, like Jasper and Bob Rauschenberg. And eventually, you know, and the whole milieu was around pop art, and those artists. And I met most of them, but I didn't necessarily become close to all of them, but I did have—Bob Rauschenberg was a close friend for a while, until he moved out of New York. And then, Jasper was a very good friend for about 30 years.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Let's talk about them in a second, but let's go back to Hector Leonardi. Do you remember how you met Hector?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. [Laughs.].

MR. STIEBER: Tell me the story.

MS. GABLIK: I met Hector at Yale-Norfolk Summer [Art] School in Norfolk, Connecticut. And we studied photography together, and we were teamed up. So, you went into the dark room with somebody, and we were learning big cameras, 3D cameras or something. I don't know, where you had to slide that big of film, which you clunked down into the camera, and—so, then, you went into the dark room, and you had to develop your own pictures. And we used to share the dark room. And somehow or other, I was always dropping negatives on the floor, and Hector would scold me in fun, pick them up. And there was so much laughing and kind of carrying on—the people thought we were having it off in the dark room, but we weren't.

MR. STIEBER: And Hector lived in New York as well?

MS. GABLIK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. New York, and then he moved out to Bridgehampton, where he still lives. He's up in his '80s now, and still painting. And he lives with another artist called Karl Mann, and they have a whole brownstone that they own in Manhattan. And Karl has a five story studio that he does his work in during the week. And then, Hector stays out in Bridgehampton all week, and Karl comes at the weekends.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Is there anybody else that you were particularly close with during this period?

MS. GABLIK: I'm sure there were.

MR. STIEBER: Any lovers? Any lovers worth mentioning, I should say.

MS. GABLIK: Well, there was Harry Torczyner, who I knew from Dolly Chareau's salon, and who was the man who went to visit Magritte, and then started collecting him. And I think became a millionaire because of all the Magritte. Probably had the biggest collection—at least, in America. Or maybe rivaled by the de Menil's [John and Dominique]. And it's a little strange, Jason. I can't quite think who I was hanging out with. I just remember that there were a lot of dance parties, and everybody was in lofts downtown at that point. And there was always something going on, and I was kind of in the middle of it. I guess by then, I had met Betsy Baker, who is an old friend, and became, ultimately, the editor of *Art in America*.

MR. STIEBER: Yep. Let's talk about Betsy in a second as well, but let's go back to Harry Torczyner. How long did your relationship with Harry last?

MS. GABLIK: Well, there goes that old trick question of how long—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Approximately?

MS. GABLIK: A few years.

MR. STIEBER: A few years?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. How did it end?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I know there was a young man I took up with at some point after that, but I can't clearly tell you if that was the cause of a break up or not, or we had just drifted apart. I think I may already have mentioned that Harry was married—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and so, I never planned a future with him anyway. I was not really interested in that, and he obviously had no desire to break up his family or anything. So—but I don't specifically remember an episode or something, or you know, a big kind of crash of any sort.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay, so tell—

MS. GABLIK: It may have just been that I went away again—went back to Europe. Because I went back to Europe at the end of the '60s.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay. Tell us about Betsy Baker. How did you meet her?

MS. GABLIK: I—maybe I was introduced to her by Tom Hess, who she worked for before. But she was a very charismatic character. Tall and dressed stunningly. She seemed to have independent means, as well as earned a lot of money at her job. She traveled a lot, and was very sophisticated and worldly. I mean, I thought I was too, but Betsy seemed to really be at the top of the ladder for that. Very glamorous figure, and very, very bright. And knew everything there was to know about the art world, and was very much loved and admired because she was—she managed to keep herself aloof and she could not be bought. And so, she had a lot of integrity about her work, and she was very respected. Still is.

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Absolutely. So, by this time, were you starting to do writing? Were you going to exhibitions and reviewing them? How did you really get started as a writer about art?

MS. GABLIK: Well, that's one thing I can tell you. I was approached by Tom Hess, who always was being advised by hotshot young artists around town, you know, who might be an interesting person to get a hold of to write reviews for *ArtNews*. And somebody—it may have been Ray Johnson, but I'm not sure, suggested my name, and I got this call one day. And I suppose I went to see him, and he asked me if I would consider writing some art reviews. And at that time, it was not considered a good idea to mix up your professional status. I mean, it was not well thought of to not be clear whether you were the artist or the critic or what. So, I was a little hesitant. And also, I had never done it. But he encouraged me, and he said, "Well, just give it a try." Which I did, only to discover that I was pretty good at it, and I enjoyed it.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes. Okay. You mentioned *ArtNews*. Were you writing for *ArtNews*, or for—

MS. GABLIK: At that time—

MR. STIEBER: —*Art in America*?

MS. GABLIK: —yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Okay. What were your parents up to during this period? Between 1961 and the time you went back to Europe.

MS. GABLIK: Well, my father had died—

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MS. GABLIK: —one year after I left home, so he was out of the picture.

MR. STIEBER: He died while you were in Belgium, or—oh, he died before that?

MS. GABLIK: Well, let's see. I moved out—when did we say I moved out?

MR. STIEBER: In '55, late '54, early '55.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. When I graduated.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Thank you for remembering better than me.

MS. GABLIK: And he died a year after that.

MR. STIEBER: I see, I see. Okay. And you did not have much contact with your mother at this point.

MS. GABLIK: I did not, no.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And I don't think she was doing anything in particular.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right. Let's talk a little bit more about some of the artists you were hanging out with. When did you meet Joseph Cornell?

MS. GABLIK: I met him through Robert Motherwell.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And Motherwell was, I guess, friends with him. And Joseph was always looking for sweet young things to be of some form of assistance to him so that he could have the contact. And he called me up one day on Motherwell's recommendation, and he said, "You know, I hear you can speak French pretty well, and I need someone to help me with some of the French words and names, and things that I use in my work. So, I would like to meet you, and maybe we could do some things together." So, that's how that happened.

MR. STIEBER: Was this in the '60s, or in the late '50s, before you went to Belgium?

MS. GABLIK: I think it must have been after I graduated—shortly after that because I was—I stayed friends with Motherwell, but not that long. He remarried, and he got married to Helen Frankenthaler, and he went a completely different direction.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right.

MS. GABLIK: And we did not cross paths much.

MR. STIEBER: What about Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg? Or let's start with Jasper. How—when did you meet him?

MS. GABLIK: I think I met him through a poet called Arthur Gregor. And Jasper, when I met him, was working in a bookstore on 57th Street. I may have mentioned that already.

MR. STIEBER: I don't think so.

MS. GABLIK: And he was selling books. And occasionally, stole one or two for me.

MR. STIEBER: It wasn't Gotham Books, was it? Is that—

MS. GABLIK: No, it wasn't Gotham.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I can't—I might know the name if I heard it, but I can't remember it.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: But it wasn't Gotham.

MR. STIEBER: So, you met him through Arthur—

MS. GABLIK: It was on 57th Street.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what about Rauschenberg?

MS. GABLIK: I do not precisely remember who introduced me to Rauschenberg.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, what kind of exhibitions were your first reviews about? Do you remember?

MS. GABLIK: Who I wrote about?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Absolutely not. No idea.

MR. STIEBER: Did you have any other artist friends?

MS. GABLIK: Joseph Rafael—or Rafaelli, was a good friend of mine at the time.

MR. STIEBER: And how did you meet him?

MS. GABLIK: I don't know.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. I mean, often, we just meet people at parties, so they don't—the meetings don't really stand out. I don't know him. How—what kind of work did he do? Or does he do?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I have not seen his work in years and years. They were kind of abstractions, as I recall. You can probably—he's probably Google-able.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay. Did you do any traveling during this period? During the period before you went back to Europe permanently. What—

MS. GABLIK: Yes. I remember now that I had a very good friend—his name was Claude, and I—oh, is—[cross talk]—Claude Fredericks.

MR. STIEBER: Claude Fredericks was another one of your friends who was an artist?

MS. GABLIK: And he lived in Pawlet, P-A-W-L-E-T, Vermont. And I used to go regularly on the bus, and visit and stay with him—Pawlet being in the region of Bennington College.

MR. STIEBER: Your journal that encompasses the time that you were in Belgium begins with entries in Vermont. So, do you think that you met Claude Fredericks—Frederick? Fredericks? Earlier? Did you meet him in the '50s?

MS. GABLIK: I don't know.

MR. STIEBER: Not sure? Okay. Okay. We can find out. So, aside from your publishing in *ArtNews*, where else were you publishing your writing during the '60s?

MS. GABLIK: I only had one other publication that I remember, and that was at Harper's Bazaar, and it was this—an article based on my writing about Magritte. And it was the first article on Magritte [in a popular magazine. David Dalton's sister helped me get it published -SG]—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —I think, that came out in America.

MR. STIEBER: Were you still attempting to get your manuscript on Magritte published?

MS. GABLIK: I guess I was, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what role was journaling playing in your professional life, at this point?

MS. GABLIK: Well, it was never used professionally.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: But I guess I always kept some kind of journal, and wrote down a combination of personal stories and experiences, combined with quotes. And then I used the *I Ching* a lot during the course of my long life, particularly in times of crisis. And so, I would often, when I was having some issue to work out, write the readings down, and try to think about the teaching, or the lesson.

MR. STIEBER: When did you first start using the *I Ching*?

MS. GABLIK: Probably in my 30s or so.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And I'm not exactly sure how I got into that. Maybe it was partly the influence of John Cage, and yes, I guess I knew those people, too. John Cage and Merce Cunningham, because they were all intertwined, all those people. It was a kind of clutch of avant-gardism in New York.

MR. STIEBER: So, you would have met them in the '60s, right? All right. Can you describe that meeting, or what kind of people they were?

MS. GABLIK: Well, John was probably the most affable man I ever met, and extremely attractive and charming, and very smart, with a very easy, quick laugh. And very warm. And Merce, he was a little more formidable and aloof, so I never really got to know him, personally, very closely, but I used to go to a lot of his performances. And then, there was that whole group of musicians, like Philip Glass, who came into the picture a little later, and we always went to all the openings of operas and things like that that were the avant-garde music of the time.

MR. STIEBER: Can you just—

MS. GABLIK: —and serial music, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Serial music. Yes, yes. Were you aware—not aware—were you interested in what was happening, in terms of performance art, at that point?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. I was. There was the Judson Street Group [Judson Dance Theater]. And I even performed one time in somebody's performance group. And Bob Rauschenberg was often in the group, too—

MR. STIEBER: Right, right.

MS. GABLIK: —of the Judson Street people.

MR. STIEBER: What about Leo Castelli? When did you meet Leo Castelli, or how?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I may—I don't specifically know, but I suspect it would have been at Jasper's house, or something like that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I mean, Jasper and he were very close, and good friends. And so, as I say, there was a kind of large, overlapping group of people, and we just—in those days, people threw dinner parties because they were not so busy and frantic as they are now. Having big dinners and has kind of gone out of style—

MR. STIEBER: Right, right.

MS. GABLIK: —unfortunately. But so—I guess a lot of people I met—at a dinner, or something like that, or as you said, at a party.

MR. STIEBER: Can you describe the atmosphere of New York in the mid-60s? Not just the art scene, but what was going on in the city, and politics?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I actually was extremely ignorant about politics, and followed nothing, and left kind of in the middle of the civil rights holocaust in America. And I became politicized when the twin planes crashed into the—

MR. STIEBER: The Towers? Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and then, you know, followed—had followed politics very closely.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, let's go back, actually, and do a few pick up questions from yesterday. Do you think—that might help a little bit. Was your father Jewish? No?

MS. GABLIK: Not at all.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. That's interesting that your mother would want you to marry a good Jewish boy but when she herself did not.

MS. GABLIK: My mother was very prone to Judaism, but not religiously. She was kind of a social Jew.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. So, religion played really no role in your young life?

MS. GABLIK: No, it was not anything ever discussed, and again, it was something that was not a feature of my life until much later.

MR. STIEBER: Not at all? Sometimes—it's interesting. Sometimes, when people experience a great deal, or a strong spiritual calling in later life, there is some hint of it in the younger life, too. Some books that they may have encountered—is there anything like that? Do you remember encountering anything?

MS. GABLIK: No, I don't. [Mother sent me to history of Judaism class, but I hated it and refused to continue. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: No? Okay. Interesting. Did your father teach you any Hungarian?

MS. GABLIK: Did he teach me—

MR. STIEBER: Any Hungarian?

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: No. Did he speak English well by the time you were born?

MS. GABLIK: Quite well, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. You mentioned yesterday the poems of Jacques Prévert. What attracted you to his poetry?

MS. GABLIK: It was very playful and original, and kind of a little enchanted. I guess, in the spirit of *Le Petit Prince*, the Little Prince, which is a famous children's book, his work had that kind of quality.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay. Does that sort of writing still attract you?

MS. GABLIK: Probably not. [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: What about Ortega y Gasset? What attracted you to his work originally?

MS. GABLIK: Whose?

MR. STIEBER: Ortega y Gasset.

MS. GABLIK: Oh. Well, the course that I had with Robert Motherwell got me deeply interested in, I guess, the philosophy of art, and this whole idea of dehumanizing art, and taking anything that related to real life out of the picture. And this evolution of the concept of art for art's sake that—and Herbert Marcuse was the other big philosopher at that time—having to do with the idea that art was valuable in and for itself, and non-utilitarian. And I guess that was one of the key things I rebelled against later on: the refusal of the idea that art could do anything, and actually be used in ways that help society or communities. So—

MR. STIEBER: Did you ascribe to the non-utilitarian view point for a while, when you were younger?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I think it was a slow evolution, but that kind of evolved along with the culture that was going into something called the New Age thinking, and new paradigm thinking was the preferred, more sophisticated word because New Age was sort of associated with Shirley MacLaine, and crystals, and all that. And—but really, there was a whole new way of framing the values by which one worked, and the reasons for choosing the kind of work that one did. And they were basically against the consumer ethic, and the idea that, you know, value was made by price and by fame and all that.

But—and there were books that came out that were very key. *The Aquarian [Conspiracy] Age* by Marilyn Ferguson [New York: Jeremy P. Tarche Inc, 1980], *The Chalice and The Blade* by Riane Eisler [New York: HarperOne, 1987]. And they were all books that were kind of deconstructing the way all of our mental structures in our culture were very patriarchal, and were not feminized at all. They were all about competition, and not cooperation; and individualism, and not community. And again, I—you know, I think there was this clamp of art for art's sake that was put around everybody's throat. And still is, to a large extent—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —although I gather there's been a shift in the culture, in a lot of contemporary practices which are more based on interactive processes [or the notion of static art objects -SG] rather than solo performances.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. What kind of interface did you have with feminism? Particularly in the '60s.

MS. GABLIK: Well, as with politics, I was never a part of that crowd mentality. And I guess, at that stage, before I became converted by very, very extensive readings, I saw myself as—still in patriarchal terms as like, needing to produce work that the feminists could point to and say, "See, women can think as well as men can."

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And—but I was not part of the movement, or did not participate. Although, later, when I understood the full of meaning of patriarchy and its impact on the world and on our thinking and on our thought structures, then I became very much a pursuer of feminizing our cognitive structures so that they would be more receptive, and more inclusive, and more compassionate.

MR. STIEBER: When did you first become aware—when did you first become aware of the kinds of alternative spiritualities that were coming out of the 1960s? You know, Paganism, for instance, or the sort of Oracular technologies that you came to be acquainted with.

MS. GABLIK: Well, there was this whole movement, as I say, and it became the hot thing. And books came out every week about something. And all the bookstores—I mean, you had some bookstores—and still do, that are just sort of New Age bookstores. But even the bigger bookstores got whole sections that didn't exist before. Like, they had to do with ecology, and deep ecology, when people started writing books in droves about all of that. And so, I guess, again, this was all part of the '60s action, where there was great cultural upheaval on all levels, and competing ideas. Old paradigms versus new ones.

MR. STIEBER: Were you involved in any groups at the time? Discussion groups, consciousness raising groups?

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: No? Okay. Solo practitioner.

MS. GABLIK: Sorry?

MR. STIEBER: A solo practitioner.

MS. GABLIK: Right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, let's go back to the chronology again. Now that we have done a little mental leap frogging, let's go back to the chronology. We are in the—let's say, 1966. You are hanging out with a lot of artists who are becoming quite famous. What was your conception of yourself within that circle? When did you stop seeing yourself as an artist, and start seeing yourself as primarily a writer? How did that come about?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I think, primarily after I published *Has Modernism Failed* [New York: Thames and Hudson, 1984] which kind of was my breakthrough book and got reviewed in all the national papers, cross country, and was very much of a muck-raking item when it came out, and got people discussing the pros and cons of all the ideas that shaped the modernist ethos. And I started writing to universities and colleges, and giving them a little précis of my ideas, and asking them if they would like me to come and lecture. That was before the days of the visiting artist. I like to think I may have been an underground influence for setting up that particular institution, nation-wide. And so, I would go in and stir the pot, and get everybody all upset and aroused, and arguing and debating, I would hear for weeks afterwards. And then, I—you know, started being invited. I—you know, a point came where I did not have to send out my yearly letters, soliciting gigs for myself. They started to write to me. And I just realized that in my writing, I had a public voice, and that people were interested in hearing what I had to say. And I guess I just shifted over to the idea of—that writing gave me a kind of public voice that painting would never really do.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Now, I have that, in my notes, that you published *Has Modernism Failed* in 1984, so that

would have been quite a bit longer after the '60s.

MS. GABLIK: So, I guess we were in the '70s because that book was a long time in the making.

MR. STIEBER: I see, I see. Okay. Well, okay. Let's move away from the '60s. Let's, in fact, go to the end of the '60s, to 1968. That was the year that you moved to London.

MS. GABLIK: Sixty—whoa. You better pause.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Let's get this straight. London in '59, I mean, to Belgium in '59, '61. And yes, then I went to England in '68 or '69, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Sixty eight or nine. Okay. And did you go because you were being sent there by *Art in America*, or what took you to London?

MS. GABLIK: No, I went there because I lost that apartment that I had, and by that time, real estate had totally changed in New York, and I had had this nice space and situation, which was rent controlled, and there was no way to replace it. I would have had to move into a tiny room, and for the money that I had been paying. And I could not afford more. And I was ready to leave New York anyway, particularly because I did not like being in New York in the summertime. It was very hot and sticky, and kind of awful. So, I decided to cut loose. I guess I had also had a failed romance somewhere in there at that point. And I didn't really have a job, and I didn't have a place to live, and so that signaled to me that it was time to move on and start a different life somewhere.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Because all the things that hold you back from never doing that because a lot of people feel like they would like to do it but, you know, they were tied down with either a relationship, or an apartment, or a job, or something that they are afraid to give up. But I didn't have any of that anyway.

MR. STIEBER: No golden handcuffs.

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: So, you just—without a job or any specific prospects, you just picked up and moved to London? Okay. What happened then? How did you get there?

MS. GABLIK: I maybe took a plane. And I had lived for some months, when I lost my apartment, at friends' places, and so, I was still doing my freelance work, and so, I was able to save some money—and probably not a lot, but some, because I wasn't paying rent and electric, and all that. And then I probably flew over on one of those cheapo flights at the time. Icelandic Airways. And I had a good friend who I knew from New York who was living there, and she went over with her then husband, who was studying with Anna Freud, who was Freud's daughter.

MR. STIEBER: What was your friend's name?

MS. GABLIK: What was my friend?

MR. STIEBER: Your friend's name?

MS. GABLIK: Elizabeth Novick.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, the photographer.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay.

MS. GABLIK: The same woman who photographed the Moticos.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, yes.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, you land in London. And what do you do then?

MS. GABLIK: Well, she had helped to locate a room for me in a rooming house not far from where she lived. And

so, I went to live there, in this big old Victorian brick house. And I had the attic room. And it came with—

MR. STIEBER: One second.

MS. GABLIK: Truck load of something going by?

MR. STIEBER: Something. So, you were in a Victorian rooming house?

MS. GABLIK: Right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And I occupied the attic, and there were big breakfasts down below, in the morning. And otherwise, you know, you did not have meals, but it did come with a nice breakfast. And it was a nice place. It was in an area called Swiss Cottage, which was adjacent to Hampstead, kind of getting up towards the north of London.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. Did you start looking for a job immediately?

MS. GABLIK: No. I wasn't looking to work, and you couldn't get jobs anyway there, unless you, you know, had green cards or tricky stuff. But I was asked to write for an art magazine, and once a month, a column, a review, you know, an overview of the scene. And that kind of paid my rent, which was very cheap. The rent was probably about 25 bucks a month.

MR. STIEBER: Was this—was your column for *Art in America*, or for a different magazine?

MS. GABLIK: It was for some magazine in England.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, I see. How did you land that gig? How did you land that job?

MS. GABLIK: I think I was approached by the editor.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Maybe at a party or something?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I had some names, I remember, of three well known art figures. Art historians [and critics – SG], that Tom Hess had given me. One of them was Andrew Forge, who later ran the Yale Arts Museum. Moved to America. And I can't quite recall who the other two were.

MR. STIEBER: That's okay.

When did you meet John [Russell]—

MS. GABLIK: Oh, maybe David Sylvester—

MR. STIEBER: David Sylvester, okay. [Not him. –SG]

MS. GABLIK: —who also ended up doing the catalogue raisonné of Magritte. And I became friends a bit with both of them. And the third person, I don't recall who that was, but I didn't see much of him. And I guess, you know, you get passed around when you are a foreigner in a new place, and people try to help you out and introduce you, or suggest this or that. So—

MR. STIEBER: When did you meet John Russell?

MS. GABLIK: Oh. John Russell. Well, maybe he was the third one.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Not the third one that I don't remember because there was somebody else. But maybe it wasn't David Sylvester. It was Andrew Forge, I know, and John Russell. I met John Russell also through Tom Hess, who had given me letters of introduction to all of these people, and I sent them the letters when I got there.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, describe John Russell. Your relationship with him, how it started, what—

MS. GABLIK: Well, it started fairly slowly, as a friendship. And he was tall, and fair-skinned and blond, blue eyes. And wore three piece suits all the time. He was very well dressed, very affable, and he had a bad stammer that was one of his outstanding features. But he was very sweet, and very devoted, and he started to take me out, and take me to lunch, and things like that. He was married, but unhappily married. And eventually, we kind of

fell in love.

MR. STIEBER: Did you attend exhibitions together? How did your intellectual collaboration begin?

MS. GABLIK: With John?

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: That was when we got together—after we were living together, we were invited by the Arts Council. I mean, John was, of course, the art critic for the London Sunday Times. So, he knew absolutely everyone and everybody in England. So, once I got together with him, I met everyone under the sun, like Francis Bacon, about whom he was writing a book, and Lucian Freud, and Sonia Orwell, the widow of George. And all kinds of circles within circles of people. And anyway, the Arts Council invited us to put on an exhibition and—of pop art, combining the English face of it, and the American. And I was in charge of the American, and he was in charge of the English pop artists and became good friends with people like Richard Hamilton and his partner, Rita Donagh, who is Irish. D-O-N-A-G-H.

MR. STIEBER: Rita. R-I-T-A?

MS. GABLIK: Sorry?

MR. STIEBER: Rita. R-I-T-A? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: R-I-T-A.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Rita.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, describe Richard and Rita. What—you met through John Russell. What kind of people were they?

MS. GABLIK: Well, Richard was kind of womanizer. Smoked cigars. Had a kind of not very handsome face, but—and he was mostly bald, and then he had longish hair coming down from—halfway down his scalp. And was super bright, and knew everybody. And was very much the man around town, even though he always dressed in dungarees. And Rita was more of a solemn, gorgeous beauty, much more quiet and serene. And statuesque. I mean, she was just divinely gorgeous, with long, dark hair. And she only wore black and white clothing. She had a kind of nun-like [appearance. . . . -SG].

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How did the London art scene strike you, in comparison to the New York art scene?

MS. GABLIK: Well, very much like it was trying to become a rival, and develop along the similar lines. When I first got there, there were a lot of galleries that were much more regional and unsophisticated, and showed more local stuff. But then bigger people took over the scene. And like, there was a Marlborough Gallery there, and a few other big names that started to dominate, and make it more international and blue chip kind of stuff—could you pause a minute—

[Audio break.]

MS. GABLIK: And other dealers like Kasmin Gallery opened up that became very popular, particularly with the younger generation of artists and—

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were there a lot of Americans showing their work in London at the time?

MS. GABLIK: A certain amount.

MR. STIEBER: Any who traveled to London that you were able to see?

MS. GABLIK: No one that I specifically recall, except Jasper at some point had retrospectives, and—at the Haywood Gallery, and—of course, there was a Tate Gallery as well, and some foreword looking curators there. So, there was a lot going on, and there was the Institute for Contemporary Art, which was a little more avant-garde, and had events. There were a lot of venues.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. Who were some of the European artists that you were particularly interested in at the time?

MS. GABLIK: I guess Anselm Kiefer—

MR. STIEBER: Oh, wonderful.

MS. GABLIK: —was one that I particularly liked.

MR. STIEBER: Was he showing his work in London a lot at the time?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. Not a lot, but he was shown.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Interesting. And did you find yourself writing more about European artists or American artists in your column for the magazine?

MS. GABLIK: I imagine I wrote about anything that was of interest. And you know, visited all these different places. There are more that I can't quite call to mind, but there were lots of places—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —showing interesting stuff.

MR. STIEBER: So, it's 1968, and the Arts Council of Great Britain has approached you and John Russell to do this exhibition on pop art. So, describe the process that you and John undertook to make the exhibition happen, and to write the catalog in the book that accompanied it.

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was in charge of the English side, and I was in charge of the American side. And so, he had all the final say in his sphere, and I had it in mine. And I just remember that we had a rough time. I'm not quite sure why it was so difficult, but—

MR. STIEBER: Securing the loans, you mean? Or interpersonally?

MS. GABLIK: Interpersonally.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Because basically, we got along very well, and we never fought or anything. But working together was not the most positive experience, and was not so much fun. And I don't think—I know we never really attempted it again, and did not actually have any occasion to. But—

MR. STIEBER: But do you remember any details, or—

MS. GABLIK: Well, I wish I could conjure up an example of what made it so difficult, but I'm not able to do that right now.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. That's fine. So, you say a few—you say a few things in the book *Pop Art Reimagined* that accompanied the exhibition—

MS. GABLIK: It's *Pop Art Redefined* [John Russel and Suzi Gablik. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1969] actually.

MR. STIEBER: —or Redefined, excuse me, that I think are interesting, and I would like to just read them to you, and see if you have anything to add or comment about. A quote from Rauschenberg: "There is nothing that everything is subservient to." And I find this quote interesting because I think—to me, it relates to these dual interests in your life, which are the dehumanization of art, and then your later rebellion against that. At what point in your intellectual development do you think you were starting to rebel against the dehumanization of art? Or the non-utilitarian argument?

MS. GABLIK: Well, that comment that there's nothing that everything is subservient to doesn't feel like something that I would have to disagree with. But I think, as I say, my feelings—the real turning point for me was reading *The Aquarian Age* by Marilyn Ferguson. Do you know that book?

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Have you read it?

MR. STIEBER: I have not read it.

MS. GABLIK: Well, it would be an interesting thing to read. And it really shook up all my thinking because it—what it is is a compendium of all kinds of different professional spheres, and she found individuals in all of them

who had changed their practices and their beliefs to conform more to this more feminized way of doing things. You know, less self-centered, autocratic, competitive, modus operandi. And what struck me the most about it was the fact that there were no artists represented in the book, and that our profession was completely ignored, which seemed odd because it's supposed to be in the forefront of all the new things. So, it set me on a path where I decided I was going to see if I could find artists who represented this new way of doing things, or who were working outside the old paradigm of art being painting and sculpture in museums and gets exhibited in galleries, and makes somebody, [the artist, -SG] famous. And if you are very lucky, rich.

MR. STIEBER: Right. And about when do you think you read that book? When it was published, or later?

MS. GABLIK: I'm sure I read it when it came out.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Okay. What about this quote from Claes Oldenburg? "I am for an art that embroils itself in the everyday crap and still comes out on top."

MS. GABLIK: On—

MR. STIEBER: On top.

MS. GABLIK: Oh. Well, there again, that is not anything that feels offensive to me, and if anything, suggests—you know—more down to earth kind of relationship with the world, rather than this rarefied, sanctified, you know, special sanctuaries for special, rarefied objects kind of art. I mean, Oldenburg was definitely somebody who brought it back to the real nitty gritty of everyday living. And you know, I guess, started the whole trend of making objects that went from toilets and right straight into vacuum cleaners like Jeff Koons, and so on.

MR. STIEBER: So, this is a related quote from you: "The use of found objects rather than invented images represents in America what really amounts to a moral strategy."

MS. GABLIK: A moral strategy?

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Now, those are your words. Do you feel that pop was a return to the human element?

MS. GABLIK: Well, it certainly was a reaction to the dehumanizing factor that had been so strong, for sure. And of course, all the abstract expressionisms—or abstract expressionist artists did not look kindly on the arrival of pop art and its philosophy at all because it was all part of that, you know, those stylistic upheavals that characterized the way art would be seen and categorized and structured in people's minds. You know, the new hot style that's just coming in, and it would usually totally overturn what went before. At least, at that stage, starting there. I mean, pop being so completely the opposite of abstract expressionism. And then minimalism being so completely the opposite of pop art, and so on.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay. What do you think attracted you initially to pop art?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I guess being professional in the middle of the scene, it was the happening thing, and it was different to everything else that one had ever seen. And it was fun—and a little wacky—and it was an intriguing moment in time. And, you know, all the different facets with the comic strips, and the soup cans, and all the ideas that that brought in. You know, is this a real—a real can, or a painted can? And so on. Simulation and—

MR. STIEBER: Well, let's talk about happenings. Did you ever attend any?

MS. GABLIK: Well, just the ones that were kind of events with the Judson Group. I never went to an Allan Kaprow one. And—or a Fluxus one.

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever meet Allan Kaprow?

MS. GABLIK: I think I met him once, in passing.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: But I was never very fond of what he did because he was kind of the epitome of pointless, useless art.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And it just seemed to me like a big waste of time. I mean, because it was not even a glorious, rarefied object, which, of course, has always had a place in the world, and continues to. I do not have objections to people making beautiful paintings, and beautifully crafted works that one just uses for visual enjoyment. I don't have a problem with it. I just wanted and worked for a more extended—an inclusive kind of way of thinking

about art so that there were other options and other avenues to pursue.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Right. Okay, I think just a couple of more questions, and then we will take a break because we are an hour and fifteen minutes in. In the book *Pop Art Redefined*, you thank a few people, and I want to just ask you about them, and ask you how you met them. We have talked about Leo Castelli. Sidney Felsen [co-founder of fine art print studio and artist workshop Gemini G.E.L.].

MS. GABLIK: Oh. I—that's somebody I barely knew.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Okay. That's fine. We talked about Phil Lider or Leider—I'm not sure how to pronounce his last name.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. He was the editor of *Artforum* [Philip Leider]—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and I just knew him slightly. I did not hang out with him or anything, and again, I don't precisely know how we crossed paths. But you know, I was just moving in art circles all the time, and—

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Ileana Sonnabend?

MS. GABLIK: Well, she was—sorry about that—a figure to reckon with, of course. And she, by then, had moved her New York gallery out of New York, into Paris. And we used to go and visit the gallery when we went to Paris, which we did a fair amount because John loved Paris, and again, I didn't really have a relationship with her. I mean, we knew each other, and would say hello, and so on, but she was a rather formidable character—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —unlike her affable ex-husband, Leo [Castelli].

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Last one. Maurice Tuchman

MS. GABLIK: Maurice Tuchman?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was out in California. And again, he was not exactly a pal, but just a colleague, and I would have met him somehow. I might have met him through Joseph Rafaelli, but I'm not sure. But he was kind of the going curator out in California at the time, and I think he was at the L.A. County Museum [of Art].

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. Okay, well, let's take a break for a little while, and then we will come back this afternoon and pick up again, okay?

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MR. STIEBER: Okay, we are back for the afternoon. It is about three-thirty—that clock is wrong. When we left, we said that we would pick up with the topic of Francis Bacon, whom you met because of your association with John Russell.

MS. GABLIK: Correct.

MR. STIEBER: So, do you remember when you first met Bacon?

MS. GABLIK: Well, John was commissioned by Thames & Hudson, our mutual publisher, to write a book about Francis. And so, they—there were a lot of meetings with him. I do not remember precisely the first one, or—but that's the reason he was active in our lives. And we got along very well. I had one funny Francis Bacon story.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: So, we used to go out to dinner together, the three of us or sometimes somebody else, and go to pretty fancy restaurants. And of course, Bacon drank a lot. He mostly liked to drink champagne. And he was well known in these restaurants because he spent a lot of money, and was a big tipper. And so, we went to one fancy English restaurant, and he ordered fish with a sauce on it. And when it came, he did not like the sauce, so he picked up the plate, and he just tipped the sauce onto the carpet.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And the waiters all came over. And of course, they didn't say a thing, or show any outrage. They

just said, "Don't worry, Mr. Bacon. We will clean it up."

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And that was just a kind of typical thing of him being so famous and being a bit sassy, and a little wild.

MR. STIEBER: Despite such behavior, did you like him?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I liked him a lot. Yes. I thought he was fantastic. Really interesting, and a lot of fun. He laughed a lot. He was sort of always a little bit drunk, but he was very charismatic and very appealing, yes. He had hairless skin. He was very soft to the touch, and had a lovely frame. He was a little overweight, but not too much. Very attractive. And had this really wonderful face and wild hair. And very dark, penetrating eyes. And a lot—a big smile, and a lot of laughter. [He wore sweaters a lot and always had the sleeves pushed up to his elbows. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever George Dyer, his partner?

MS. GABLIK: I think I did run into George Dyer.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: He was very dry, and I don't know. He was some kind of workman. I don't know. Francis grew up as a stable boy, and he had a penchant in his love life for working class men, is what he liked. And of a very different intellectual caliber than himself.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. George Dyer committed suicide in the early '70s at some point. Do you remember that?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, that is probably around the time I knew Francis, and I remember that happening. I don't remember a whole lot about it, but yes, he did it in the bathroom, on the toilet.

MR. STIEBER: Oh. I don't know the details. Just the time frame.

MS. GABLIK: And Francis made at least one, and maybe more, triptychs of George.

MR. STIEBER: The sort of common wisdom is that Bacon and Lucian Freud had been friends, at one point, but that they had a falling out. Were they friends when you knew them both?

MS. GABLIK: I think that they had—they were friends, and then they fell out—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —probably during the time span that I knew them. I remember being in a restaurant, again with Francis, and him making the comment that—in relation to the Freud situation, you know, wistfully, he said, "Well, relationships often have a life span, and that they are, you know, some are forever, and some are not."

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Well, you can't argue with that wisdom. Okay, so when you got to London, you lived in a boarding house. You did not live there the whole time you lived in London, though. Where was—where did you live next?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, no. I lived there the first year.

MR. STIEBER: The first year? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And then, when I got together with John Russell, we got a flat in the heart of London. It was about a five-minute, six-minute walk to Bond Street and Oxford Street. We lived around the corner from Winpole Street and Harley Street, which was Doctorville.

MR. STIEBER: What does that mean? Doctorville. That was just the name of the neighborhood.

MS. GABLIK: Harley Street was the famous street where all the well off doctors—

MR. STIEBER: I see.

MS. GABLIK: —had their offices.

MR. STIEBER: I see, I see. Okay. And did you do much traveling while you lived in London? At least, for the first few years?

MS. GABLIK: Well, with John, I traveled a lot, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, you mentioned trips to Paris. Anywhere else?

MS. GABLIK: I mentioned?

MR. STIEBER: Trips to Paris.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Did you go—

MS. GABLIK: He loved Paris, and he had some friends there, and we went there a lot. And then, at a certain point, we became good friends with Jackie Matisse's mother, [Alexina] Teeny Duchamp. And so, we saw her a lot in Paris. And also, in Cadaqués, where—

MR. STIEBER: In Spain?

MS. GABLIK: —I spent 22 summers. And we actually had Duchamp's old apartment. And then, that was just for a few years before John left, but I managed to get back to Cadaqués every summer, and get that place.

MR. STIEBER: Was that in Spain—that place?

MS. GABLIK: It is north of Barcelona—

MR. STIEBER: North of Barcelona.

MS. GABLIK: —in a area that is known as Catalonia. So—still fighting for its—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —independence from Spain.

MR. STIEBER: What was Teeny Duchamp like?

MS. GABLIK: She was a very warm, affectionate, and bright, easygoing sort of person that had—she had been married to Pierre Matisse before she was married to Marcel [Duchamp], and—so, she had moved in art world circles very intensively for most of her adult life. And she had three kids, of which one, Jackie Matisse Monnier, became one of my best friends. And the other two were boys, and one of them is an artist. And the other one, Peter [. . . -SG]. And I think he died at—somewhere along the way, but he never made much of himself. But the other brother was, you know, smart and on the ball. And he was, at that time, living in Boston, I think, and fairly successful. But I don't think I met him.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, we are in the early '70s. How long were you and John Russell together, as a couple?

MS. GABLIK: Six years.

MR. STIEBER: Six years. And aside from the interpersonal troubles that you faced while organizing the pop art exhibition, how would you characterize your relationship?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, smooth as silk.

MR. STIEBER: Yes?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Very nice.

MS. GABLIK: John was very easy to live with, and we really never quarreled. I only remember one quarrel, when he came home and—I was always cold, and he was English, and he always hot. And I had the gas log fireplace going, and the windows all closed. And he stormed in and he said, "I can't live like this!" He said, "It's like a stoat's den in here!"

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: He threw open the windows, and so on. That was the only sort of serious disagreement we really

ever had.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And aside from your writing—your column for the British periodical, your monthly column, what other writing were you doing?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I guess, somewhere along the line, I was invited to write a book about Magritte by Thames & Hudson [*Magritte*, 1985], and I retrieved my old buried manuscript from New York at the friend's apartment, where I had left it. And I began to redo it because they wanted a full length book. And so—

MR. STIEBER: And that was published in 1970?

MS. GABLIK: —otherwise, I guess before that, my first published book was the one you like, *Progress and Art* [New York: Rizzoli, 1977]. So, I guess I was working on that.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Let's see—the *Pop Art Redefined* came out in '69. Magritte came out in 1970. Yes? Does that sound right? And then, *Progress and Art* was in the mid-1970s—1976 or so.

MS. GABLIK: So, those were what I was working on.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, let's talk about *Progress and Art*. What drove you to that particular topic? Actually, let's back up. How would you characterize that book? What is the main thesis of that book?

MS. GABLIK: Well, generally, the history of art had been thought of as the succession of stylistic—one style overturning a previous style in—at least, in terms of modern times and modernism. And the idea was to completely reverse the premises of the previous style, and come up with something completely new, making it new. And somehow—well, it started with the fact that I had asked to write a book about collage, because I was a collage artist and very interested in the whole process of collage as a way of life, and a way of thinking, and a way of writing, and so on. So—

MR. STIEBER: I'm sorry. You had asked your publishers at Thames & Hudson?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I mean, I got connected with them through John—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and became friends with the various owners of the company, who were—was the widow, and also the son.

MR. STIEBER: Yes? Okay, so you had asked to write a book on collage, but they were not so interested?

MS. GABLIK: No, they were. They actually commissioned me to write this book on collage. And I would be a little hard pressed to tell you how I moved from the idea of collage to the idea that art history has an underlying cognitive development—I mean, it is an interesting question, and I have no idea how I got from here to there. But at a certain point, I went back to them and I said, "I actually find myself writing a different book," and I explained what I was doing, and they accepted that. And you know, I was reading a lot of Jean Piaget and Claude Lévi-Strauss about the structure of mind and consciousness, and whether there is any kind of evolution from like primitive society to more evolved, modern, technological societies, and whether that involves an evolution in the structure of the mind, or it is just another variation of human behavior, but the basic core structures do not change. And my view was that—I guess, ontology follows—

MR. STIEBER: —recapitulates phylogeny?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. Or the other way around, actually.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, I think, yes.

MS. GABLIK: And that cultural development had an underlying mental evolutionary process that paralleled that of the individual. And my perception was that the way children perceived space, as described by Piaget, in kind of more two dimensionally, that that was similar to the way artists began depicting space, without perspective and without—

MR. STIEBER: At the beginning of art?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. And without the separation of self and world. It was a lot involved with that idea, which comes in with perspective, where there is an observer who is outside the scene, looking into it. And then, you are not part of what you are looking at in the same way. And you know, perspective was that moment in time in the Renaissance where the way of perceiving space totally changed, and you had the observer outside the picture—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —looking upon the scene, [as if through a window -SG] rather than just a clutch of individuals that were all misaligned, in terms of spatial relations, where big people could be in the front or, you know, and smaller people behind—

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and so on. And no real spatial relationships.

MR. STIEBER: Right. How did you come across the work of people like Piaget and Lévi-Strauss?

MS. GABLIK: Lévi-Strauss was easy because John had translated one of his books—one of his first books. And so, they had a little bit of a friendship. And once I was on this track, I asked John if we could go and visit him, and we did. And then, I had a little correspondence between myself and Claude Lévi-Strauss, which I actually sold recently, when I moved, in a Sotheby's sale. And it was all about this idea of whether there is any kind of parallel development between the—in the [cognitive -SG] structure of mind [in the individual and culture -SG]. And Lévi-Strauss' position was firmly that, you know, it does not involve any kind of progress or improvement, that the structures of mind are permanent, and that primitive work and contemporary art are, you know, only a matter a difference of style, or a difference of interest, and so on. But not of anything to do with a cognitive development underlying it all.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, yes—[inaudible]—Okay, and what about Piaget? Did your investigations into Lévi-Strauss'—

MS. GABLIK: Well, I don't—

MR. STIEBER: —work lead to Piaget, or—

MS. GABLIK: —precisely remember—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —how or why I started reading Piaget, and came to this perception that I—became the core of the book, to be honest. It just sort of started coming out of me, and I—when the book was published, or the manuscript was about to be published, I sent it to Piaget, and he sent me back a letter, which is in your archives, I think, saying that he thought it was really very interesting, and he pretty well supported all the ideas and the thinking in it.

MR. STIEBER: Are there any ideas in that book that you have—would now disavow?

MS. GABLIK: No. It's just—remains a bit of a mystery to me how I ever dreamed all that up—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —and made that connection. I cannot quite fathom how that ever happened, but it did.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And you know how I switch gears from starting with a subject matter so completely different, about collage consciousness being potentially a way of life, and a way of perceiving the world.

MR. STIEBER: Collage consciousness?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, I really believe that seeing the world as a giant kind of collage is really about seeing the way things interact and interconnect. So, rather than looking at things so much, you look at the way they interface, and the way something new comes out of a juxtaposition that you would not have expected. It is, in a way, more Magritian in its idea about—I mean, I'm sure Magritte had a bit of an influence there—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —in terms of unexpected connections. And I have always been more interested in like, where

things connect, and what comes out of that space. You know, it is almost like the negative space rather than the positive space, this and that, but what happens when this and that connect.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, I can see how you would have been influenced by Magritte because in the Magritte book, you talk about that quite extensively.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: His pictorial refutation of the idea of a painting as simply a window onto the real. You know, you seem very comfortable with his supposition that life is a mystery. That there is a mystery at the heart of human existence.

MS. GABLIK: I still cannot fill in the gap between starting to read Piaget, who is not exactly easy reading, and not something I think I would have just picked up.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: So, something must have dragged me, kicking and screaming, to plow through a lot of Piaget's writings, particularly on the development of spatial relations.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes. Okay. Back up to my publication list here. Okay, so, mid-1970s, you have published *Progress and Art*. At what point did you start writing for *Art in America*?

MS. GABLIK: Well, before I left, I had done some articles, and the bulk of the articles came about when I started traveling for the USIS, and going around the world to all kinds of places, giving lectures on contemporary art, and my various theories.

MR. STIEBER: And what is the USIS?

MS. GABLIK: At that time, it was—

MR. STIEBER: The Information Services?

MS. GABLIK: —the United States Information Services—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and it was culture diplomacy wing of the—I guess, the CIA? But it was to spread goodwill and ideas about American culture. And usually, it was about sending artists of one kind or another, or musicians and so on, to share their work with other cultures.

MR. STIEBER: So, just to back up, you wrote articles for *Art in America*—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —before you left for Britain?

MS. GABLIK: But the main articles then became—when I made these trips, and some other ones that were independent of the USIS but were invitational also, like to Australia and to the Philippines, I wrote articles while I was there. I collected material on what artists were doing, and wrote a series of articles called—I don't know, something From Abroad. "Correspondence From Abroad" or something [an *Art in America* column -SG]. And they were all published, except the last one, which was on Philippine art. And that was a very disappointing set back in my life because they decided either Betsy Baker and/or her board that I had been in the clutches of Ferdinand Marcos [president of the Philippines], and that this whole trip was fake P.R. to prove, you know, that it was all—everything was great in the Philippines.

MR. STIEBER: What year was this?

MS. GABLIK: The reason that they made the connection was that the woman who was looking after me when I was there, and connecting me with people, her husband worked as a curator in one of the three museums that Marcos had built. And so, they decided that I had gone under bad auspices and that it was politically incorrect to print this. And I was horrified because these artists were really so excited, and so happy to meet someone from America, and to have their art written about in *Art in America*. It was like the biggest deal for them, like getting the Nobel Prize or something. And when they refused to publish it, it kind of ended my relationship, professionally, with the magazine because it broke my heart. Not for me. I mean, I had actually—it is the one thing—the one article I remember that I ever wrote that did not get published, so it was like a drop in the bucket for me. Personally—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —and I could have lived with it. But I knew how seriously I let down so many people that I had had so much attention and affection from. And who were so exhilarated. And their lives so uplifted by this possibility that had come their way, and full of promise and everything. And I remember, I was teaching a class at the University of Tennessee in Sewanee, and I just went into the class and I could not speak. I just sat there and I wept. I was just so emotionally put out of joint by the whole episode.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. What year was this?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, you keep asking me those kinds of things.

MR. STIEBER: About, about—ish. '80s?

MS. GABLIK: Well, let's see. I think John left in about 1975, and it was soon after that I inadvertently inherited this situation of working for the USIS and traveling because they had initially invited him, and then he, of course, was no longer there. And so, they asked his successor, who was a woman called—forget that—

MR. STIEBER: It's okay.

MS. GABLIK: —who—

MR. STIEBER: His successor at that—

MS. GABLIK: —took over his position at the London Sunday Times—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —as art critic. And she did not want to do it. And so, she was scrambling around for somebody who might be free and interested in doing that kind of thing. And so, she asked me.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Let's—so, the Philippines, though, that—

MS. GABLIK: That was later, and that—oh, yes. That was not under the USIS. That was not part of an embassy sponsored trip.

MR. STIEBER: I mean, the dust up with *Art in America*. What—

MS. GABLIK: The bust up, yes, came about then.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, about—

MS. GABLIK: Professionally.

MR. STIEBER: You think in the 1980s? Maybe the late '80s? Because you wrote for *Art in America* for nearly 20 years, right? So, it must have been—

MS. GABLIK: Well, a lot of it was just being on the masthead. I did not write that much, except what I sent these —

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —letters from abroad.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And occasionally, there would be a show in London that I would write about.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember the name of the curator in the Philippines that was working in the—no?

MS. GABLIK: Well, it was the woman's husband, but I don't remember her name, either.

MR. STIEBER: Either of their names? Okay. What about—

MS. GABLIK: But I mean, I never hung out with her husband, but only with her.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. What about the names of the artists that you wrote about?

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: But I'm sure probably the article may be in the archives somewhere.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. And that information might be in your journals, too. Okay. So, late-1970s, you are traveling for the USIS. You are writing articles for *Art in America*. What are some of the other places you visited? You mentioned Australia.

MS. GABLIK: Yes. I was invited by the Arts Council of Australia to go and teach at Sydney University. I had an artist friend that I had known in London who hooked up with an Australian artist—and she was living in Australia, and they offered a place for me to stay. And I had this teaching job for a month, and then I also—the Arts Council arranged a lecture tour, so I went to a number of places in Australia. And I—also writing one of my essays on Australian art.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And then met, and subsequently fell in love with one of the artists that I met while I was there, who I continued to correspond with. I later went back to live with him for a period of time in Australia.[I had only known him briefly, a few days, so that may have been a bad idea. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: And what was his name?

MS. GABLIK: Peter Taylor. Least, I remember that.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] We all have three or four great loves in our lives, right? And we remember their names. Was he Australian, or was he—

MS. GABLIK: Totally.

MR. STIEBER: —Tasmanian?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I mean, Tasmania is considered part of Australia—

MR. STIEBER: Oh, okay. Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —but he lived in Tasmania, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: So, that is where I went back to.

MR. STIEBER: All right. And how would you characterize him? Peter.

MS. GABLIK: Kind of manic depressive, and very intense, and intuitive, and very, very neurotic. So, it was a very rocky romance.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. Any stories from your time with him?

MS. GABLIK: Well, the most interesting one probably being meeting him. I met him because I went to visit Hobart and give a lecture at the art school there, and he was teaching there. But he was also a very good friend of some—a pair of curators, whose names I do not remember—that were very—a kind of power couple in the art world in Australia that I got pretty chummy with. And this was a close friend of theirs, and they knew I was writing this article, and they knew I was interested in having some kind of 'bush adventure.'

And so, they set me up with Peter. They told me later on, they suspected that something more might happen, but I was not aware of it at the time. So, I went there, and I liked his work [swans and ducks, -SG] very much, which was a lot of carving from the local wood, and some of it was bird decoys, which he used because he also a hunter. And so, for my bush adventure, he took me onto the river. He lived right next to the Huon River, which was the actual river that all the English prisoners came in on when they first landed in Australia and decimated the Aboriginal colonies.

I gave my lecture up in Hobart, and then his wife had been delegated to drive me home, back to their house. And I didn't meet Peter that night because he went to bed early and I got back there late. And in my room, I found a jasmine plant and a copy of—of all things—the *New York Review of Books*, which just—that was my favorite reading at the time, and my favorite scent. And that was pretty amazing because I never met this man, and it seemed odd that—I mean, an odd pair of things to leave in somebody, you know, who was visiting, artist-critic, who was going to come to stay. So, I never figured out how that happened. Another one of those

mysterious synchronicities that he pressed two buttons at the same time—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —without even having met me.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And the odds of the New York Review of books turning up in the wilds of Australia [Tasmania] was pretty remote.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: So, I went to bed, and got up the next morning, and Peter was up already, and he was talking on the telephone in his underpants. That's all he had on. And that was also a little unusual. Or to use his word, "Youn-usual [ph]."

MR. STIEBER: "Youn-usual?" [Laughs.] That's how he pronounced it?

MS. GABLIK: That's—that was his word, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MS. GABLIK: And so, it began.

MR. STIEBER: Did his wife know?

MS. GABLIK: Well, he informed me months later, after we had corresponded, and I kind of realized that I had sort of fallen for this man through corresponding with him, and of course, having met him, that you know, something was happening there. And then, he told me at that point, which was months later, that he did not know if I had noticed, but—that he and his wife were already estranged and were planning to separate, and she was going up to live in Hobart because the marriage had broken up over another woman called Kitty. I remember that name, and—because she remained in the picture, somehow, throughout our time together. And eventually, moved herself to Hobart, if you can believe it, but they never did end up together.

MR. STIEBER: So, on that first trip, did you actually have your bush adventure?

MS. GABLIK: Have a bush adventure?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Yes—it kind of put me in a trance state. He took me down at dusk, and we had to walk part way across the river, and he had a swan blind there. There were a lot of swans in the area, and he sat in the—well, I—he had a crate there, and I sat on the crate, and he stood in front of me in the moonlight by then, with a rifle. And of course, nothing came along and he did not shoot anything, but I had never experienced anything like that. And then, when we had to go back in the dark—I mean, I have never been very sure-footed in the best of times, and so, I hung onto him for dear life, and he safely steered me back to shore, on foot. And it was kind of terrifying, but I realized that the whole experience—later, after I left, I realized that it was somehow more intense and more romantic, and that I had unwittingly put my life in his hands, and it had a feeling of intimacy that was stronger than, you know, if we had somehow gone into—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —the back seat of a car or something and—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —scrambled around. This was of a completely other, almost mystical kind of situation. And I still didn't really take in what had happened. But I knew something unusual happened. It came upon me when I got on the plane to leave, and I thought, wow, this was—this—something happened here. I didn't even know what or how to name it. And then, the next morning, the phone rang early, and my friend came in with the telephone, and I thought it was the people who were organizing my last lecture, which was to be the next day, wanting to settle on logistics. And it was Peter. And he said to me, "You took the sunshine with you when you left." And so—

MR. STIEBER: Sweet talker.

MS. GABLIK: Huh?

MR. STIEBER: Sweet talker. Sweet talker, yes?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. Definitely. And then, the second thing was when I got on the plane to go home, a couple of days later, the plane lost an engine, and so, he [the pilot] said, "Oh, don't worry, you know, as long as we have got three engines, we are okay. If another one goes out, we are in trouble." And so, we had to turn back and land in Singapore. And we were put up in a hotel. And I was, of course, dressed for another kind of situation than 105 degrees. Heat. And they kept our luggage, and just transferred it. But we were given nice hotel rooms. And I went down by the pool to sit for a little while, and I wrote a post card to thank Peter for my time with him. And while I was writing, I was perspiring so much, and the sweat went and kind of watered, you know, ruined some of the writing on the post card. And I wrote an apology that, you know, I'm sorry, but this is what's happening. And he wrote me back when I got to London and said, "I will treasure this postcard forever." [Laughs.] Because of—it has your sweat on it.[Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: Saucy.

MS. GABLIK: So, those are some of the Peter Taylor stories.

MR. STIEBER: About what year was that first trip?

MS. GABLIK: Maybe—I don't know, 1980?

MR. STIEBER: 1980? Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I think I had completed my stint for the USIS because the man who I made friends with at the embassy, who kept organizing new venues for me to go to in the third world, left the job. And so, I did not do that anymore, and I guess the Australia trip came about after that, as did the Philippines one.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And those were my last big trips of that kind.

MR. STIEBER: Before we move into the '80s, let's try to finish with the USIS. Did you have any other trips with them?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. I went to Pakistan.

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MS. GABLIK: Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, as it was called then. Jordan. Egypt. And not sure if there were others. India, of course.

MR. STIEBER: Wow. That's a lot to talk about.

MS. GABLIK: It was fabulous. And I was put up in first class hotels everywhere, and looked after all the time.

MR. STIEBER: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Jordan—

MS. GABLIK: Sri Lanka.

MR. STIEBER: —Sri Lanka.

MS. GABLIK: Egypt. Nepal. That was another big one. Nepal was wonderful.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Let's talk about India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, all together. Before the partition, what was that experience like?

MS. GABLIK: Well, it was a very interesting, eye-opening experience for me because of course, I was there to talk about art, and the people I met were mainly art-related people, or artists. And they were very excited at the idea of an American critic coming to give them information. They—there was not a whole lot of interaction between Americans artists and those countries, so it was very exciting, big deal for them to have an American in tow, who brought information. They were just—these countries were hungry for information about the outside world, and other cultures.

And then, I started to do the research while I was there, meeting the artists, and visiting their studios. And one of the things that happened was that a lot of these artists were making kind of third-rate abstraction—abstract paintings, and sort of mediocre copies and rip-offs of American and European style modernist art. Usually, Cubism or abstract expressionism. And when I met the artists, the artists seemed very, very smart, and very

knowledgeable people. And so, I wondered about this cultural—I guess, imposition that, you know, America had propagated the idea that modernism, particularly in its abstract forms was the universal art. So, a lot of them signed up to try to connect with that universal idea. Not all of them. And the ones who kept their roots more authentic and related to the history of Indian art seemed the much more interesting artists. But the artists themselves were all very vibrant, intelligent, intellectually knowledgeable people, so I began to think about, you know, this way that America had kind of appropriated the consciousness of some of these artists by imposing—I mean, the idea that its way was the best way.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And you know, everyone in those countries thought America was very exotic, and longed to be connected with that culture.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. And was that the case in pretty much all of these countries that you went to?

MS. GABLIK: I would say so, yes.

MR. STIEBER: You felt that same sort of colonial—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —influence.

MS. GABLIK: It was colonialism gone terribly awry.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes. Yes. Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And a lot of them had, you know, managed to—or some of them had managed to go abroad for a year and study, and then they came back and just, you know, did their bad versions of some of the things they had seen. But it wasn't a lived, embodied kind of thing. I mean, in our own cultural history, it evolved, one thing out of another, and it made sense. And you could trace its roots in the people who originated it. In each case were interesting innovators, again, with the idea of making it new, and all that. But for people from these other cultures, it was disconnected them from their own history—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and they were working out of a mental idea, rather than a lived experience that was embodied and indigenous to their own culture.

MR. STIEBER: Right, right. Interesting. Did you have any adventures in any of these places? Any near misses?

MS. GABLIK: Are you looking for more sexy stories?

MR. STIEBER: No. No, no, no. Not in the least. Not in the least. I mean, you know, rude cab drivers, mountain climbing accidents. Whatever.

MS. GABLIK: Well, I did have one kind of racy—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —evening—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —that sticks out because there was a man there who was the American cultural ambassador, and it was in, oh lord, Calcutta. And so, my went late into the evening, and he offered to take me home. And we got a rickshaw driver. [There were bodies everywhere sleeping in the streets and we had to make our way through them. -SG] The ambassador, he came back into the hotel, and the hilarious part—the rest does not need any description—but the hilarious part was that we decided to go swimming in the pool, which was, of course, closed, but we did not care. And so, I loaned him a pair of my shorts so he could go into the pool. And I guess I put on a bathing suit, and we went down to the pool and got severely kicked out. They were not very happy. But we were laughing—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —so that was amusing. And the rest of the time—I mean, the Indians, the people from India, the males were very deferential, and very respectful of women, and would not approach you, or harm you, or do

nothing. The man I was talking about was, of course, the American ambassador, and he was kind of starved for a non-Asian encounter [. . . -SG] and some intellectual companionship, and for an American woman..

MR. STIEBER: One who was willing to go into the pool, after-hours. Okay, I think I would like to stop now.

MS. GABLIK: Okay.

MR. STIEBER: The next sort of stage is your publication of *Has Modernism Failed?*

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: So, I would like to talk about that book tomorrow, as well as your other—you know, publications.

MS. GABLIK: Okay.

MR. STIEBER: So, we will have a good long chat tomorrow, as well.

MS. GABLIK: Did that contain some stuff for you, or was it—

MR. STIEBER: Yes. This is very illuminating. Thank you.

MS. GABLIK: Huh?

MR. STIEBER: This is very illuminating. Thank you.

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.]

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MR. STIEBER: All right. This is Jason Stieber with Suzi Gablik for our fourth session. The date is March 1, 2015. The time is about 10:00 o'clock, and we are 3610 South Main Street in Blacksburg, Virginia. Now, Suzi, when we left off, we were in the '80s, and you had just come from Australia for the first time, where you had met Peter Taylor and fallen quite in love with him. Did you return to London? Is that right?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. I was living in London.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And where were you living by that time?

MS. GABLIK: In London?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Well, this was after John Russell left, and I actually stayed in the apartment—

MR. STIEBER: Ah.

MS. GABLIK: —that we had lived in together.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: So, except for the first year in London, where I lived in this Victorian rooming house, I lived only in that apartment.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And do you know how many years you were there?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I was in London about 22 years, so probably 20, 21 years or so.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right. And John had gone to New York, to work—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —in New York. Okay. That's right. And do you remember what publication he went to work for?

MS. GABLIK: Sure. He replaced Hilton Kramer—

MR. STIEBER: Okay, that's what I thought.

MS. GABLIK: —at the *New York Times*.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Great. Okay, so you come back from Australia on this USIS trip—

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: —no, that wasn't a USIS trip. That was an Arts Council trip, right? Okay. So, you come back from this trip. You still have USIS trips to take?

MS. GABLIK: No.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, that's done?

MS. GABLIK: No, that was about—a little less than two years that I was—had the privilege of doing all that free traveling through the American Embassy cultural diplomatic side of—

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what sort of things did you talk about on these USIS trips?

MS. GABLIK: I lectured—I guess I was working on *Has Modernism Failed*. And so, I talked about modernism, and I just—mostly, they were interested in promoting art in America, and what artists were important, and what they were doing currently, and so on. So, I tried to explain—there was a chapter in *Has Modernism Failed* called "Anxious Objects."

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: I tried to explain, you know, artists whose art was meant to provoke and to have very dire kinds of experiences that were challenging to them—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and challenging to other people to watch, and so on, and tried to have that make sense. [Laughs.] [Like Chris Burden shooting himself in the foot to see what it felt like to be shot, or Marina Abramavitch lying motionless on a block of ice with live pythons around her neck for many hours. -SG].

MR. STIEBER: Right? Okay, so you come back. You are living in London still, but at some point, you are no longer working for *Art in America*. You are working on your new book. Are you supporting yourself entirely through your writing? Or are you doing some teaching while you are in London as well?

MS. GABLIK: I did some teaching, and I also began to travel back and forth to America, and earn money lecturing and teaching. But I also had some artworks that I had acquired along the way that have saved my life at different times of crisis—that I have sold them. And at one point in New York, I had this big Bob Rauschenberg painting that was painted on a tablecloth and had a big—had a parachute of which the strings hung off the canvas. And Jasper Johns bought that from me.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember the title of that piece?

MS. GABLIK: No, I don't remember the title of it, but it went the Yale Arts Center. He later donated it, permanent loan to them. It was an all-white painting. And it was very controversial at the time because it had these strings hanging down, and people said, you know: "That is not a painting because it doesn't fit inside the frame."

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Right.

MS. GABLIK: Seems ludicrous now, in terms of what goes and what passes for art. But at the time, it made people very uneasy.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember approximately when you sold that piece to Jasper Johns?

MS. GABLIK: I think it was not that long after I got to London [I ran out of money. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right.

MS. GABLIK: It seems very hot, doesn't it, suddenly?

MR. STIEBER: It is. Well, I'm always warm. So, what were some of the—where were some of the places you traveling to in the United States to lecture and teach?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, everywhere from RISD to Yale to Harvard to most of the universities in California, and a great number of places.

MR. STIEBER: Were you talking about some of the same things there that you were talking about on the USIS

trips?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, probably putting forth my ideas about—well, how a lot of this art, like crawling across glass on your hands and knees—broken glass—was a bid to get away from the careerism and the commercialism that the modern art market had become. But all of those, the double-mindedness of those artists who still wanted to become blue chip artists and have their work be recognized along the same paradigm that was already in place that their art was designed to break—

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: —or make a break with.

MR. STIEBER: So, by double-mindedness, you mean these artists wanted to move away from the precious object, the precious market object, and yet they still wanted legit—you know, to be legitimized by the market.

MS. GABLIK: By the art world.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: In the same way, yes.

MR. STIEBER: Where do you think we are now in the art market? In relation to that.

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.] Well, you know I do not follow those things as much anymore, since I cannot travel, but you know, my understanding is that there's an even greater divide now between the money part and the consumerist part of art, and artists who have felt uncomfortable with that from the get-go. This—a lot of artists are caught. [The divide is between the consumerist and market ideas of art, and its other reasons for being. -SG] Hi, Mitzi.

MITZI VERNON: Hi.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, Suzi. So, you are teaching. You are writing. Give us a sense of what your daily discipline is with writing. I know that you are a very disciplined diarist, so maybe talk a little bit about that, and what role that plays in your—

MS. GABLIK: Well, I was a steady—

MR. STIEBER: —writing practice.

MS. GABLIK: —diarist, but I would not call it disciplined. I did not have a special time or situation. I just did it, partly because I wanted to make note of things that happened, and partly because I kept it all so as—they were combined with being notebooks, when I would read something that seemed important, and I would make notes. [I make notes of two things: things that happen and things I read. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Your working books?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. And what about when you were working on a full length book? How do you organize your time? How do you organize your research material, and your thoughts?

MS. GABLIK: These questions boggle the mind.

MR. STIEBER: Ah.

MS. GABLIK: I don't know. I guess my best working times were mostly in the mornings, although I usually went out to exercise. And at different times, I would just work all the time. And I remember spending quite a few holidays on my own, and just having deadlines or needing to get through some sections that I was working on. And I would spend, you know, a holiday just working.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: I have read about artists, you know, who go into retreat when they are going to write a book, and they do not see or talk to anyone. But that was not me.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I mean, I lived normally, and I just wrote when I could.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Are there any writers that you particularly admire? Any writers whose process you particularly admire?

MS. GABLIK: Well, we brought up one that I had not thought of—William Gass.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And Annie Dillard, yes. And—trying to think.

MR. STIEBER: Writers that you admire.

MS. GABLIK: No, I remember what the question is, but—trying to think who comes to mind, particularly.

MR. STIEBER: We can come back to it. So, at what point did you move back to the United States?

MS. GABLIK: Oh. From England?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: When—well, I had been thinking about moving for three, four years in advance, but so I did not talk about it much because I was not sure if I would ever manage to bring it off. But I was ready to come back to America. I did not want to go to New York and live in a city anymore. And I had had several stints of teaching for semesters and so on where I was living in country houses and in smaller town settings, so that's what I was looking for. And in the 1980s, I had a bit of a mishap because I was—I had been out to teach several times at the—U.C. Santa Barbara, and made good friends—one very good friend there, a painter, and she—C.L. Bergman—

MR. STIEBER: C.L. Bergman.

MS. GABLIK: —and she very much wanted to get me on the faculty there. And of course, Santa Barbara is the most beautiful place and—

MR. STIEBER: It really is.

MS. GABLIK: —the idea of living where you could go have breakfast on the beach at the Brown Pelican was extremely attractive to me. And we—she actually got the dean interested in hiring me as a kind of, you know, special effects person that would bring a little extra glamour to the college. And he was in favor, but there were a couple of other people, one woman in particular, who was this same friend, C.L.'s best friend there, who was very enraged by the whole idea that I could be slotted in. And then, you know, be the kind of star of the department after she had herself slogged her way up the ranks for almost 20 years.

So, they literally set out to sabotage the whole thing. And they succeeded, largely by saying, "Well, if we are going to get a slot for an art critic, who says it has to be Suzi Gablik?" And then, they decided that maybe there would be nobody who—except for me, who they clearly did not want, who would willing to come out there and make a life there. So, then, they said, "Well, we will divide it up between several critics." And they picked out two of the least reliable, Barbara Rose and Marcia Tucker. And they decided that if there was going to be a position, there should be multiple critics, and no one person should get it.

Anyway, they made the dean so disgusted because they could not close ranks behind the appointment themselves, and so, he just kind of threw in the sponge and said, "I can't really help you out." And so, that fell through, and I had a very bad month after my dream fell apart. And my cushy job was stolen out from under me. And I went back to London, and then I was—I received a telephone call from the head of the department here [Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA], who had been prompted on the side by Ray Kass, that there was this—G.C. Garvin?

MS. GABLIK: Endowed chair, that rotated between the departments of the school of the arts and the sciences. The art department was kind of due for a shot at this, and they put me forward as a candidate. So, this is where I ended up. I came here, accepted the job, and it was for a year. And in the course of that, made quite a few friends, and decided that I could wake up to this landscape and this scene for the rest of my life and be quite happy—

MR. STIEBER: And did you—

MS. GABLIK: —which has been the case.

MR. STIEBER: Did you move immediately into that house on Deer Run?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I—when I was working, when I had the job, I lived in somebody else's house in an adjacent valley to the one I ultimately moved to. And I started looking for a place, thinking the only way I would come back here is if I found a place to come because I was not—I was not going to be able to come, with no place to go. And I got a realtor and started looking at houses. And then, maybe even having a builder build one on a piece of land because I got hung up on a certain kind of view.

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And then, this house on Deer Run that I moved into—a friend told me about it, and that it had been on the market previously and not sold, and that it might be available. Friends of hers were renting it. And so, I connected with those people, and I bought the place in 24 hours.

MR. STIEBER: And about what year was this? The year that the Santa Barbara fell through, and you—

MS. GABLIK: No. Let's see, I had been teaching here '89-to-'90, and then I went back to London, and it took about eight or nine months for me to run through all my commitments to travel and lecture and do whatever I had to do, and dismantle and sell my lease of the apartment that I lived in, in London, which I did equally as quickly because I called a friend of mine, my closest friend, who is also my editor at Thames & Hudson, and told him I had bought a house and I was moving back to America. And I said, "So, if you know anyone who would like my apartment" —and his secretary and her husband wanted it. And so, they bought it in another 24 hours.

MR. STIEBER: Wow. [Laughs.].

MS. GABLIK: So, that was all very fated and synchronistic.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: Nobody ever—moved real estate quite that fast.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] What is your relationship with teaching? Do you enjoy it, or—

MS. GABLIK: With what?

MR. STIEBER: With teaching.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, yes. I loved it.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: I loved it.

MR. STIEBER: What about it appeals to you?

MS. GABLIK: Well, I loved being able to influence younger minds, and tell them as much about values and life as I could, and particularly, help those students who were more on the side of, you know, not wanting to have to go change their life by going to New York to become an artist and make portfolios and do all that hard slog that had become routine for 'this is how you become an artist.' I mean, it used to be, when I was growing up, that the whole idea of being an artist was to break out of the hard slog and do things your own way, and be creative, and live independently of all that. And everything somehow got mixed up and turned upside down, and suddenly, there were rules and regulations, and things you had to put yourself through to prove your worthiness and—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —your ability to get to know the right people, and on and on.

MR. STIEBER: Like MFA programs. They are almost like MBA programs these days. Okay, fantastic. So, you come to Blacksburg. The next book you publish is *The Reenchantment of Art* [New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992]—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —in 1991. And that book is a pretty dramatic shift—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —from all the books that you had published—

MS. GABLIK: Right.

MR. STIEBER: —previously. So, to what do you—I mean, of course, if you read all of your work, there seems, to me, a very clear line in your thinking. But *Reenchantment of Art* is quite different. So, can you talk about that shift a little bit?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, the shift—well, we talked a little bit about reading some of those books, like *The Chalice and the Blade*, and *The Aquarian Age*, and the whole new paradigm shift that was happening throughout the culture. And what I had done in *Has Modernism Failed* was basically a philosophical critique of modernism and its core concepts that were devoted to individualism and originality, and making it new, and so on. And the second book, really, was born as like, part two, in terms of what are the other options, and what kind of art are those artists making, who have not chosen to go down the route of modernism and be part of the canon, and just get their names into art history, and so on.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. So, you see *The Reenchantment of Art* as part two—as the sequel to *Has Modernism Failed*?

MS. GABLIK: Yes. And I see *Conversations Before the End of Time* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1995] as the third in a trilogy—

MR. STIEBER: Oh, okay.

MS. GABLIK: —of books.

MR. STIEBER: Interesting, interesting.

MS. GABLIK: And I can tell you about that when you want.

MR. STIEBER: Well, we can talk about that now—I mean, because it follows close on the heels—

MS. GABLIK: Well, basically, *The Reenchantment* was about a more feminized kind of—less patriarchal view of art that is self-oriented and authoritarian. So, it had to do with being—art that is more community based, more interactive, more participatory, less kind of removed from the world, which was the basis of the art for art's sake philosophy.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: Art does not need to do anything; it just needs to be. And you know, anything else is kind of fascism, if you dictate that art should be in service to anything. The whole core principle of modernism is that art does not serve anyone or anything. So, once I had set up this other ethos, which had to do with more feminine ideas of cooperation, interaction, participation, and less hardcore careerism. I also used, as a basis for that, the idea—some of which belonged to David Bohm—that the concept of deep listening, so that you would include other voices than your own in what you were doing, so art would not be so self-oriented and based on pure individualism. But you might do work around giving other people's creativity a voice, and the possibility of participating in the artwork, and so on. So, then—I'm having a—

MR. STIEBER: Is that why you chose to—

MS. GABLIK: —oh.

MR. STIEBER: —fashion *Conversations Before the End of the Time* as a—

MS. GABLIK: Well, I became very interested—

MR. STIEBER: —as interviews.

MS. GABLIK: —it grew naturally out of the idea of could one also write [in an interactive way. -SG] Where it was not just my ideas and my writing, what I think art could or should be, but it would be much more including other people's opinions and voices. So, I—it just kind of grew. It was one of those pure, synchronistic events where it was happening at a time when I—my star was shining brightly, and I was traveling everywhere and meeting all kinds of people. The idea of art in the service of ecology had a huge momentum for a period of a year or two, in terms of everybody doing conferences around art in the environment, and what should art be doing? And can art help save the world? And all that kind of stuff.

So, I got to meet all kinds of interesting people that I would not have otherwise met. And I would learn about them in advance, knowing they were going to be there. And it was not everybody I contacted in that way, but quite a few of the people that were unknown to me before and told them that I was doing this book, and what it was about, and would they be willing while we were in such and such a place to sit down and do a conversation that I would record, a conversation. And that they would have complete control over it, afterward, if they wanted to change anything, or if they did not like it, they could drop out. But nobody did, and hardly anybody changed a

single word. It was really great.

MR. STIEBER: It—

MS. GABLIK: And—

MR. STIEBER: Go ahead.

MS. GABLIK: —so, I had everyone from Hilton Kramer, who was put on a panel with me, just the two of us, to duke it out over modernism versus other forms of art that he did not even consider were worthy of the name of art. And that was probably one of the most interesting experiences, working with him. But he was very respectful of me. We had a very good conversation. And I would just arrive at a conference with this key idea that the world was now in crisis, and did this alter the view of what artists should be doing? Did artists have a responsibility, along with everybody else in the culture, to try to change their thinking so that we did not end up exactly where we have ended up now because we did not do it. [Laughs.] And I had, you know, really interesting conversations with writers, and psychologists, and artists [Laurie Zuckerman-SG]. And then, I had a friend here in Blacksburg at the time, and she said she was going to interview me, and she insisted on that. She was quite aggressive, but it also made for an interesting conversation.

MR. STIEBER: It's interesting to me that in that book, you give Leo Castelli the last word. A man who is, you know, widely regarded as having invented the contemporary art market. Why did you do that, and how can you —

MS. GABLIK: Well—

MR. STIEBER: —how can you elaborate on that conversation?

MS. GABLIK: I just put the conversations in the sequence in which they happened.

MR. STIEBER: I see. Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And he was the last one. And I was very pleased that he agreed to sit down with me, and I think he enjoyed it, and he liked the conversation very much. And you know, I mean, the whole point of letting other people speak is that you try to assemble all the viewpoints, and that no one viewpoint dominates, and no one way of thinking dominates. So, it was always an intention to get a mix of Hilton Kramer's and Leo Castelli's up with, you know, Thomas Moore and James Hillman and—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —other kinds of people, and people—[psychologists -SG] environmentalists, and so on.

MR. STIEBER: Great. Okay, so your next book is *Living the Magical Life* [Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 2002] Is that right? That was 2002?

MS. GABLIK: My next and last.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. So far. So, talk a little bit about that book. In particular, I'm really fascinated to learn what your oracular practice is like.

MS. GABLIK: Well—

MR. STIEBER: For those who have not read the book.

MS. GABLIK: —I decided that I had exhausted my ideas about art, and given it all my best shot with that trilogy of books, and somehow came to the conclusion that the next subject would be myself. And as I was in the process at that point of starting a new life, coming from London to Blacksburg, I just began the book with the shift—how my shift also included or invaded my everyday life because when I got to Blacksburg, I really got into antiquing with the same friend of mine who had interviewed me in the book—her name being Laurie Zuckerman.

MR. STIEBER: I have read that interview, yes.

MS. GABLIK: And we were both, at that point, into making altars, and we joined up with another friend called Kathy Pinkerton and became the Altar Makers of Blacksburg.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Is Kathy spelled with a C or a K?

MS. GABLIK: K.

MR. STIEBER: So, what's any given day for you—

MS. GABLIK: But when I got here, and I had suddenly, unbelievably, to myself, a house of my own—[laughs]—I decided that I didn't want anything modern anymore. No steel and no Plexiglas. I wanted, you know, things with patina and color. And so, I changed my style of decorating, and spent a lot of time finding old Mexican furniture from a store in New York that imported it. And slowly but surely, made my entire house—certainly, the living room—into a giant collage of all kinds of color and artworks and textures.

MR. STIEBER: I remember it well. It's beautiful. Okay, really, the only thing that I have left—actually, no, I meant to follow up on the question, what is your—I want to talk again, more carefully, about your oracular practice. What is any given day for you with your chosen oracles? With I Ching or whatever other spiritual technologies?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, we touched on that, and I'm not sure exactly how I got hooked into using the I Ching, but once I started doing it, I learned that it really had the power to give you answers and shift your consciousness in a time of crisis when you are stuck mentally. Or support confusion, when you did not know, should I zig or zag over here?

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: Do I do this? Do I move forward, or do I not do it? [I do it; I follow it. -SG] And it always—not always, but when it hit the target, it was so distinctly clear that it did. So, I was doing that for a long time, and then added other things, like Tarot and runes. So, I had this whole repertoire of things, and when I would get stressed over something, I would work on it with all my little implements there. And then, I started taking tai chi when I got to Blacksburg, and managed to kind of fall in love with a teacher of the class, who was a very expert martial arts teacher. And he was not very responsive to my—I mean, he was responsive to my interest in him, but not to anything romantic. But he also made some unusual moves at the beginning that suggested that he was.

And I started the whole thing after I built an altar to the Black Madonna, and I also had gotten these two big leather chairs in my living room, and my friend Fern said, you know, "You need someone else to sit in the other chair." And I thought, well, it would really be nice to have a partner. And so, I decided to test all this magical stuff, and invited in a man of courage into my life. Which, this man certainly was, in his own way. And synchronistically, again, that was so symbolic. I went off to California, and when I came back, I got—I had not really thought about him, but when I came back, there was a totally out of the box phone call from him saying that he had bought the New York Sunday Times and saved it for me. And I thought, well, that's odd. That's not really like Tom; what's going on here?

And then I had a dream, which I can't remember at this moment, but it all sort of suggested considering this man. So, I did. And then, I went through a very rocky time with not being able to read the clues as to whether he was in it or not in it. And then, it became clearer that he was really not inclined to participate in this. But by then, I had launched my story, and I had had a number of magical events, the key one being that three times when I was kind of screaming at the cosmos, you know, "I cannot do this," and "This isn't working," and "I don't want to do this anymore." But since it had been a spiritual path that I invited in, I knew that it was very bad practice to say, "I don't want this path," after you had asked for it. You cannot just jump off.

And besides that, I was also writing a book, and it would have ruined my story, as it turns out, if I had just said, you know, "This sucks. I don't like it," like you do in the real world, "Get this guy out of here," which I was ready to do on three occasions. On each of these occasions, where I had been weeping and carrying on and hysterical, a little pair of red shoes would arrive out of nowhere, and became the symbol for the spirit world really communicating with me that I should just continue along with all my readings from the I Ching, which also were saying, "If you just persist, things will eventually work out." Well, as it happened, it was both right and wrong, because things never worked out with that person, but eventually, everything ended, and it ended in such a way that I had my book, and I completed the path, and I learned the spiritual lessons. And the I Ching told me, "It's time to leave this situation immediately." And it was very clear. It's over; get out; and I did. And there was never any residue.

So, it worked out. I mean, [in retrospect, -SG] I never—in fact, I'm only hugely relieved and pleased that it never worked out as a romance, but it worked out as a great story, and a great way to structure one's spiritual path, and one's ideas about synchronicity. And these experiences were so powerful. I read about similar things that other writers wrote about—one I remember of a guy who would find a card, a playing card [queen of hearts] - SG], in extraordinary places. You know, he would look down in a movie theater, and there would be a playing card laying next to his foot. Or he would be on a remote beach somewhere, and a playing card would appear out of nowhere. And it was always the same playing card. And that happened to him three times. And there was another book that I read that was titled something like "If It Happens Three Times in a Row Then Pay Attention."

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And, so—

MR. STIEBER: The red shoes is an interesting—

MS. GABLIK: Sorry?

MR. STIEBER: The red shoes is an interesting image. Earlier, I think it was on our—in our first session, you said that your father—

MS. GABLIK: I know.

MR. STIEBER: —had done the design for *The Red Shoes*.

MS. GABLIK: I know.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: But they are different red shoes because—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: The red shoes in the movie, *The Red Shoes* are the lethal ones that the young girl puts on, and then she cannot stop dancing—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —until she drops dead of exhaustion because she cannot get them off. Or else she has to cut off her feet or something. I cannot quite remember. And in this case, it's Dorothy's [magical -SG] red shoes that take her anywhere she wants to go.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: And are a kind of spiritual protection.

MR. STIEBER: Great. Okay. So, what I have left are just a few pick up questions. Things that I wanted to ask you about that you may have mentioned in previous sessions that we—I don't feel we really covered as significantly as we could. And then, I just have a list of names that I would like to throw at you—

MS. GABLIK: A little what?

MR. STIEBER: A list of names.

MS. GABLIK: Oh.

MR. STIEBER: So, let's start with the pick up questions. After the—your break with *Art in America* over the article on the Philippines, how would you characterize your relationship with Betsy Baker and people who wrote for *Art in America* after that?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, well, Betsy Baker stayed a friend.

MR. STIEBER: Good.

MS. GABLIK: And I saw her all the times I went to New York. We have kind of drifted apart over the years now because our lives are so unparalleled. But she always stayed a friend. I mean, I don't think it was Betsy's fault. But anyway, our friendship was separate from our professional relationship.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Good. When did your mother die?

MS. GABLIK: My mother died—let's see. She was—gosh.

MR. STIEBER: You can anchor it to an event in your life. Was it before you got together with John, or after? That sort of thing.

MS. GABLIK: No, I was definitely with John.

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And we were definitely in Cadaqués, and it definitely has another story attached to it, which is that

—Cadaqués being that summer place in Catalonia.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And suddenly, we were sitting in a cafe, and a waiter came up to me, and he said, "Do you have a mother in California?" And I thought that was pretty weird. And I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I do." And he said, "Well, I hate to tell you this, but I think she may have died." And it turned out that my—that she had—and of course, since I was estranged from her, that did not send me into spasms of grief or anything—but the story that we got from the waiter was that—or that I learned in detail, as time went on, was that my aunt, her sister, had called—just knew that I was in this town. We had no phone or anything there, and so, we were pretty hard to find. So, she knew one thing about it, which was that Salvador Dalí also had a house there. So, she called up Salvador Dalí—somehow, and said, you know, "Can you get a message to this person?" And I guess he told the waiter in the central cafe there to see if he knew us, or would be able to identify us. And—

MR. STIEBER: But he didn't know you. Or did he?

MS. GABLIK: No. Oh, Salvador Dalí?

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: No, I did meet him a couple of times out there, but he did not know me then. And—not that I particularly recall, anyway. And so—so then, I managed on somebody's phone to call my aunt in California. And she told me that I really should be there for the funeral, only because there was some discrepancy in my mother's will, and she thought that if I did not actually come and be there, that some things originally my mother meant for me to have, or subsequently meant for me to have, would not get put into the original will because there was no date on the document, or the lawyer had tricked her, or something. So, I very grudgingly decided that I would go to California, which was a huge trek from Cadaqués back to London to California.

So, it was a hardship. And John offered to come with me, and I said that would be wonderful, I would really appreciate that. Well, on the day we were supposed to leave, we had gone out for lunch, and I got a little drunk on some wine, and—on Sangria, and laid down for a nap until the taxi cab—who has a man that took us regularly back and forth from the town—was due to pick us up. [The airport was 2.5 hours away. -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: And when he—he knocked on the door and came in, and found me on my bed, and said, "I think your husband has had a fall." And sure enough, John had gone into the drugstore or the tobacco store, or whatever, newspaper store, bought a newspaper, and was reading it while walking along, and tripped off a curb and fell flat on his face—

MR. STIEBER: Oh, God.

MS. GABLIK: —and had to have stitches in his nose. So, I then had an excuse not to go.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: I said John had fallen—and it was all true. And that I had to stay here with him because he had had this injury. So, I never went.

MR. STIEBER: But your mother had moved to California at some point?

MS. GABLIK: She had moved at the bequest of my aunt, who moved her into her very fancy house. My aunt was a kind of millionaire, and not a kind of—she was a millionaire.

MR. STIEBER: She was.

MS. GABLIK: But they did not get along at all. And she eventually had to ask her to leave. She did not want to be with her anymore, and I think they got her in some sort of home. All that is murky. I'm not sure because I really was not in touch.

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever inherit the items that your aunt was worried about?

MS. GABLIK: Not the ones that she was worried about, which was my mother's jewelry. I did inherit \$80,000,.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: I mean, or would not be huge now. It was more then. But I was very grateful to have it. And there is

a story attached to that, too.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, good.

MS. GABLIK: Which is because I had had this poisoned relationship with my mother. When I got this money, smart me, decided that the money must be tainted, and that it probably would not be a good idea for me to take it because I had not really been a proper daughter to her in the same way that she had not been a proper mother to me. And I had a Jungian psychiatrist that I had gone to in all the rocky patches with John Russell, and I kept her—I mean, she became a close friend, and I also continued to use her during the time I lived in London, whenever I had any kind of crisis. And so, I went to her, and I said, you know, "I'm really confused because I feel that this is not really my money, and that it might be a bad idea, or jinxed for me to take it." And she said, "Oh, no, darling." She said, "Don't be foolish." She said, "Your mother could not give you what you needed when was living, but she has done a good thing for you when she died, and you should just accept it." And so, I did.

MR. STIEBER: Good. I thought the end of the story was that you did something foolish with it or something, so I'm glad to hear it ended well.

MS. GABLIK: I guess the foolish thing was taking it. But I had no regrets.

MR. STIEBER: Let's talk a little bit more about your Aunt Melba. You have mentioned her a couple of times, but—and you have said that you went to go visit her in California. Did she live in Los Angeles, or—

MS. GABLIK: She lived in fancier sections of L.A. [Beverly Hills -SG]

MR. STIEBER: And what kind of woman was she? What sort of things did you do together?

MS. GABLIK: Well, she liked to go out to eat, so we went to a lot of fancy, classy restaurants, and she liked to shop, and she would take me shopping, and we would argue over what I would get because we did not necessarily have the same tastes. She bought me some nice things. And there—she had this whole family. She had had two daughters, and there were a bunch of grand kids, and so, we saw those people, and some of her friends. And I had friends there, and I would see them. And sometimes—or very often—usually, actually, someone would come up and stay with me in my room because it had twin beds, and I had a friend from San Francisco. I also had a friend in Venice Beach, and so she would come, and we spent the day together, and things of that nature.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Very nice.

MS. GABLIK: And then, I usually had gigs [lectures -SG]. So, I would go and do my work schedule—

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —using her place as a—

MR. STIEBER: Crash pad?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, what I have now are just a few names to throw at you. And you can tell me a story about them, tell me how you met this person, tell me what your opinion of them is—whatever you like. And these are people that you may have mentioned earlier, or you may have mentioned in your books, or that are in your photo album, that I think may be of interest to people. Susan Sontag.

MS. GABLIK: Oh—[laughs]—well, I knew her a little bit. Mostly through Jasper Johns, who went through a phase of having some—not actual, but I think symbolic sort of love affair with her. And I did not really care for her very much. She was a little brittle, in my opinion, and she once made a pass at me, actually. [Laughs.] I was staying in Jasper's penthouse apartment after I lost my last apartment, and I think I told you, you know, I lived in people's houses and saved money—

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —to go back to Europe. And it was just mild, but it was unmistakable. But I must say that she was not my cup of tea.?

MS. GABLIK: I admire and respect her writing.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: But she had a very different—

MR. STIEBER: Susan. Susan Sontag.

MS. GABLIK: —slant on things than me. And she was super intellectual and snobby.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Eva Neurath?

MS. GABLIK: Eva Neurath?

MR. STIEBER: Neurath, okay.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, well, she was the widow of the man who I never met, who founded Thames & Hudson. And so, she was kind of the mistress of the company all those years that I was around, and became a personal friend, and was very friendly with John. And to my great chagrin, took John in after he decided that he was going to be leaving me and going off with Ms. Peggy.

MR. STIEBER: Ms. Peggy?

MS. GABLIK: Ms. Peggy. I'm trying to remember her name—[Rosamund Bernier]

MR. STIEBER: It's okay.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Barbara Rose?

MS. GABLIK: I knew her a little, from my early days of friendship with Jasper because she was around a lot. Around him, early on. I think it kind of petered out. She was married, at the time, to Frank Stella. And so, you know, we talked about how there was this swirling art scene, and everybody kind of knew everybody, if you were part of it—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —in the early days. It was small enough, and more social because people used to cook huge dinners, and have a lot of people over, and have a loft parties, and all that.

MR. STIEBER: Right. In relation to your potential job at U.C. Santa Barbara, you said they chose the two least reliable, Barbara Rose and Marcia Tuckman. What did you mean by that?

MS. GABLIK: Well, just that—the idea that Barbara Rose would want to—either of them, would want to leave their big careers—

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and their lives in New York, and just go [to live and teach in Santa Barbara -SG].

MR. STIEBER: That's what I thought you meant. I just wanted to clarify that portion.

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: I mean, they would get other commitments, or a more glamorous offer, or something, and would think nothing. They were too big to fail. They could do whatever they wanted.

MR. STIEBER: R. B. Kitaj?

MS. GABLIK: He was an artist friend of mine for a long time in London, which is where I met him. And he was very serious and intellectual, and always I had somewhat mixed views of his painting, but he was very smart, and he was a good friend of John and mine. And he got married to a really lovely woman called Sandra, who, towards the end of my time there, I guess, got sick. She was quite young still, and very beautiful, and then she died suddenly. And he was very grief stricken, and eventually left London, and went to live in L.A.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. Okay. David Hockney?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I was just thinking of David Hockney because they were very good friends. And David Hockney was around a lot. And a good friend of some other friends of mine as well, so I sometimes would see him at my

friends' at Christmas time, and things. Holidays, like that, and he was very wry and very jolly and very amiable. Everybody liked David. He was a little dour, and from the north of England, and always had these interesting young men in tow.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Okay. James Rosenquist?

MS. GABLIK: I knew him only slightly. He, too, was very nice guy, and did some interesting art, at the time, as part of the pop art scene.

MR. STIEBER: Did you meet him first when you and John were doing the pop art exhibition for the Arts Council?

MS. GABLIK: I may have run into him earlier, but I do remember that we went out to see him somewhere on Long Island. I remember being on a beach with him, walking. And—but I don't remember much else.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Claes Oldenburg?

MS. GABLIK: Kind of the same. He was in the same circles, and he was very friendly, but did not become a close personal friend. And after the pop art show, he gave me a kind of saw that was a printout that he used for one of his soft sculptures [a lifesized blue print paper cutout of an actual saw -SG], and I framed that, and had that for years. But when I got to London, it was not one of the things that I hung,.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And it sat around in a closet somewhere for years, and then I had a young friend called Bradley McCallum, who had been my student at VCU, and he helped me do a number of things. And he has helped me, over the years. He helped me move my stuff from London, New York, and so on, up to Deer Run. And I eventually gave it to him [as a thank you for his help -SG], as he was enamored of it because he does more construction things. And he sold it recently, and made, I think \$20,000, with which he renovated his studio.

MR. STIEBER: How do you spell his last name?

MS. GABLIK: M-C-C-A-L-L-U-M. McCallum, Bradley.

MR. STIEBER: And he was your student at which university?

MS. GABLIK: VCU.

MR. STIEBER: VCU. Okay. Okay. In *Has Modernism Failed*, you dedicated your book to your Aunt Melba, and to somebody named Manny.

MS. GABLIK: Her husband.

MR. STIEBER: Her husband, okay. I wondered if that was the case.

MS. GABLIK: Emmanuel J. Rice.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Okay. Joan Halifax.

MS. GABLIK: One of the really special people in my life. A gorgeous woman who I had my first real spiritual experience with, out in the desert, I guess, of Chaco Canyon. We went off through a lot of the old Native American places, and we did vision quests and things of that nature that she had learned from Native American teachers, and she knew a lot of shamans [and zen masters -SG]. And she was basically a Buddhist who ended up an ordained—I do not know whether you would call her a priest or a nun, running a Buddhist sanctuary in Santa Fe. And she is still around out there, but is kind of a retirement age now, and she—one of the things that she did for years, and maybe still continues to do, is take people to various sacred places and initiate them in different kinds of ways.

And so, I had my first real experience with her on one of these trips when we had arrived at some campsite in some place like Chaco Canyon, and we would set up camp. And everybody was very depleted from the journey and the long bus ride, and a little kind of under the weather. And Joan did a ceremony with an enormous white eagle feather and sage, and she—kind of brushed us all clean. And when she touched me with this feather, I got this kind of electrical shock through my whole body, and I just—that I had never felt before. And somehow, I responded to all this Native American kind of ritual and practices. And really, it was—and the vision quests, and it was a kind of spiritual awakening that I never had when I was younger, and was never attracted to in the—you know—

MR. STIEBER: About what time—

MS. GABLIK: —in a Jewish or Christian tradition.

MR. STIEBER: Yes. About what time was this? Again, you can just anchor it—you know, do a before and after some other event in your life of which you are sure. After you had come to Blacksburg, or before?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, no. No, no. Long before. I was living in London—

MR. STIEBER: I see.

MS. GABLIK: —and she came a couple of times, and stayed with me. I went on several trips with her. And one was to the Yucatan. So, what year would that have been? I don't know.

MS. VERNON: Eighties.

MR. STIEBER: Where—

MS. VERNON: The '80s.

MS. GABLIK: Trying to think like how I met her. Oh, okay. It was during one of the times that I was in Santa Barbara. Oh, fabulous story attached to that.

MR. STIEBER: Good. [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: There was something called the Ojai Foundation.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I know it.

MS. GABLIK: And that was in driving distance of UCSB. And so, my friend Ciel and I decided to go up there because we heard—I think it was Marilyn Ferguson who was going to be there. Or it could have been Riane Eisler. I'm not 100 percent sure. But somebody that—whose book or books we had read, and who we were interested in was going to be doing a workshop of some kind over the weekend.

And so, we decided to go up there. And we drive up the driveway into this space where this place is, and there is—the first thing you come to was the bookshop. And I had—I went into the bookshop, and ran into a book by Joan Halifax called *Shamanic Voices* [New York: Penguin Books, 1979]. And it was a book that, years ago, showing about synchronistic connections that are very far-reaching with their tentacles. I had received a phone call, when I was living in London, from a publisher, who said, "We have an author who's written this book, and the only cover she will accept is an image of yours she saw somewhere in another book." And it was a smaller collage I had made, which was like a haiku collage. It had a curled, orange snake, and it had an orange moon above the snake, and it was all against a dark blue [midnight sky -SG] background. And so, he said, "So, I'm desperately seeking your permission, and a slide or transparency for use for this cover." And I think he offered me \$150, and I said "Yes," and I said, "Please send me the book." And he sent me the book, but I had not yet developed my interest in shamanism, and I did not really even know what it was, so I just put the book away and never read it.

Well, then I arrive at the Ojai Foundation and I see this book on the bookshelf. And then—so, that was amazing to me. And then, we go up and we—the group assembles for the beginning of all the activity, and then I see this gorgeous woman dressed all in white, in a white kind of pant suit, and long, honey-colored hair. And just, I think, probably the most charismatic person I ever met. And of course, I fell instantly in love with her just because she was so gorgeous, and spoke so eloquently. And so, I then learned that she is the head of the place. At the end of the first discussion, she was standing around and a huge, long line of people assembled to greet her, and talk to her.

And I decided that I have to present myself and meet this person, and still not knowing who she was. And so, I got in the line, and I'm thinking the whole way, while I'm waiting for everyone else to get done, you know, what in the earth can I say to this woman to make an impression on her? You know, I can't just say, "Oh, I love being here," or "You seem like a wonderful person," or some kind of blah, blah, blah like that. But I just felt this need to make a connection. And I had no idea how to do it. And so, I get up to her and I introduce myself, and she introduces herself, and she says, "I'm Joan Halifax, the director of the Ojai Foundation." And I said, "Oh, my God." I said, "I'm Suzi Gablik. I designed the cover of your book." And she said, "Oh, my God!" [Laughs.] And she was just so thrilled and excited to meet me. And it was, you know, one of those electrical moments you could never set up for yourself.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. GABLIK: And we became fast friends after that.

MR. STIEBER: That's a wonderful story. What's the saying? Things work out more perfectly than we plan them? Okay. Two more names, and then we are done.

MS. GABLIK: Okay.

MR. STIEBER: Gloria Orenstein?

MS. GABLIK: Barely knew her.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. She—I'm just interested because she was one of my favorite teachers when I was in undergrad—

MS. GABLIK: Ah ha.

MR. STIEBER: —at USC.

MS. GABLIK: She was a friend of my friend Fern's.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: But I never really had a connection with her.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. You mention her in the *Reenchantment of Art*, so I thought I would ask. And then, finally, Leo Castelli. You have talked about him a good bit. But I'm just curious—you traveled with him.

MS. GABLIK: Well, not with him. I traveled one Christmas to see Jasper in the Caribbean—

MR. STIEBER: Is this Saint Thomas?

MS. GABLIK: —where he had a house. Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Yes?

MS. GABLIK: And Leo was down there, too.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And who—in the photograph that I told you about that the Archives is publishing in its snapshots book, the dancer, Tawn [ph]?

MS. GABLIK: I told you, I didn't remember his name, but then you had found it—

MR. STIEBER: I think, yes.

MS. GABLIK: —and I recognized it?

MR. STIEBER: And who was that fellow?

MS. GABLIK: He was a boyfriend of Mark Lancaster—

MR. STIEBER: Oh, okay.

MS. GABLIK: —who was previously a boyfriend of Jasper John's.

MR. STIEBER: Got it.

MS. GABLIK: And I think he danced with Merce Cunningham.

MR. STIEBER: Oh. Okay. So—okay, Suzi, you had mentioned earlier that you really appreciated the work of William Gass and Annie Dillard. Can you—

MS. GABLIK: Of who?

MR. STIEBER: Annie—of Annie Dillard and—

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: —William Gass?

MS. GABLIK: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: Can you talk a little bit more about why?

MS. GABLIK: I guess, mainly, their ability to combine stories about life and living, and a philosophy of life, together with excruciatingly beautiful writing—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —that would make me die of envy, when I would read it and figure, "These guys put me out of business."

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Okay. Frankly, that's how I feel about your writing sometimes.

MS. GABLIK: Aw.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] So, now that we have come to the end of the interview, is there anything that you want to add? What are your plans, going forward?

MS. GABLIK: Ah, Mitzi sits up on that. Just—no, I cannot speak about that rationally—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: —at this stage. It would be too deadbeat to say. You know, I want to be able to just walk around again, like a normal person.

MR. STIEBER: Sure, sure.

MS. GABLIK: And so on.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And I realize I have one of those language ticks that you mentioned before we started that some other people have that I say constantly, and so on.

MR. STIEBER: I haven't noticed.

MS. GABLIK: You haven't noticed it?

MR. STIEBER: No.

MS. GABLIK: Oh—

MR. STIEBER: It's usually more noticeable—

MS. GABLIK: —well, you will now.

MR. STIEBER: It's usually noticeable in the transcript. That is where it jumps out at you.

MS. GABLIK: Ah ha.

MR. STIEBER: Not in speaking, so—well—

MS. GABLIK: I kind of end a lot of sentences—I kind of tail off and suddenly say "And so on" because I can't think of the next piece that I wanted to say. [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: Well, that is the—that's the spoken word. It's okay.

MS. GABLIK: Tricks of the trade of becoming old.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Even the young do it. The young do it far worse.

MS. GABLIK: Or becoming old before your time.

MR. STIEBER: Well, Suzi, thank you so much.

MS. GABLIK: You are more than welcome.

MR. STIEBER: And I look forward to seeing what you do next.

MS. GABLIK: You have been an absolute sweetheart to me, in every way.

MR. STIEBER: Aw.

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MR. STIEBER: Okay, Suzi, I have been reminded that I did not ask you about Black Mountain. [Laughs.] A huge oversight on my part. So, tell me when did you attend Black Mountain?

MS. GABLIK: Black Mountain came about in my life because my parents would not send me away to college and I was extremely disappointed. And they knew that and they offered me as a consolation prize to send me somewhere for the summer; to some sort of summer school situation. And I have, of course, I was 16 at the time and I had never really been away from home at all. And I didn't know one place from another and basically, they did not either. But somehow, Black Mountain appeared in the mix.

I'm not sure how. And—oh, I think it was because there was another young woman my age who I was kind of friends with who lived in our apartment building who was going there. And so, my mother thought it would be a good idea to go with somebody. And so, that's how Black Mountain got selected because that's where she was going. And when my father checked it out, he found out that Ben Shahn was going to be there for a month and he thought that would be a good person for me to be under the wing of during that summer. And also Robert Motherwell, but I'm not sure what he thought about that.[Laughs.] [Ray Kass was looking for artists to lead his Mountain Lake workshops. -SG]

But—so off I went to Black Mountain totally green under the ear. So, knowing nothing really about life outside my parents' world and I get there it's very exotic and strange situation in place and one of the first people that I met was M.C. Richards, who never became my friend while I was there. But later, when Ray Kass was looking for people for Mountain Lake workshops, I suggested her—having met her a little bit through my friend, Paulus Berensohn, and so she came here and did workshops with Ray and stayed at my house. But at the time I met her at Black Mountain, she scared me to death.[Laughs.]

And—so I did not really get close to her then. And what happened very quickly was that my friend who I went down with had an allergic response to the whole place. I think she was out of her element entirely.

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember what her name was?

MS. GABLIK: Joy Bergman.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: And—and she decided that she—her nose blocked up and she could not breathe and she hated the place. So, she told her mother that she wanted to come home. Well, I, on the other hand, would have stayed in hell rather than go home. [Laughs.]

So, I determined that I would stick it out. I did not know what I thought of the place. I had not gotten my bearings, but I knew I wanted to be there rather than in New York at home. So, her mother came down to get her with instructions that if she found anything irregular down there, or not right that she should bring me back with her. Well, the mother of Joy Bergman did not want to have Joy at home that summer because she was busy doing her own things. I think having a love affair or something. [Laughs.]

So, she very grudgingly, and unable to persuade her daughter to stay, took her home, but she fell in love with the place. She thought it was just great. Of course, she had no idea what was there and it was very pretty and the setup was lovely. So, she left me there by myself and I was changed forever by the experience.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: I think I was saved from becoming a schizophrenic or something of that nature because I found a world that I could actually live and breathe in and people that I could relate to outside of my parents' way of life and lifestyle.

MR. STIEBER: What did you study there?

MS. GABLIK: I studied—well, supposedly I went there to paint but I never made one painting. I somehow froze up and was unable to do art. I became very interested in writing poetry. I had another one of my big crushes on the poet, Charles Olson—

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MS. GABLIK: —who was six feet seven or something. Enormous like that and I started secretly writing poems and leaving them in his mailbox. I was not officially in his writing class at that point. But he loved what I wrote

and he encouraged me and invited me to his classes at night and they would often go on until 11 or 12 o'clock. People would sit cross-legged on the floor, smoking and drinking beer.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And I was in heaven.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: And so, thus began, I guess my earliest writing—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MS. GABLIK: —at age 16 with Charles Olson.

MR. STIEBER: Did you ever maintain that relationship?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, I saw him a few times after that. In fact, once he invited me to come to Gloucester and lived with him, but that scared me to death and I did not want to do that. He was between many marriages and I guess lonely.

MR. STIEBER: But there is some evidence that he reciprocated the attraction.

MS. GABLIK: Well, he was always very nice to me and I did have some correspondence with him, but all my Black Mountain material never made it across the sea when I left for England. I had put it in storage and at some point, which is when I sold my Rauschenberg to Jasper, I guess, I ran out of money and I could not pay the storage bills and they liquidated everything. And so, I lost a number of items that would now be in the Black Mountain archive, I guess, if I had them.

MR. STIEBER: Who else did you meet there that stands out?

MS. GABLIK: Oh, I had another ridiculous unrequited love affair with someone called Merrill Gillespie who was a [composer . . . -SG] and before that, someone had an unrequited love affair with me—

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MS. GABLIK: —I don't remember his name, but he lived locally in the region and I remember one outing he took me on that was memorable to me at the time, which was to visit the house of Thomas Wolfe, who at the time was my favorite book at the time: *You Can't Go Home Again*.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you ever study with Ben Shahn as your father had hoped?

MS. GABLIK: I did, but I do not remember doing anything. I became very friendly with him though and I visited him after I returned to New York once or twice—went to New Jersey to see him. And then, Robert Motherwell was there [Black Mountain]. But I did not get friendly with Motherwell while I was there. That came later [at Hunter].

MR. STIEBER: Later at Hunter.

MS. GABLIK: When I studied with him at Hunter.

MR. STIEBER: And when did you meet Paulus Berensohn? [She gestures that she doesn't remember.] Okay.

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: You had just mentioned Paulus' connection to Black Mountain, so I was just trying to make that connection.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, actually, I do remember. He knew my work and he wrote to me and he said he was living not that far. He lives in out in—

MR. STIEBER: Asheville.

MS. GABLIK: —outside of Asheville in Penland and that if it was okay, he would like to drive up with a friend and come and visit me. So, that's how we met and don't ask me the date. [Laughs.]

MR. STIEBER: What were meals like at Black Mountain?

MS. GABLIK: [Laughs.] Well, I do not remember specifically anything about the food, but I know that they had

gardens and farming was part of the ethos. So, if you could not actually work on the land, which me at age 16 having grown up in New York City, that was way outside of my ken. You got to do kitchen duty and I think all the food was probably very fresh, good stuff because they grew a lot of it right on site and it was a very poor school, so they had only a limited budget. So, I think they were self-sufficient in a lot of ways and kitchen duty was amazing because I have one outstanding memory. It's just a picture of shaking up knives and forks in a towel. It made a frightful racket, but it was how we dried the silverware.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] And what about the living conditions? Did you—where did you stay?

MS. GABLIK: I stayed—I had my own room after Joy left and it was in a house. And the best thing was we all had our own study workrooms that were kind of in a building by the lake and that was when I adopted the name Suzi instead of Suzanne because you had to put your name on the door. And I became Suzi Gablik forever at that point.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Yes, I saw the plaque outside the door here with Suzanne. Who is Suzanne Gablik?

MS. GABLIK: Exactly.

MR. STIEBER: It doesn't make any sense.

MS. GABLIK: It's on my medical—my medical stuff.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MS. VERNON: Joseph Albers already left and gone to Yale when you went there. Is that right?

MS. GABLIK: I cannot quite hear you Mitzi, but Joseph Albers—

MS. VERNON: What had already left and gone to Yale by the time you went?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, he was a big influence on the school.

MS VERNON: Oh, yes.

MS. GABLIK: But I never met Joseph Albers.

MR. STIEBER: Did you make any lasting friends there at Black Mountain aside from Charles Olson?

MS. GABLIK: Nothing that lasted all that long. I think I occasionally saw people afterwards, but no notable long-term friendships.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MS. GABLIK: Oh, actually, wrong again [Laughs.]. It was—I did have a friendship and again, a kind of ne'er-do-well weird sort of romance on his side more than mine with Jonathan Williams.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]

MS. GABLIK: But Jonathan Williams—all that came much later. I was not friends with Jonathan at Black Mountain. He was there at the same time, but we did not interact and he was madly in love with Francine du Plessix Gray—

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh [affirmative].

MS. GABLIK: —at the time.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, well, great. Do you have anything else?

MS. GABLIK: So much for Black Mountain, right?

MS VERNON: There was something. So you talk about it being transformative—

MR. STIEBER: I want—I want to get to that in a second.

MS. GABLIK: Talk about what?

MR. STIEBER: What happened after you came back from Black Mountain?

MS. GABLIK: I was miserable. Going back home, I begged and begged on my hands and knees for my parents to

send me back there for a year, but they wouldn't.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Had you graduated high school?

MS. GABLIK: Yes, I started Hunter College and the first thing that happened was we had a massive group assembly for the beginning of school and everybody had to stand up for while very uninteresting looking old ladies kind of marched in and went up on the stage. I don't remember who they were, but we had to applaud and everything but I was back in the world of sitting on the floor in a smoke-filled room with Charles Olson. Hunter seemed so foreign to me. And so, like, why am I applauding these people? I don't even know who they are. [Laughs.]

[. . . -SG]

MR. STIEBER: Okay. I'm done. Thank you, Suzi.

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[END OF INTERVIEW]