



Smithsonian
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**Oral history interview with Sandra
Shannonhouse, 2015 July 22-23**

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Sandra Shannonhouse on July 22-23, 2015. The interview took place in Benecia, California and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's Viola Frey Oral History Project.

Sandra Shannonhouse and the Artists' Legacy Foundation 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

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Sandra Shannonhouse at the artist's studio in Benecia, California on July 22nd, 2015 for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number one.

Thank you for making time; I'm glad you could make this happen. The goal of today, I would hope, is for us to cover some of the early biographical material, discuss at least your early work, and get into some discussions about Viola Frey because as—unlike all of the—or unlike many of the interviews for the Smithsonian, this is being funded by Artists' Legacy Foundation. And so, we want to make sure that we take enough time to cover Viola, Viola's work, your relationship with her, how that might have influenced your own work, as well as your own story. Yes?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were born in Petaluma in 1947?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I grew up on a ranch.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not a working ranch—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —as Viola did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But 10 acres, nevertheless, at the end of an about-a-quarter-of-a-mile long private road. And it's a property that I own now, I bought out of my dad's estate, and spend part of my time there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Also, the ranch you talk about is the ranch that you grew up on?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Is the ranch I grew up on. And it's the ranch—so it's been in our family for more than 100 years. My great grandparents purchased it right after the 1906 earthquake, not long after, a few years after.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it—although I did everything to get out of there and go to college—I mean, I was not going to get stuck out there in that life and that farm environment and et cetera—I always loved that piece of property. I had a great childhood there, and I learned to—most importantly, I think, I learned to stand up for myself and to be a self-starter, to really not be bored and to like to be alone—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —because there weren't a lot of kids my age, especially after third grade, my friend Charlene [Hampton] moved away. And then, my friend Emily [Milden] skipped a grade, and she went on into kind of another life. And, of course, when she went to junior high and to high school ahead of me, she was a—we, later in life, reconnected, and her death a couple of years ago was a terrible blow to me, but she just was—we kept in touch every year, but—so although we were raised together as young children—very much our parents were friends, and we played together a lot—after the third grade, we saw less and less of each other because she was a grade ahead.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, which makes a difference back then.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It makes a big difference back then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then in junior high and high school, of course, in totally different circles of friends, and she to Southern California for school. And anyway, it was an important friendship. It was important to me, though, I also had a lot of time on my own.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have siblings?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I have three younger brothers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. You are the only girl and the oldest.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And your parents, what were their names, and what did they do?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Bob and Ruth Riddell.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: My dad was a welder. And the way they had met—they married in 1942, in December of 1942, so right in the middle of the war. And they—my father was in the Navy, joined the Navy, and was stationed here at Mare Island and then in Hawaii. And my mother was finally able to join him. And then after the war, they had this big—you know, they got a lot of people out of the military quickly because they didn't want everybody. And so, they came back to

Petaluma. And the first six months, I think, we lived on—six months we lived at my grandparents' place—my mother's parents' place. And then after my father's father passed away, we moved to the ranch. And they built—and we moved into the house that had been my grandmother's, and she built a little cottage on the property, which is kind of great because now I have it rented out to a wonderful woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you say it wasn't a working ranch. What kind of ranch was it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, it was 10 acres. So you can't really make a living off of 10 acres ever, but there were, when I was growing up, three chicken houses. And my mother and my grandmother—I suppose my grandmother had been raising chickens during the Depression. And my mother and my grandmother continued that. We didn't have eggs to deal with. We had baby chicks that we raised up. So they all had these big, enormous brooders. There's natural gas at the ranch to fire the brooders. Lots of people in the country don't have that capability. So we have gas cooking stoves and things, and it's really wonderful. And there is only one left of those chicken houses. And that has just been—we just had it a new roof put on, made it stable. So anyway, it's so we can use it for storage.

MIJA RIEDEL: So did you spend a lot of time outdoors as a child? Did you spend a lot of time exploring? Did you spend a lot of time with the chicks? What was your childhood like?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And we also had—we also had sheep.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And we had—we were in 4-H.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then we had—I wanted a cow. And so, I got, from Sleepy Hollow Dairy, Max Herzog was the owner of that dairy. And he would get—he would—in a way, he would set up for 4-H kids. So you would raise a young calf, and that would be your project. And then, it would get sold at auction; very often he bought them back.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, once it was bred and it was a springing heifer, then we would sell back to him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So anyway, it was a whole thing, but it was—really gave us a way to get a good cow and a good calf. And it was big part of my life. And so I did a lot of outdoor stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I had to get up in the morning, feed my animals. I took sewing in 4-H. I took electricity, which was called farm mechanics, for which I—I should have showed you at the warehouse; I made a lamp out of a manzanita tree. And it sits on a redwood burl and just kind of goes up and—anyway, I got an award for the best farm mechanics project. It's a gold tractor. Here it is.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's a gold tractor on a marble pedestal.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, we're going to pause right here at the gold tractor with the marble pedestal.

Okay, so you won an award. Here is it, Sandra Riddell Roblar?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Roblar 4-H.

MIJA RIEDEL: Roblar 4-H for the best—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, it's for the—

MIJA RIEDEL: —Best Agricultural—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —Mechanics Project 1960. The donor was Woldemar Tractor Company in Petaluma. So of course, it has a tractor on it. I made lamps. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: And how old were you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: 1960?

MIJA RIEDEL: So in your early teens?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, 13.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were extraordin—well, and you made—I assume that your father, perhaps, might have taught you something about welding, or this was just—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, you know what? I still don't weld.

MIJA RIEDEL: You still don't weld?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: My husband Art Schade welds for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't—or a have the foundry do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, if I have something done from wall to wall, they do it. No, I hate welding. I hate the smell of welding. I really don't like any of those. I don't like that stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But electricity was something else that you—you know, you grew up on a ranch and we didn't have circuit breakers and stuff. We had old fuses. And everybody had to grow up knowing some things about electricity and knowing that there were going to be times when it would go off.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there would be no water coming out of that well. So for me, it was just kind of a practical thing. And then it grew; we had a really good—what do you call it?—leader in, at least, electrical. I mean, it was a wonderful thing to know about. I can still rewire a lamp or do, like, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There are certain things that you just need to buy a good book and you can do: most plumbing, most electricity, most building; anybody can learn this stuff if you can read a book.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] And use a level.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I mean, what—you know, it helps not to be—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —reversing numbers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But even people who do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I know kids who really have learned math through learning how to build a house because they never learned it math in school.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you take art classes in—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, no, no, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: —junior high, high school?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Never.

MIJA RIEDEL: No?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was totally college prep. We didn't have time for that. I did take band, so I guess I could have taken art, but you know, art in Petaluma High, art was really for people who couldn't do anything else.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really? Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. And so, I was determined I was going to college. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Had your parents been to college?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: My mother had gone to Berkeley for a semester.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then, because of the war, had to quit, and go to work, and never

went back. She always dreamed that, you know, once we were all of school, she was going to go back to college, but she didn't. By then, she owned a business, a plant nursery and landscaping business in Petaluma. And my dad worked in it with her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that's kind of—so in high school, pretty much, I would take—early morning, I would be at school for this. So I had an extra period, so I could take band. And then, I would go to the library in Petaluma, a wonderful Carnegie library. And Mrs. Jamieson, whose son Kim I just saw at a 50th class reunion Friday night. So Kim and I would study under the watchful eye of Mrs. Jamieson. And it was great. And then after work, my dad would pick me up and I—we'd go to the ranch, and dinner was kind of preset up. I would cook dinner. And then my mom would come home later.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, so does your mom work?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: My mom had this plant nursery and landscaping business, which was —

MIJA RIEDEL: When you were a child?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: In high school, for sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Starting in junior high.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She worked, yes, in town.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it was her own business; she started it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She bought it from—she had been working there, and she bought it when those people didn't want to have anymore. It's a terribly difficult business to make money. And oh, my gosh, you know, you are at the—you know, in the '70s, we had these awful droughts just like now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And this is a terrible time for nurseries. And the business has changed a great deal. And she sold it—I can't remember what year, but anyway, it got—she had—finally, she became ill, and it was just time to get out of that, so she sold it.

MIJA RIEDEL: You said you were in band. What did you play?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I started out with my mother's clarinet, which I still have here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I wasn't really a good musician. So they would find other things because they were always like—the lead clarinetist was Barry Gordon, who was also in my class. And he was really good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So they would get me. "Oh, we need an oboist." Or, "We need a bassoonist."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or, "Okay, you want be a—go try out for being a majorette." I was a majorette. So then in the marching band—oh, no, no, before I—no, when I was a majorette, I was playing the bassoon in the concert band in the winter. But the—at one point, I played the glockenspiel in the marching band—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —you know, because I really was—I could do that pretty well, but I really was not a good musician. And I didn't—I just didn't—I don't—I—it was a great thing for me to do with people and have a lot of—my parents had both in the band. My mom had played the clarinet, and my dad the drums, and that's how they met.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So in high school, my father used to drive into town because they had this Model-A, and he would pick my mom up because he passed by her house, so they could get to band because it was early morning just kind of like when I was there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway.

MIJA RIEDEL: So what were your goals when you were in high school? You wanted to go to college. And what was your career trajectory? What were you going to study?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Chemistry.

MIJA RIEDEL: Chemistry?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I had a fabulous chemistry teacher, Mr. Keller. I still have my book *Chem Study*. It's a program developed at U.C. Berkeley by all those guys who worked on bombs and things. It was so inventive, you learned chemistry in the most fun and wonderful way. And also Mr. Giovanda, who taught geometry, physics, and then trig. And he was at this reunion Friday night, this 50th reunion. And he told me, yes, when he—he grew up in Petaluma—and when he—at his first teaching as high—as college, rather, wherever he went to college—he realized all those smart kids came from one high school. And he was determined to prepare his students. And they talked about this, the faculty, the need to prepare the Petaluma High students. We had great teachers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I will tell you I was not going to take English from my father's English teacher after she hauled me down the hall by the ear because she caught me reading James Baldwin's *Another Country*. And she said that was pornographic, and I went to the dean of women for that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I was pretty feisty. And I made a big to-do at the Board of Education and in the newspapers and everything. I was really—

MIJA RIEDEL: How old were you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was a junior in high school. I took the—went out to Sonoma State, took the tests, and got into freshman English. I didn't have to take bonehead English because we did have really good teachers. And I—[laughs]—so my senior year, I—of high school, I had the family car and I drove out to Sonoma State, which was then in what was a [. . . temporary home –SS]—it was built—it later became a supermarket—it was built to be a supermarket. So it was before the Sonoma State campus was what it is today.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was before it was really built. So I'd—you know, I don't think that I had—it was a very interesting experience and really great in sort of learning to think that the way you think about things in college becomes much different, and it clued me into that. And then my freshman year, I took—

MIJA RIEDEL: This was Davis? You decided to go to Davis?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, no, I stayed—I lived at home my freshman year—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —to save money, and I took chemistry and physics, and these teachers were so boring. I really didn't like them. And—I don't know—so I just wasn't—but when I applied to Davis—

MIJA RIEDEL: One quick question before we moved on to Davis; what year did you graduate Petaluma?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: 1965.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So Petaluma High School.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then, so then it was '65, '66 when I was living at home. And then I got married.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That's where the name Shannonhouse comes from.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I married somebody who was stationed in Two Rock Ranch station. And he was four years older than I. And in retrospect—

MIJA RIEDEL: So he was in the military, in the Navy?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, it's a Coast Guard communications station.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Army? It's a communications station in Two Rock Ranch.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, Two Rock Ranch, okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I really—anyway, in retrospect, I will say about myself, since I always put myself through college and supported myself, everybody else was getting married. All these rancher kids were getting married for the most part. Some went off to college and didn't get married. But a lot of them, there were a lot of weddings. And I was just afraid.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was a strong person, and I could do certain things, but the idea of moving away by myself, all that was really frightening to me. So this guy was going to go to college in Sacramento to law school, McGeorge School of Law, and I was—we were going to live in Sacramento, and I was going to go to Davis. And that lasted for two years.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was his name?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Bob Shannonhouse.

MIJA RIEDEL: Bob Shannonhouse. Okay. Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He was from North Carolina.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And very different, culturally. And finally, we just moved on.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I moved to Davis.

MIJA RIEDEL: Got a room. And then, somebody who was working for a [. . . –SS] congressman in Sacramento had a room she rented and just moved on.

MIJA RIEDEL: So did you go to Davis with the intent of majoring in chemistry?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, when I went to college, that's what I wanted to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: By the time I got done with my experience at Sonoma State, taking chemistry and physics, I was wondering if I was really going to do that. And when I got to Davis, it was a university. And there were so many things to take. And I was—I started taking design classes, which was in the College of Agriculture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they were just getting done with this time when it was really—home economics and this kind of stuff was really to teach the farmer's daughter how to set the table. So I'll tell you, there were trays with placemats and silverware and, you know, paper kind of bouquets, whatever you made them out of, and all kind of things and linens for setting the table. And we—there had just been this change in who was there. And we were—we who had work study because we had aid from the university—so we were getting rid of that stuff. And it was just a fascinating change in what was happening.

MIJA RIEDEL: So when you say we were getting rid of this, would—in conjunction with the professor?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, right under the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Moving that out and changing—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Under the professorships of whoever was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —you know, Katherine [Westphal] Rossbach came, and she was teaching textile design.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Helen Giambruni, who is a fabulous writer, if you don't know—and she lives in the Bay Area, and she's quite active as a writer—was teaching design—history of design. And I was really working in the slide library of the design department. And Louis Allrich, who's now an appraiser here, was working with me. And she was a year older. And she's actually the person who told me, you know, if you really don't like chemistry, you know Bob Arneson is just coming back from being on leave for a year. And you should go and take a class from him. And you should take a class from Tio Giambruni, Helen's husband who taught sculpture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there is a fabulous art department here. And I didn't know what I was getting into. But you know, she showed me these things. There had been a *Time* magazine article, I think; it was because of the show at the Museum of Modern Art that Bob was in [*Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1968].

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: We'd have to get the title of that show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so that—images were in *Time* magazine. And I thought, well, that's interesting, a typewriter or a, you know—this kind of things, you know, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: This was at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, yes?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, this was at the—

MIJA RIEDEL: New York Museum of Modern Art.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —NY MOMA, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: At any rate—

MIJA RIEDEL: Is this the one with the typewriter?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The typewriter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But the one that was in New York isn't the typewriter that's at Berkeley.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There's a second typewriter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, I did read that.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: At any rate—at any rate—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —it's a very—so I just started taking art classes. But then, I was still in design. And my actual undergraduate degree is a bachelor of science in—what do they call it?—in environmental studies or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not environmental studies. Maybe it says on here what it is.

MIJA RIEDEL: It wasn't stage design?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, no, that's later.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That's my graduate degree. It's a bachelor of science in, basically, design, but they had [changed the name to –SS] Applied Behavioral Sciences is what it had been called.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: By then, we had a dean. It just transformed itself, during that period from '65 to '69 when I graduated, into a whole different—with a whole different philosophy but in the same department. And I mean, you know, the '60s was such a huge—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —change and—culturally.

MIJA RIEDEL: So as an undergraduate, you had ceramic classes with Bob Arneson. You had design

classes. What else did you study?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I studied—I took apiculture, the study of honeybees.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I took political science with somebody who was always—one day he wrote on the board, "I quit" and—he was really, really, really—he, actually—his name was Bob Black. And he became an attorney. And I think he was the mayor of Davis for a while. I mean, he was an extraordinary man. And he really, politically, was just right on the money and very, very, very vocal. It was fabulous. I mean, there was so many interesting—you just had to look. And if you found somebody who was boring, you just get out of that class and go find something better.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But the only thing I remember—well, that was in graduate—no, it was undergraduate school. I went into a class to take an art history class. And Seymour Howard, he was so stuck on himself and egomaniacal. And every time he had something to important say, he would say it in French or German or something. And I was like, do I need this? Anyway, I stayed with it. And, you know, years later, in the '80s, we went on a tour of Greece with the Swan's Hellenic cruises. And so they did educational cruises, maybe mostly for—started for English schoolmams. And by that time, it was—everybody in the university sort of knew about it. And so, we heard about it through people, and we went. And it wasn't a fancy cruise boat. It was very small, but it was—had great lectures. And it was just incredible. It was so much fun. And we took Bob's youngest son Kirk [Arneson], and we took him out of school for two weeks in September. He was very angry with us, and he was very angry with us because he was missing baseball playoffs or something. And—[laughs]—anyway, would sit down and sulk in our cabin. But finally, he realized these lecturers were so good, he would come up and listen. But I remembered my Greek art history and Roman stuff from Seymour.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, okay, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, sometimes, you do stick it out with people because they are really good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, I took a whole year of art history. I'm telling you, when I was teaching, I could not believe there were kids who didn't know Hieronymus Bosch was. Even at Bard College, a student of Art Schade's, didn't know who Hieronymus Bosch was. I remember we went into Manhattan, and I bought him a book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You don't have to take art history? You are an art student? You have a graduate degree in art? This is shocking to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, different time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. So how did you come to, then, study in Italy for a year?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: One of the teachers who came to Davis, Ruth Horstein, the first woman to teach sculpture in the University of California system, I was recently told by her daughter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she was a pretty interesting woman, very interesting woman, and casting bronze metal like everybody else was with Tio Giambruni [ph] and then, casting aluminum. But and that was in the same space as the—the same building as the ceramic studio is in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So Ruth had taken a sabbatical and gone to Italy and taught at this [L']Academia Italiano di Costume e di Moda—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —which was above Tre Scalini in Piazza Navona. It was really a kind of a—turned out—so I—so she brought, then, the director to Davis to teach. They did kind of an exchange. And I didn't know what I was going to do. I graduated from college, and I had this degree in design. And I—so she was encouraging me to come and study costume design with her in Italy. And I did that.

MIJA RIEDEL: The year right after you graduated, right? You graduated in '69? So this was '69, '70?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right. So the summer of '69—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I didn't have any money.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or I mean, my parents didn't have any money to help me with it. So I worked at two eight-hour day jobs. I worked—I was a canning tomato inspector. And then, I could work the other hours in the costume shop because I had been working there.

MIJA RIEDEL: At Davis?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: At Davis. You know, if you can—if you—because of 4-H, I knew how to draft patterns and cut things and sew things. They didn't have to teach me how to do it, so I was real useful to them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, so I had then started seeing Robert Arneson. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Even as an undergraduate, before you left?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not when I was taking classes from him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: After that was over.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was like—I was divorced, right. Anyway, it was—I was actually so sick of these college guys I was going out with. They were so boring. Anyway—[laughs]—so it turned out that he bought a ticket to go to Europe on the same plane I was going. Did not ask me, told me. And in my mind, I am going to Europe. I am going to be there for a year. And I don't want really to have a relationship with a married man. He's married, and he has four kids. So I was a little shocked to find out, just before we left—I left that he was going to be on the plane. I mean, I didn't quite know what to do about this. But anyway, we went to England, London, and then Paris together. And then, I got on the train and went south. And he went to Brussels and flew back to New York. And by this time, he found out, went to Steve Kaltenbach's loft and he found out that his wife had moved the boys to Berkeley and—well, really, they were in Richmond, I think, up in the hills, and—anyway, wherever it was, Kensington, the kids hid, wouldn't come out of the basement and go to school. And so, she had moved them back Davis. So clearly, this was a family in turmoil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, I was in Rome for six months. I got pneumonia. I was really—the school turned out to be a school for would-be contessas [ph]. This was not me. The art history professor there at the school said, "You need to go back to California because we have nothing to offer you here."

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow, how—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: "If you are at the University of California, this is the kind of brain you have; this is really not where you want to be."

MIJA RIEDEL: Because this was—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I was having all these discussions with him about art history. And, you know, why can't we have—oh, and then, we had—we would go—the students, all the young women—we would have cappuccino on Saturday and at Tre Scalini. And then we would go up to have costume design with the director of the school, who was a lovely woman. [. . . She –SS] helped me a lot, but—so we had been—in the Saturday morning, the *Time* magazine issue with the My Lai massacre on the front came out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I went up and I designed costumes for hunting people. And she started screaming at me.

MIJA RIEDEL: You were designing—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Costumes for hunting people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So she starts screaming at me. So I kind of went, okay, you know, and what's her name?

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was the idea behind that? Just as a way to process what had happened—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I think it was just a reaction—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —to what I just read I just read—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —in *Time* magazine, which was so upsetting.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And here I am in a country where, really, in Italy in 1969, '70, you know, women were not even supposed to think about something that's ugly.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: *Que bella* was the word of the day.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And anyway, it's just—and I—

MIJA RIEDEL: You were bringing in intellectual and a more worldly approach than was being perhaps —[inaudible]—at the time.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Even though it was naïve.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I had never lived in a city before, and I would go hang out in the Catholic churches just to have peace and quiet to the point that nuns would come and ask if they could help me, you know, because it was just like a place to think. And I was living in this really wretched place with a bunch of people and turned out to be a pretty bad scene. And I—there was no heat. It was right near the Tiber [River], that old building, soaking up water. I got pneumonia.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Befriended by some American medical students, who got me into their well-heated apartment and got me some antibiotics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, when I was well enough, I came back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I actually—I came back under false pretenses because Mr. Arneson had told me he and his wife were getting a divorce. And then, when I got back here, they weren't. I needed to come back anyway. And so, I finally moved into San Francisco to—I was staying at my parents' house. And then, I moved and working at the nursery. I'm looking for a job sort of and just trying to figure it out. And Maija Zack and David Zack, she's Maija Pebbles Bright, painter, who lives in Sacramento. So her first husband and she owned a place called Rainbow House in San Francisco

in the Haight.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it was this big item, a three-or four-story Victorian, all painted rainbow colors. And they were going to Italy. And they had different floors leased out. And I could have the top and have—Adeliza McHugh could use it as a sort of gallery space with the Candy Store gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: In the city, in San Francisco?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. So this house was actually—a photograph of it was in the—fairly recent Whitney show of the '60s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was an extraordinary place to live.

MIJA RIEDEL: It must have been.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: People would throw band aid boxes full of dope through the front door of the mail slot, you know. I was like—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was it right on Haight Street proper?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, it was on [. . . 908 Steiner Street –SS]. It was kind of on one of the—it was on a hill.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I can find the address for you. I have a picture of it down here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, it'd be interesting to know.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It just was a really extraordinary place to live. And there were some—there was a filmmaker from the Art Institute, really bright guy. Strange librarian man and me. And then Adeliza would come from the Candy Store.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now how did—how had you met her?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, she would come—okay, so how did I meet Adeliza? I met Adeliza through Bob Arneson and Roy De Forest—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and through making in ceramics, I—Bob would give this class—this problem where you had learn how to make glazes just doing a scoop method, you know, and put it on the test tile. And then, you looked at the glaze and then you made a form that that glaze would work on. So my glaze turned out to be this beautiful, fondant kind of glaze. So I made these big ceramic candies. And I made a big box for them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, what kind of glaze?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It looked like fondant. You know, like See's Candy?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: How you have those beautiful-colored, pink ones—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and yellow ones. And we grew up—my great grandmother would come to the ranch from San Francisco where her sister—where my grandmother's sister lived. She lived with her in the city and they—she would come up about once a month or so and stay with my grandmother. And she was this little, tiny, Danish woman with her hair all in white curls. And, you know, on the top of the See's Candy stores, there used to be this box of See's that spun around, and it had Mrs. See's on it. Well, since she always brought us each a pound of See's Candy, we thought my great grandmother was Mrs. See's.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, so it just kind of all fell into my consciousness, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, I worked in that low-fire clay, making those things. But then after I—

MIJA RIEDEL: So even—and it would be great to talk about, so when you were in Bob Arneson's ceramic class as an undergraduate—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —were there many women in that class? Can you describe what the class was like?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, the classes were mostly women.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Always the classes were women, because, well, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: This in TB-9 [UC Davis Sculpture Building], the classes are mostly women, undergraduate?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: Graduate as well? It must have changed by then.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Graduate, there were some women. Sherry Stewart. I mean, Sherry graduated with a master of arts, not an MFA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So, oh, there was this wonderful woman who was in my class, Elvira Toriella. There was a lot of people. I mean, it was a very active scene. And then, in the summers, [David] Gilhooly would come back and Kaltenbach would come back. And the building was open 24/7.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And everybody was working all hours of the day and night. I mean, it was a real refuge for a lot of people because, you know, college can be very—I don't know. You are away from your family. And I think there is a seeking in this time of—I mean, great friendships are formed in college, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —those friendships that form around the communal thing of working in a studio like a ceramic studio and a casting studio where everybody has to work together, I think it's like being on a baseball team or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, you have to really, you know, have each other's ass. You have to back it up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You have to back each other up. And, you know, you are careful. You are—you know, mistakes can get made. People could get hurt.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So people are very—they might be having a wild and crazy time, but I think they were very protective of the space and of each other. One time, this kid came in when I was an undergraduate and stole my purse. And the kid came back a couple days later, and there was a graduate student named Mike Brod, this big guy. He's now a stockbroker in New York, I think. He—I said, "Mike, that's the kid." You know, I just—and Mike went over and grabbed him and said, "Okay, call the cops." I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, it was just a time when everybody looked out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it was before the—now they have a—you have to have a card slide to get in the door, but because the time has changed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, it's too bad. I think that's really sad.

MIJA RIEDEL: So was this an introduction to ceramics class? Could you just describe it a little bit?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I took—

MIJA RIEDEL: Because it'll be—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —it was introduction to ceramics.

MIJA RIEDEL: —wonderful to have some insight into that from your perspective.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, it was absolutely—I took two—there are two introductory classes. And one, you learn to use clay. And one, you learn to make glazes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so they follow one after the other.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so, clay, you'd learn all sorts of different techniques? Would you look at what was being made in contemporary clay? How did the class go?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: We did some of that, but we—well, we did see a lot of slides of—historical slides.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I actually—a lot of those are still here in lectures in trays. There were some we catalogued, and some we haven't gotten to, or some were from the Art History library, which was then all slides, which, of course, doesn't exist anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And even the books—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —were oft. Somebody thought to save the catalogs. [To clarify, the Art History Library was closed down –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they're trying to figure out where they're going to go if—I mean, the new Shrem Museum [Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art] being built at U.C. Davis is not going to have much room to house those things. So my opinion is, if the university wants to maintain its history up there, they better get an archive together pretty fast. There's incredible stuff. Early California. The first director of the Nelson Gallery, Price Amerson, did a fabulous job of putting things in order and keeping it together. And then, he died suddenly. And a lot of things kind of went away. Though I will say the university has put in some reasonable amount of money to have the storage for the art work upgraded, though it's not—what is it, American Museum of Art? You know, if you are having a traveling show from—it has to have certain standards for storage?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So their storage is not up to standards yet. The university, basically, has realized it has millions of dollars' worth of art stored in a tin can. I mean, they have a—they have a temperature control, but anyway, they've got to do better. So we're sort of trying to get them to do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. So in his class, were you—did you assigned projects? Were people working on whatever they were interested in?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, no, they were projects. And they were pretty open-ended projects. One project—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sculptural, high fire, low fire?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, no, it was all low fire.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: By then, it was all talc-based clay. It was very clunky clay. You learned to make glazes by scoop method.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The idea that somebody had to do a chemical equation, well, Bob Arneson] couldn't do it—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —so he didn't teach it that way, which was a great—I mean, I did know how to do that because I really loved chemistry. And I still could do that in your—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or even patinas, you know. You have to learn about positive and negative ions and stuff. And that's what makes the thing work and stick on to the—you know, the copper ion in the bronze holds the color; it bonds to it. So that's what makes a patina work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, if—they were really trying—Arneson was really trying to free up everybody from all the secret ceramic glazes and the preciousness of the pot.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So we certainly had the opportunity to throw; we had to learn to throw to a certain point. I immediately went to hand building.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there was a teapot—we had to make a teapot. And you could throw it, or you could hand build it or whatever. But it had to be based—you drew names out of a hat of artists, and I got Frank Stella, you know, so make a Frank Stella teapot. So there were always —

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There was always—and we had crits.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, so everybody brought their work in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You were expected to be there, show up. He kept a grade book, just as regular—like a high school teacher.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And, you know, you had to—and you had to keep a notebook.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And turn it in at the end. And it got graded.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sketchbooks, what was it—what's the notebook?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The notebook had—it had to have your projects in it, your thoughts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Your—other things you were thinking about. You know, you could put poetry in it or—

MIJA RIEDEL: So how—it's—did the—did the glaze class inspire the ideas for these candies and these pastries?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Absolutely. That's what it was for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The glaze.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then, and then, I absolutely hated this low-fire wet clay. So I guess it was when I came back from Italy, and I was living at Rainbow House, I went—it was downtown San Francisco. And there was an old bookstore going out of business. And I bought Katherine Mellish's cookbook [*Cookery and Domestic Management*, London: E. & F.N. Spon Ltd, 1901 –SS]. I think it was the first large-print cookbook in English, about 1880 or something. And it has these gorgeous lithographs in it of all these kinds of foods, all the deserts. So I was trying to make them. The first plate of—it's a tray of cakes or a plate of cakes in paper cases. And they're all colored, but I made them out of the low-fire white. And I just couldn't—you know, how do you—you can't get it thin enough. And you can't make the little paper case. And so, Bob brought me a bag of porcelain from Leslie ceramics. And so, I just got how to do it. I mean, I just made a little ball of clay, smash it out real thin, made the paper case. I could just do all that—get the little candy in there. And then, oh, you have to use is glaze. And we got such as gorgeous form. Just use china paint—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —on the raw porcelain. And you can get—you know, you don't have to mess it up with glaze. I just love that because I just hated those clunky glazes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I—then my work has never been about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that was kind of—I don't know. Maybe he [Arneson –SS] took the book, and he made—could only make the dinner dishes. And then, he started making more food things, American food. He thought they weren't American enough. And then, he ended up throwing them in the Bay, mostly because he thought they looked too much like [Wayne] Thiebaud. So he had a studio down here. And people still bring him pieces. They don't have any glaze on them anymore, but they'll bring back—it's obviously a chunk of a sculptural something. And they'll bring it to me. They find it off of—West E Street here. It washes up in the water.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's pretty funny—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: He would literally go and throw them in the Bay?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, so porcelain was my thing for a long time. And I stayed working in porcelain, for the most part, until—about 1980, I think, when I started working in bronze.

MIJA RIEDEL: So this was all through your graduate work. So you decided to go back and get to Davis for a Master's?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I did. So, well, there were a number of issues. You know, I was madly in love with Bob Arneson, who was married, even though we had tried to just say, this is not going to work; you have four children; this is not going to work. I'm not going to—you know, you just have to stay home and take care of your kids. Leave me alone. So I applied to school at Davis. He was going on sabbatical. So he was moving down here with his wife and the four boys. And they rented a house on West I] Street, I think, near his mother-in-law and it was really kind of a family thing. It was a great thing for his kids, I think. And it was a great thing for Bob to be here. It was not a great thing for Jeanette [Arneson]. She had grown up here, and she hated this town. And she was taking art history classes at Davis. But he had promised me he would stay out of Davis. So I applied in theater because, well, I couldn't go [. . . –SS]. I was too smart to apply in a department where Robert Arneson was teaching. That would be really stupid. And then the other part was, in the drama department—first of all, when I was an undergraduate at Davis, there was a lot of interdepartmental work between music, art, and drama.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And [William] Wiley's doing all these *Out of Our Way* things and Dan Snyder and the drama department and people in music, and there was some—[Karlheinz] Stockhausen had been there just before. And, you know, there was a big thing about new music and who was going to like new music. And then there was a huge entrenchment in the music department of really wonderful people, who were totally involved in chamber music and orchestral music and, you know, all that old stuff. And that was fine, but there were a lot of questions going on.

There was a lot of interdepartmental work. So I just felt very comfortable applying in design for theater. And I had been in Italy doing that work. And I got in, and I got a full TA. In the art department, if I'd even tried, they were splitting their TAs into eighths.

And I knew some of the [art –SS] students. And a lot of them were either working their tails off just to buy food—because, remember, tuition was pretty cheap then and materials—or other ones were on food stamps, and they came from fancy families in Beverly Hills and had a ton of money. It was so offensive. So I was like, oh, you know, I don't need all that stuff going on. So I got this great—I had a really wonderful time in the theater department. And they gave me—they had set storage in an art graduate studio. They kept one studio. And they were actually using it for storage. So Dan Snyder, who taught design for theater, got them to clean that out and give me a studio. So I had a studio where all the art students had studios. And I went to art seminars, but I never had the benefit of the crit from the full faculty like all the art students had.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I didn't really take art classes, except I took the seminars. And I took all the stuff in theater. And I had to take the theater—history of theater course and pass this oral exam or written exam to get my Master's. I remember really studying hard for that one summer.

MIJA RIEDEL: So let me just make sure I have this straight. You are getting your Master's in theater at Davis. And at the same time, this is early 1970s, you are also exhibiting ceramic work at the Candy Store.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I'm making all those things in porcelain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And those candy dishes and desserts. And she's showing them. And I kept making sculpture, but then I also would get this—

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —big budget and all these people to build my sculptures. Sets, costumes and props for, say—I did two big things. I did *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance*, which was very—well, it was John Arden, who's descended from Shakespeare, they say, anyway, was the playwright, I guess. And he later came with his Marxist, Maoist, Irish revolutionary wife to be probably a Regent's [of the University of California –SS] professor for a quarter. And I worked with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Which was difficult, because what they really wanted to do was make a film that was an expose of the Regents. And I was kind of in a difficult—I didn't really want to do that. So anyway, I got out of—I got excused from that. But then, the—I took three years to do this MFA. And the third year, I got to do the sets, costumes and props for Fernando Arrabal's *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*, wild play. And so I made the—the set was the world where the—the island where these two guys shipwrecked as the torso of the woman. But, you know, huge in the arena theater. So, you know, the breasts and the big belly and then, of course, the cave is the vagina. And there was these two actors only in the play. I mean, it was really—

MIJA RIEDEL: So is that when figuration began to enter your work, was through theater and set design?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I have never thought about it that way, but yes, absolutely, absolutely. I mean, I have always been involved—well, another thing I did in Italy, the school would hook us up with these kind of—not high fashion houses like Armani or something, but there were so many little fashion houses.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Everybody was, you know, making stuff up. But these garments were so beautifully made, you know, and so I knew about sewing because of 4-H, and I mean, I used to make all my clothes, you know, wool coats. I mean, it was crazy. But anyway, I knew about this stuff. And I couldn't believe that you could actually buy clothes that were even a way better made than anything I would go through. And I got totally in love with fashion and totally in love with shoes. Oh, my goodness.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I have read that about shoes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I would run have naked in the street if I could have any shoe I wanted.

[They laugh.]

I was like, who cares about clothes? But I did like it, but I did like the clothes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was it Italy that did it for the shoes?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Pardon?

MIJA RIEDEL: Did that love for shoes start in Italy, or was it before that?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, I think I always liked shoes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And, you know, I mean, you are growing up in a simple farm community. You know, and this stuff isn't—but I mean, I remember being in high school and sewing some pretty out-there outfits. I mean, I would get Vogue magazine and look at it and whatever was around. I mean, I would pay attention. And then, in college, *Women's Wear Daily*, you know, and that whole Jackie Kennedy stuff, oh, the stuff, you know. I mean, I still—like Viola Frey.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, you know, except I wanted to wear this stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And one of the things that my friendship with Squeak Carnwath was, I mean, we would love to go shopping together, but the last time she took me shopping, she's trying to convince me to buy some thousands of dollars' worth of, you know, an outfit. I said, I don't do that anymore. I have a daughter—[laughs]. She said, well, people don't have—we don't have children. We buy clothes.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'd like to talk a little bit about those early shows at the Candy Store because it would be wonderful to just describe what they were like, what the openings were like, who came, how Adeliza got people who were not necessarily interested in art, not only interested, but buying art. So you had shows that are—I believe, '71, '74, '75, '76. So even while you are getting your Master's, you are exhibiting actively?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes. She was phenomenal. I mean, she was a really—you know, she was this little Mormon lady who would sit up there in a rocking chair and read her Bible, a big Bible. And then you'd get there, and she would say—she would want you to sit with her. And she would talk. She was so sweet. And she would have a bouquet of flowers, and she would take it and she would just put it in front of a Roy De Forest painting and say, "Look at the depth that painting has." And she had this little Volkswagen bug. And she said, one day, "Sandy, come with me. I have to go to this collector's house." And she takes a Roy De Forest under her arm. "I'm going to go over to this woman's house"—probably in Fair Oaks or something, and she knocks on the door. I guess the woman knew we were coming. I don't know. Adeliza marches in, just goes right in past the woman, and takes off this little Wayne Thiebaud painting of ice cream cones off the wall and puts it on the floor and says, "I don't know how you can stand to look at art that's so boring. Look at this for a while." And she puts this De Forest on the wall. And we left. And I was, like, mortified, just mortified. But, you know, the woman probably kept her great Wayne Thiebaud and also bought Roy De Forest. I don't know. I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —Adeliza had these people—the postman was buying stuff; the colonel's wife of Mather Air Force Base; it was phenomenal. And she had some really loyal people. Stuff wasn't all that expensive. And I don't know how well—I mean, I have actually bought pieces back from—you know, there was a woman, and she had moved to the Midwest. And she got in touch with me, actually, through Brian Gross. And she wanted to sell this piece. And Brian decided what it would be worth, should be. And I just bought it, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. This was a piece of yours?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: A piece of mine.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: This was a piece of mine. I mean, I have also bought back pieces of Bob's that were from there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That we—to fill in in the collection.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Pieces from ex-students, woman who lives in Michigan, who I kind of have the feeling she was ill or something, or her family, the pieces that obviously—it's a whole series of beautiful little cups. And they had obviously been wrapped away. They were in pristine condition. And they got shipped out here, and I bought them, again, through Brian. Brian and—Bob's dealer is very good about telling me if something comes on the market.

MIJA RIEDEL: Brian and sorry, who?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Brian Gross.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, of course.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Brian Gross Fine Art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And George Adams.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: George Adams Gallery in New York.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So they are the two dealers—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —that I have worked with on the Arneson estate, and they have been very good about sharing with me information and telling me if stuff is coming on the market—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —or if there is something I want or if there is something auctioned. Sometimes they tell me I should get something, and I say, well, I can't—[laughs]. I can't afford that, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or I don't like, you know, or—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —or also, Brian found a—really, a funky old pot in a—one of these antique malls in San Francisco. And so, I was going down to the gallery and Kirk Arneson, Bob's youngest son, who's now helping me in the archive office here, in the Arneson Archive, and my husband Art Schade were going down to the gallery. And so, it was only a few blocks away. So I went to look at it. And I could just tell from the glaze and the clay body, as soon as I saw it in person, I put my hand in it. I could feel a throwing marks. I mean, I know—Bob didn't have big hands.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So when he threw, you know, and it had been paddled and worked on and then glocked all over with this dark glaze on the outside, but this white glaze with this clay body had all this iron in it. And the iron would bloom through. I just, well, yes, that's a Santa Rosa pot.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, that's Santa Rosa, you know—[laughs]. So I bought it, you know, and through that dealer, I got some other things, because that's a—the early years, we don't

have a lot.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And just going back briefly to Adeliza, just—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, who was there you asked me?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, with—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, well, Clayton Bailey. Everybody took their kids up there. The kids would run around outside in the garden and come in. And she had these friends who had baked this lemon Jell-O—lemon cake made with Jell-O mix or something. It was very moist cake. And it would be, you know—in the summer, it was so hot up there. And everybody had a great time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And oh, it was a real mix of people. You know, there were people who wanted to show; there were young students, but there were also her core people. And I really wasn't one of her core people. I mean, you know, it was really Bob, and Maija, and Gilhooly, and Clayton [Bailey], Jack Ogden and Irving Marcus. She didn't show Gerry Walburg or Kaltenbach I don't think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Jim Nutt?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, Jim Nutt.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Absolutely. Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Karl Wirsum, Joseph Yokum, who they get her involved with, Jim did. Yes, Jim Nutt once painted the gallery for her, the outside of it and the inside of it. Probably all the artists participated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Seems like such an extraordinary community. What is that—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, it was, but you have to understand, it was—she started in the early '60s. She'd come to Davis. She'd got—this little old woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: How old was she when you first met her in the early '60s?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I don't really know. We'd have to look up when she died, and I'd have to go back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She was over 60, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she—

MIJA RIEDEL: And the gallery had opened fairly recently? She opened it in the early '60s, do you remember?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think by the time I met her would have been 1968.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But she—or '69—but she had opened the gallery a few years before that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Maybe the mid-60s, I'm not sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I know that when Bob was on sabbatical in '67, '68, I believe, in the East Coast, and he was living with his family in Doylestown and had a loft with Kaltenbach in Manhattan. And he would commute in a few days a week to do that, and they were back home. I know that he said she was sending him—she was the only gallery he could rely on to send him money every month and that's what he had for art materials, \$100 a month.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she would—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it continued. But that continued even—you never had to ask Adeliza for money.

MIJA RIEDEL: She just was regularly selling and regularly paying you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Regularly paying you. Regularly selling, for sure, and regularly paying you. And she would send these little 3x5 cards, you know, very cryptic, you know, like love letters from Mom—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —you know. And Bob treated her like Mom. I mean, Mother's Day, he made sure Adeliza got a box of candy, too. I mean, he was really—they were all devoted to her, very devoted to her. She was just a phenomenon. And when she closed that gallery, the last show, I think, was the show that Bob had, which was the *Death of Pollock* or something. I don't know, Pollock—it was a Pollock show and it had the dead Pollock head and Bob's son Lief [Arneson] did the poster for it, but it was just—it was—it ended up being sad because we didn't realize Adeliza was closing the gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, oh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, she moved to Palo Alto. And I visited her a few times in her apartment.

MIJA RIEDEL: She really focused on artists from Davis and from Sacramento; is that accurate?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I mean, she also showed Luis Cruz Azaceta and did very well with his work. And he had come from—

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SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think he was living in Florida at the time. And he taught—he showed at Allan Frumkin. And through that, we had met him. And Davis had these positions where they would invite people out. So any faculty member could suggest someone. And they always tried to get somebody from out of the area, not always, but—because I think [Robert] Bechtel came up and taught on that in that way and some other—but Luis Azaceta, before he had moved to New Orleans, I believe it was, came up and taught. And oh, Don Nice taught out there and Robert Mallory before I was there. There were a lot of people. John Coplans actually taught there once, but it wasn't on that program. It was called Regents Lecture or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: It just seems extraordinary that she was able to sell the amount of work that she was out of a little space in Folsom [California].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was really great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Shall we pause this for a minute?

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: When you were with Adeliza, was it strictly the candies and the cups and that sort of thing that you were showing? Did you begin to show any of the figurative work there at all?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I did. I showed some of those hanging forms that were kind of pre—they were very abstracted, figurative things. They related more to the interior parts of the body. Let's see, there is one at the di Rosa [Foundation] Preserve; I think it's called *Galen*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —Figure. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: What was the catalyst for that change in focus?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Before—just before we moved from Davis, I was really getting more linear. So that would have been 1974, '75. And I was doing these hearts. I was trying to get out of this object thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: This—well, I just—it just didn't do it for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: You were done.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it was all around me. I—you know, I was—really, it was all around me. And a lot of it I didn't like at all. And so I was just—I was drawing a lot. And I was using telephone wire to make linear—to make lines.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And to tie little pieces of porcelain on, so I could make these pieces be in space more. And when we came down here—

MIJA RIEDEL: Because you married Bob in '72, yes?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: '72 or '3, I don't know. You know.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think '72.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay? We can fix that if we need to. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That was in May.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, right, after we moved in with the kids, six months later, because I wouldn't get married to him before, because I wasn't sure I could do it, be the mother in the household of four kids.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was extraordinary. How old were the kids?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Kirk was just turning eight. Derek, I think, was—I don't know—11, 12, and Leif was 14 or something like that. I mean, it was very, very hard on Leif.

MIJA RIEDEL: I imagine. It's a hard age.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I'm not—we have a difficult relationship.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. That's a hard age.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, he has a great family, but Kirk and Derek live here in town. And Kreg, and Kreg's out here sweeping my yard right now for me. And his son's 24th birthday is today. So and Derek lives here in his—the Arneson grandparents' house where Bob was born.

MIJA RIEDEL: There's such an Arneson presence in Benicia; it's extraordinary.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, we just went to a birthday party up in Middletown out in the country, this gorgeous old place. And one of Bob's cousins is 93, and one is 94. And they've talked on the phone every day; they talk on the phone every single day. And when he went off to school, he missed his sister so much that, here in Benicia, the teacher told him to bring his sister to school.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh, my gosh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He's a great guy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Howard Arneson is a—he owns a fast speed boat. He's into speed a lot. I mean, big, fast boats. And he still drives it, but I think it's like getting a little more difficult.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. So you were beginning to show these hanging figures at Adeliza's gallery?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was. I was really—I found this book by the—of reprints of the Andreas Versalius [*De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, 1543 –SS]. Oh, they were probably etchings where they were, you know, in those pre-Renaissance and—they're exhuming—they're—is that the right word, exhuming?—corpses and dissecting them. They didn't really know about the human body. I mean, like [my sculpture –SS], *Galen* figure is about—they had very much confusion about the parts of the male and the female and how they were different or how they were the same, and they got things conflated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, you know, I was just—I just found—I also started stitching cloth forms and coating them with porcelain slip to make these interior parts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I got—so you can't stuff them up too hard—too—like, too firmly stuffed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or, of course, the porcelain will—

MIJA RIEDEL: Will crack.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —shrink enough and crack.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you just have to get it right. And then it would mix some nylon fibers in with it sometimes and—to make it stick together better, but I didn't like that so much. It's just a slip. So I was just experimenting with different ways of doing that. And out of that grew—I started making whole, hanging—I started making hanging figures that had more recognizable parts, like hats—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and then maybe lung, liver, spleen kind of things, and then a leg. And then they would hang from the ceiling. And then there would be, like, shoes on the floor. So those were the hatted figures.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Then I would make these hats and develop a personality, grandmother figure, or a Bella, which was for Bella Abzug, who I just thought was incredible. And—although the cowboy boots, I just wondered, too, was it possible that—[they referenced –SS]—Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] You also started to teach right around this time. And it would be great to talk—maybe we can transition now into teaching at CCAC [California College of Arts and Crats, now California College of the Arts—CCA], I think, in '79, maybe, you started there, started in '79 maybe?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, well, I had done—when I got out of college at Davis, I taught in the drama department as a visitor.

MIJA RIEDEL: At Davis.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: For a quarter, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think I taught one class.

MIJA RIEDEL: Set design or costume?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Just design, basic design for theater.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then I got a job at American River College. There was a really great guy teaching up there, Mr. Kaneko. And he told me that I needed to come to the interview in stockings and a dress because the dean was a Mormon. And be sure the dress covered my knees and my arms were covered. And I thought, oh, my gosh, what am I getting into? Because I am going to teach ceramics. I'm certainly not going to be wearing a dress and stockings. But anyway, I did it, and I got the job. So for a couple of years, I taught from noon to 9:00 p.m.

MIJA RIEDEL: Two days a week?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Two days a week.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it was a—it was a pretty good drive from Davis and then coming back at night. And I would be so tired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But we knew we wanted to move to Benicia. We wanted to move, and finally, we had bought this property, and I—so all my money went into renovating that house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that was fabulous. I really felt like I was doing something that, you know—then when I—after I was living here, Viola asked me to teach, but this was really—this was not anything I applied for. This was a summer school.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And these weren't regular classes. These were kind of community art classes. So you would have some serious art students, some older people coming back to just take ceramics, and high school kids could take. So it was really a mixed-bag class. And that's, actually, how I met Squeak.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So Squeak was the technician.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So—and that was great. That was just a wonderful—I mean, we were wonderful friends. That was a great thing to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: From the start. How did you meet Viola?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, I just think we met her—I met her going to openings because she—we would go to the Wenger Gallery. Hank Baum, I remember those shows, not really well and not—I remember more of the Hank Baum show because I think she had some big figures in there. And that was a knockout. And then, she would come to school, and she and Squeak and I would go out to lunch. One little story. We're sitting down on College Avenue one day, and, you know, she wasn't real talkative.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. This I've gathered.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But she would—something would happen and it—so she said, "Oh, look at that black and white Dalmatian running in front of that checker cab," or that yellow cab.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Whatever it was. It was not checker, but it was like she just saw these things, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or she would just get very excited if something excited her visually.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then, she was well into all this Claude Levi-Strauss stuff and Fiske—Charles Fiske was feeding her all this information. And she was processing it. He was great, but, I mean, I was a little frightened of him because he was a little out there for me, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: These are all things we definitely want to go into great depth on, but just—let's—we'll take this one at a time, but many people have commented on her visual sensibility and just—I—is there more that you can say about that? Because many people, Garth Clark, Patterson Sims, many different people I have talked to—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Really?

MIJA RIEDEL: —and read about, have just said that her way of seeing would help them see something new and something they'd been looking at for a long time. And that she just had an amazing visual ability. And that she might not say much, but the one thing she would say would change the way they saw things.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, absolutely. I mean—I don't have—I don't know if I could say—I mean, you know, she was a fierce woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she was some kind of a feminist. I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —well, not—I mean, she didn't talk about feminism, but I remember she came over here one time, and the washing machine was going. First of all, she wanted to bring lunch from Oakland. And I said "No, Viola, I'll take care of it." Said, "oh, you're not cooking lunch." I said, "no, I don't cook lunch. I have a—installed a café next door and I'll just get takeout. Don't worry about it." And she was coming up with Garth and, I think, Art Nelson. And we sat here and had a pretty good conversation, which I taped, and I have a transcript of, but when I read it this week, I mean, Viola hardly says anything in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But what she did do was come marching into my house. And in my house, kind of in the middle of the house—it's a little, old one-and-a-half Cape Cod that we turned into a salt box to make it livable, but there is some bi-fold doors. And behind it, there is the washing machine. So the washing machine was going. And she could hear that. So she opens the door. The washing machine stops. She opens the lid. She picks out an item of clothing, says, "You can't do the laundry."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: "You can't do the laundry. Get rid of the laundry." And I read about that somewhere; she had gotten—Charles had and she had gotten rid of the laundry machine—no, the washer and dryer, so she wouldn't be distracted by it. Well, in fact, at that time, I remember saying, "Viola, those are men's shorts, and I only do my own laundry."

So actually, when I moved into the house with Arneson, I tried to do the laundry the first week. This is December of whatever year that was. And the boys got to the table. They were just furious at dinner because all their socks were mixed up. You know, they all had white athletic socks with the stripe around the top. And I tried to get them all by size. But that's—you know, these kids were so close together in age, that wasn't entirely successful. So they were really upset I had messed up all the socks. And they were just really ragging on me at the dinner table. And Bob Arneson said, "Okay, I get it. Sandy gets it. She's probably very sorry, and I apologized for all this." And then, he said, "Tomorrow, I'll take care of this, and it won't ever happen again." And went down to Davis Lumber, and he bought them all their own laundry basket and one for himself. And they all started doing their own laundry. I never did anybody's laundry again.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So Viola was very gratified about all that, you know. She thought I was cooking entirely too much. I had entirely too much of a kitchen going in there. But you know, I actually like to cook dinner. And I think, when you have a family, and I entered into this, you know, with wide open eyes, I knew what it was like to cook dinner for my family in Petaluma: my three brothers, my mother and father. And it really wasn't hard for me. And, you know, there are tradeoffs in life. And I didn't feel like—to me, it's important to sit down and eat dinner every night. And I like eating dinner with people. And if it's a family, I like eating dinner with my family. Or, you know, whatever.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, this is not a penalty to me, but Viola, I mean, one of the ways she got so much work done—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —was—incredible what she did—was to just keep all that stuff out of her life, period.

MIJA RIEDEL: So she was trying to protect you and your commitment to your work by saying, "Get rid of the washing machine, no cooking," yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And in some ways, she's right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And in other ways, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I have here a book—I was looking for this. I think this is the *Portrait of an Artist* biography of Georgia O'Keeffe that I read by Laurie Lisle. Anyway, a long time ago. And it says something in there about, you know, you do all the things you do every day to tend the garden and make bread and whatever and do the shopping, and you also paint.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I—you know, that's kind of more—but I certainly, you know, Judy Chicago lived here in town, too. And she was—oh, she was something to have to dinner.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have her to dinner?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, she lived right across the street.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: In the back of that building right across from the café.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And, oh, yes, we were—attempted a friendship. And we did things together. I never joined up with *The Dinner Party*, which she was building here. I never went to all those women's meetings. I never did any of that. That was a big turmoil in town. Lots and lots of changes in people's lives, but she would come over here for dinner. We went there. Once in a while, she would make her famous layered salad. But more, she would come here. And she ate really fast. She—food was not really that important to her. And then she would demand a coffee. "Okay, I want coffee." And so Kirk Arneson, one day, he pounds on the table, and he says, "Dad makes coffee when Sandy's done eating." It was like, enough already. And another day, we got—she and Bob and I got in—mostly I got really angry with her at a Santa Fe Bar and Grill in Berkeley. Bob took his dinner and went to the bar.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Unbeknownst to either Judy or to me—I didn't know who these

people were—right behind her was sitting a table of her collectors from LA. And she basically—she shushed me. She asked me about—I don't know—my children or the children—the boys or the laundry soap or something like that. And then, when I started to enter into the conversation she was having with Bob, obviously, about art, it—so I have kind of had a range of opportunities to be around all kinds of feminists. And one of my big beefs is people who are rude in the world. And I mean, I know a bunch of women in New York. They don't pay their assistants well. They treat their partners like crap. I don't have time for that. I just—that's not the way I do things, and I don't think you have to do that to be a successful artist. But I think, in some ways, you know, they probably, for them, they do, just like for Viola. She did have to do that. And look what she got done.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's phenomenal.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Well, just, she had a single focus and very little got in the way of that.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she worked hard to—she got it all cut out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She just snipped it all away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes, once she identified anything that was interfering with that, off it went.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: You talked about Charles Fiske. Did you meet him?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes. He was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He was around CCAC a lot, and I met him then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: CCA.

MIJA RIEDEL: ALF [The Artists' Legacy Foundation] would love any detail that you can supply about that.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I know, but, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: As many memories as you can pull up.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I'm going to tell you, you are going to have to talk to Squeak Carnwath about her because—him. My details about Charles are so minimal. Even Viola, I mean, I didn't know them nearly as well as Squeak, but Charles, I just found him a frightening person.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why so?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He was sort of off and wild. And he would get his eyes screwed up

and these—and get really excited and go blathering on and on and on.

MIJA RIEDEL: About—was it about architecture? Was it about art?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Whatever it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But it was always about art or architecture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or Viola's work or philosophy that he was espousing or trying to get Frey into. And I mean, he was really great telling Frey's got to make it bigger, bigger, bigger.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: What did he look like?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, he was this—fairly tall, but a little bit stooped over by the time I—very thin man. I think it had some kind of injuries from the war. I don't know. I don't know a lot about him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you observe—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And smoking all the time, smoking. No wonder he died of emphysema. He was smoking, smoking, smoking.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you observe the two of them interacting?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I was at their house a couple of times. I remember one time when he was really, really, really going on about Levi-Strauss, about Dubuffet.

MIJA RIEDEL: In relation to Viola's work or—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, totally Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, he was her great champion.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And he thought—I think he saw his role in life as supporting her and being sure she became the artist she became.

MIJA RIEDEL: How fantastic.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I think it was totally extraordinary. You know, I had great support from Robert Arneson to do my work. I had great support from—I have had great support from Art Schade. You know, a real belief in me and in doing my work and a, really, willingness to take

their own share of the other parts of life. But this was different. You know, Charles was just—it was a single-minded thing. They became like one body to move—or one mind or something to move her along. And it's phenomenal. It's a really unique thing. I have never seen that, I don't think. I mean, I don't know if they're—I know there are women who have been totally devoted to their husband artists, probably other partnerships as well. And somebody's devoted to helping that person, you know, but this was maniacal.

MIJA RIEDEL: How so?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, he was just crazy. You know, he—I mean, I don't think—I mean, I don't know that he was crazy, crazy, but I don't even know if he wasn't or was. He was wild. And he would get wild-eyed. And sometimes, you couldn't follow. You just nodded because you were not going to get in the way of that, but he knew where he was going.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or maybe he didn't, but it—maybe it was more like one of Viola's bricolage pieces where everything just builds up together into one thing, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I'm not—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, people talk about—I don't know if you want to talk about this, but her work or her influences.

MIJA RIEDEL: Go for it.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, there are people who talk about Viola's work, Dubuffet and all this stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But you know, I have had this book for a very long time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Which is this book, *the Surrealists*?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Look at this. This is called *the Surrealists*. Look at this de Chirico. Talk about bricolage. Look at this figure by Carra on this little square thing, very stout. No face.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes, you are right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think there was a real surrealist bent to Viola's work that nobody's ever really explored or talked about. Yes, de Chirico's, not the—you know, metaphysical interior. But this one, *The Painter's Family*, I just really see Viola in this.

MIJA RIEDEL: The density, the back and forth between figuration and abstraction, maybe not so much—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Totally.

MIJA RIEDEL: —the color sense.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not the color. Not the color.

MIJA RIEDEL: But certainly, there is a bricolage sensibility, sure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. I just—I don't know. You know, I mean, you can look to other people, even Max Ernst for some of those surfaces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure. Did she ever talk to you about the surrealists in her work in terms of surrealism?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't believe so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, I don't believe I have ever heard anybody talk about it. I think it's just something that I—I mean, I look at a lot of art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I wonder, too—I mean, certainly, I think about Robert Arneson's work with surrealistic influence. And there is certainly, I think, a lot of dialogue that could—a lot of dialogue between Viola's work and his work that many people could see many different ways. And I wonder if that's one reason why you make that connection that, perhaps, other people haven't.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't know. Viola—

MIJA RIEDEL: But that is a very interesting point, that that really hasn't been explored in depth.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Clay kind of lends itself—doesn't it—to a—well, it lends itself to bricolage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Certainly.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it lends itself to some surreal things just naturally just because of the way you can shape it, and you can draw in space with it and put it together and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Take it apart—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —add and subtract.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And now, with fiber and with all kinds of different clay, you can—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, now there is all kind of—

MIJA RIEDEL: —make it do it all kinds of things—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —that you couldn't do it before. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. Bob had great, great, great respect for Viola. And he was so happy when she got her due. And I mean, it was really—oh, he went to her house to that garden party she had. We went to that, and he turned—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was the house in Oakland in the garden where all the figures were outside?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And he turned to Richard Shaw, this big, awful cigar. And he turns to Richard Shaw and says, "Richard, you think we're getting enough work done?"

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's a great story. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That was really crazy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did Viola talk about Levi-Strauss in relation to her work with you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, she did. But all that stuff, I just—I don't even—I don't know. Yes, she talked about it a lot.

MIJA RIEDEL: And—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: All the time, but I just don't pay any attention to it because, to me—I don't know. I—yes, they're right. Okay, you got it, but I didn't need to keep hearing that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I just kind of, okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think this is something she felt profoundly, or do you think this was the result of a dialogue with Charles?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, I think she totally internalized it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She could practically quote those pages.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know? I mean, she read it so much, I think, really, she would just be quoting. You would go get the book, and then you go, oh, my gosh. You know, I like this. I like Rackstraw Downes. *Nature and Art Are Physical [Writings on Art, 1967-2008]*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: *Writings on Art, 1967-2008*; this man is a brilliant guy. Some of the philosophers, all that stuff, structuralism and all that, I'm not interested. I mean, I'm sure it's important, and it's some—it's important for people to read, and it's important to somebody, but I find

it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Not your influences and not the way you think about it.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not interesting for me to read.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is it something that—and is it—but it's nothing—is it something that Viola talked about from her own work, structuralism?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She talked about this stuff. I mean, Charles talked about it. She talked about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's interesting, too, that the first thing you said when you mentioned Charles talking about Viola and pushing her work was the word "scale."

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, he told her, "You have to make it bigger."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she was determined. And, you know, Viola would do this thing. She was really—well, first of all, let me say, I'm not sure she didn't realize the surrealist influences because Viola—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —knew when to keep her mouth shut. She really knew—

MIJA RIEDEL: And she—mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —when to keep her mouth shut. And she knew that—I have wondered about that. Did she just keep quiet about that? Because—or maybe Squeak will know more about that. I really don't know.

MIJA RIEDEL: She was so well read.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: What was your question?

MIJA RIEDEL: Everybody talks about her being so well read.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, her library was extraordinary, extraordinary.

MIJA RIEDEL: But we were talking about scale, is what we were talking about. And then we veered a little bit—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —to structuralism, but—or surrealism, but the idea that Charles had really encouraged her to go larger.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, right. Well, the other—the thing—other thing she did is she would change the dates on things. So she had made it first and do it with glee. "No, I have to beat them. I have to make it before he did."

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes. Oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did she tell you that?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She—yes. She would say, "Oh, guess what I did today?" Or she would just do it, yes. So sometimes we are not sure about the dates of things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, she had a mission. She was going to be—you know, she did it in nicer ways than some people have done stuff—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean—[laughs]—I—she did it with glee and cunning, but she was never mean.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, she could be tough on you when she was—she could be tough on you, but she wouldn't—you know, she wouldn't really—

MIJA RIEDEL: There wasn't a meanness to it. She was just—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: —pushing you to improve?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I'm sure—I would imagine that there are graduate students that cried. I know Bob made graduate students cry.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I know one of them passed out. But oh yes. There was a lot that went on. I mean, you know, when the entire faculty would go in, and the Davis faculty, you know, you got to think how different that was. I mean, Dan Shapiro and William Wiley and Ralph Johnson and Wayne Thiebaud, and Bob Arneson, and Ruth Horstein, and I don't know—whatever other visitors were there and Roland Petersen. And they were all kind of, in their own way, trying to outdo each other.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, the poor kids, I mean, it was great. It was great for them. Look at the students that came out of it. You know, even the ones who don't make art, I think it changed how they—now, I think it changed how they thought.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, and isn't that what college about?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Let's get that brain turned on.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: What first drew you to Viola's work? What did you find interesting about it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I didn't like it. No, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: You are in good company—[laughs].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No. I did not like it. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: And what didn't you like?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I just didn't like the clunkiness of it. And I didn't like all those thick glazes. It took me a long time to understand what she was doing and to get on with it, you know, to really—I mean, to really love it, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: I have heard that from so many people.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —to understand. And I just did not like it. And she didn't make anything too easy—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —to like. So no, to really—and then when she started making those figures, even the early—

MIJA RIEDEL: The large figures?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —grandmother figures.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: They were, like—the first ones, you know—did you ever see the *National Geographic* woman?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, so then that became—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't know. I mean, I love that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I saw a piece in Philadelphia. There is a woman named Helen Drutt.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, sure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She owns a wonderful piece of Viola's, and it's up there in her—above her office on Rittenhouse Square. It's in among all these hanging cactus things, orchid cactus, whatever it is, or cereus, I don't know what they are. Anyway, I love that piece now. I only saw it a couple years ago. We were—ALF had a meeting in Philadelphia, and I went to visit her. And that was great. And I got to see that piece, and I loved it, but I remembered it. And it was—I just hated it. So, you know, your whole sensibility about things changes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And, you know, art should bother people. And if it bothered me in the beginning, I should have been smart enough then to realize maybe there is something here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But you know, you have to grow with it, and you have to be ready to see it. And I mean, now, I find some of her bricolage pieces even more interesting than some of the bigger figures.

MIJA RIEDEL: I have heard that from Garth Clark in particular.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I like the big figures. I understand what she was doing, but the complexity and the relationships made or, like, the plates you used to—[see –SS]—at Nancy Hoffman; oh, my gosh, those are so fabulous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But also the paintings and drawings. I mean, what—they are extraordinary. And people don't know them.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, certainly not like they know the large figures.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, they are really, really, really extraordinary.

MIJA RIEDEL: What do you find compelling about them in particular?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, there is always an exit somehow, and there is a dark space. So you have all this stuff going on, but then there is this kind of—like the guy going out the door.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There's some kind of a dark thing. And so they're very disturbing in a way. She gets all that bricolage kind of stuff happening and the shifting of scale.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But then there is this out-there place that's dark and this exit.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I find that quite remarkable. I actually would like to see more. You know, I mean, I know there is a lot that I haven't seen.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it's pretty phenomenal stuff, what she did. And I think her work influenced me as she started to develop these figures, and I realized I wasn't going to do the full figure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it allowed me to really develop this more—that and working in non-ceramic material and bronze, especially. Environmental spaces so that—not making—I'm not making environmental art. I mean, it's not like that, but I mean that the—instead of actually having the figure, even the little dancing figures, the exuberant female nude always related to a vessel somehow. So instead of having the figure be there, making a sort of a space that one figure could somehow enter into or be part of, or you could just see this. So you could see it as an object, but it was large enough that it would—like the big—like *Southwood Swish* is this big pink dress. And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There's—

MIJA RIEDEL: We'll pause just for a second.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Okay.

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: All right, we were talking about the pink dress.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So *Southwood Swish*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —is this big piece I made in New York when we were living there. I spent a lot of time there from 1996 when I came back from Paris until two years ago, which would have been 2013 when we sold that property. My husband sold that property. So it was 26 acres in near Tivoli [New York]. The mailing address was Tivoli. It was actually in Germantown, just into Columbia County out of Dutchess County, going up the Hudson. Gorgeous place with, you know, fabulous house Art built and a three-acre pond, like a couple of football fields end to end, ringed with 60-year old willow trees, and wood ducks, and all kinds of things migrating through. And, oh, it was incredible, and 4,500-square-foot studio and a foundry, our own foundry. So most of—we would—the casting there was in aluminum. And Art worked with Tio Giambuni at UC Davis. So he worked on casting aluminum and then doing kind of a lost styrofoam casting, as opposed to lost wax casting.

So you don't use any molds. And you use heat tools to shape the styrofoam. And Art further developed that from what happened at Davis because he's the master at teaching it through working at University of Wisconsin, and then moving east and worked at SVA [School of Visual Arts]

in New York City] for a long time, taught at Cooper, Bard College. Anyway, here in the studio, the pieces you see, the foam pieces are meant to be sprued and gated, packed in sand, and then you pour the metal in, and the foam vaporizes just like a coffee cup would, and you have a piece of cast aluminum. So it allows you to work very—to keep very involved in the process of casting, and it's more like drawing in space, but making it in a material that's going to survive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So *Southwood Swish* is just this big dress blowing in the wind. The skirt kind of blows out, and there is a bouquet of roses and a big bow that blows out of it. It's not as abstract as something like *Rosemary Place*, which is more of a solid skirt form that's transformed from rosemary bushes, really, that were growing in my yard that had to be taken out, which had about—I don't know—four-inch diameter trunks, I guess. I mean, it was a big bush.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then using that as the top to make a kind of a waist form and coming down with the branches and then manipulating those branches and tying them up and waxing them, so that they became a different kind of form that wasn't—so transforming the organic form to make a particular line in space. And that piece was cast in bronze, so that was sent to Walla Walla foundry because, when you cast in bronze, and you are using materials like wood and wax that have to be burned out in a—in investment casting or in shell casting or—just a lot of rigmarole involved that, you know, it's not going to get done in my studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, it's too—plus, if you want to open [pour –SS] for a bronze, then you have a crucible of bronze, it weighs 300 pounds, but it only weighs 100 pounds in aluminum. So, [with aluminum –SS] I could be the other person without a lot of equipment. And we did have a crane there, but you know, it's much more fun to just do the—you are just open pouring, and you have a pit of sand, and then just wait till it cools, and you can get it out, and you can, you know, make other parts to go with it, and then weld everything together. And I never did any welding. I don't—I hate welding. Art tried to teach me to weld, and I know he could teach anybody to weld, but I don't want to weld.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] This—we were just talking about *Southwood Swish* and then about the *Rosemary Place*. And when we were looking at them in your studio, we were talking about sense of space, and you just mentioned this. And I thought that ties in nicely again with Viola because there is, in those pieces and in her work, this sense of the entering into the space of the piece, which is—doesn't happen in all of your pieces, but in some of them, to be sure, and certainly in some of her figurative works, where you are pulled into, you are drawn into, you are thrust into. But there is a way of participating with the work and interacting with it because of the spatial relationship that is set up with the viewer. Is that something that you ever discussed with her? Is that something you noticed about her work?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, I don't think that we ever talked about it. We didn't talk much—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —about those kind of things.

MIJA RIEDEL: What did you talk about?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Not much. We didn't talk much.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you talk about teaching? Okay. So when you were—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I didn't talk—we didn't talk about teaching much. She came in. She would look at what I was doing. I did a project she liked, where I had everybody do—they had to make a figure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they could make it out of however they—and so, somebody threw all these forms and made this gorgeous figure. You know, and I mean, people—you know, but again, it was such a range of people in that kind of class, that summer class, that there was a range of work.

MIJA RIEDEL: So—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And she would come in and look at what—

MIJA RIEDEL: You taught there for a few summers, '79, '80, '81, something like that?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think—I don't know if I taught two or three summers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I didn't love teaching. It took a lot away from me. It was the one thing I couldn't—I had to make a decision if I was going to be—okay, well, here, you have to have to understand this. Robert Arneson was ill as soon as we—or before we moved here, he was diagnosed with cancer. And so, by the time we were here, I mean, he got a phenomenal amount of work done.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it wasn't like he was an ill person all the time. But he would have problems. And I would get a call, and I would have to run to the hospital.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you really can't be teaching in Oakland. And he really couldn't—he did a little bit of traveling on his own, but a couple times, it was really difficult. And I might have to get on the plane and go there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: He was diagnosed in '74, I believe, and then he did pass away in '92.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was he healthy for the vast majority of that time or—and there were just periods

of time where you'd have to really be aware?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, he had bladder cancer, which probably came from the aniline dyes he was exposed to as an artist. And he did a lot of things with his hands, but it was a very low-grade kind of cancer. And it—for the first 10 years, so for '72 to '82, he was in the hospital every three months for them to look in his bladder and pluck out these little cauliflower-like things that grow, and then be sure it wasn't growing into the muscle of the bladder. And so, you know, it—other problems developed from that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Infections and those were the things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And, you know, kidney stones, I mean, we are standing in line at San Francisco Airport to get on a flight down to New Orleans, where he was going to do a visiting thing, and he just started shaking. I mean, we were in line to get on the plane. And I pulled him out of line, and I told somebody there, a stewardess or whoever was taking—I mean, I—you know, this man is sick, and we're not going anywhere right now. Something's going on.

And I remember I went to a phone. I got his doctor, said, he has a kidney stone. Bring him up here right away. This doctor at Kaiser in Vallejo was an extraordinary human being and very available. And so it was—he kept him alive for ages. I mean, and the only reason he got to that doctor is, when he had moved here, he didn't have a doctor, and he hadn't decided what Kaiser he was going to. And so he had an emergency, and the nearest place was Vallejo. I took him to Vallejo and that was and that was the guy on call. We just lucked out—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —because he was such an extraordinary doctor.

MIJA RIEDEL: Great.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Retired now, but really a great person. And anyway, over the years, other complications evolved.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And you know, he had things removed. And actually, we thought it was fine. And I—so then, I had this—we had this daughter. And then when she was 5, he got really sick because then it developed in his kidney. And then that metastasized to his liver.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So on the—you know, it says he died of liver cancer, but he didn't. He really died from—I mean, that's just—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —where the—you know, metastasized in his liver.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He was in—I mean, you know, the week before he died, he had been in Walla Walla before he went into hospice, before he went on, you know, morphine finishing his work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And coming out here to the studio and breaking up anything that he didn't think was—should be left around.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was really pretty—and telling me, "And next week, you move all my work to the warehouse, and you get right to work." And, actually, that's what I did. It saved my sanity in a way. It was very difficult. There was some things that had to get done here, of course. But anyway, and then—and then, months later, the lawyer comes to me and says, "You know, you have to do the inventory for the IRS."

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That was difficult because that is such a different way of using your brain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes—[laughs]—oh, my gosh.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And that means, you know, getting a photographer in here. This is before—you know, now you can just take snapshot digitals. That's enough for the IRS, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Anyway, it was a giant pain in the neck—and—but it's really good that we did it because Bob was very good about keeping track of anything he sent out of the studio. So he always kept good gallery records.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Yes, and should be—well, you can go into this in more detail tomorrow, too, but you have an extraordinary database, both—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —old hard copy and then, this new digital—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —version is extraordinary.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But I mean, that's been evolved over time. But this is just—for me as an artist, oh, I was—I became quite an angry person. I wasn't very nice to people who were helping me. I mean, Pat [Patricia] Thomas, I was not very nice to her. She was really—she was such a sweet—she is such a sweet person. She went on to work for Viola. But she really—she just was great. I mean, when Bob died, she and Scott were so helpful and helping me at the warehouse and Scott arranging things and Pat talking to Scott [Atthone] about what needed to be done, and then figuring out how it could get it done. And then, you know, well, can she pay for it? Does she want to trade art for it or—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, and it was, like, really quite—oh, it was phenomenal. I mean, they were great. And maybe in a way, later, I just had to kind of move on and have different relationships. I don't know. Somebody else came to work here. Pat went to work for Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you know how—roughly how many pieces are in the inventory? Well, you probably know exactly now, but do you know then?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Nuh-uh [negative.] We didn't know when we started.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How many are there?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, we're not supposed to tell you that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay—[laughs].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I have made comments about it and been told, you shouldn't be saying these things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Well, we'll talk about whatever later—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, how many pieces Bob made in his lifetime?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Way, way, way less than Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] All right. Let's go get back to Viola and some of these questions.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And he worked all the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. So what can you say about your husband—your late husband's response to Viola's work, and did it change over the years? Has your response to her work changed over the years?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, we just talked about how I really didn't like it initially.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. And clearly, you do now.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think he was more—

MIJA RIEDEL: But just to back, you—I know that you—sounds like you are more engaged with the bricolage pieces now than the figures and even more engaged, perhaps, with the 2D work. Has that been a consistent evolution over time, or has that switched back and forth?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I wasn't really that—I was aware of the 2D work. I remember seeing all these drawings in her dining room in Oakland and the house in Oakland, but no, I just think that, when I got on the board of Artists' Legacy Foundation, when I was asked to do that, I had

to become more aware of the breadth of her work. And I think that it's—I have become much more of a fan by becoming more aware of it, of the breadth of it. When you see show exhibitions, you see this or that, or you see a catalog, Asher Faure Gallery and Rena Bransten Gallery did a great catalog—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —of the big monumental figures together, and you know, when you look at that, I mean, you see these pieces, and they are all over the place. You realize how many pieces you didn't see.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: These pieces went out. You didn't see them. And I wasn't—my daughter was born in '86. Bob Arneson died in '92. So I mean, I was really involved in raising this young child, and Bob and I with another couple had bought a property here in town in Benicia and made a K through 3 ungraded classroom. You know, and I'm on—owning that building and—with this other couple, but then bought them out and running, you know, the—not—well, we had a great—we had a teacher. We were determined to pay her what she would have been paid in the public school system here and benefits. We were not going to be a private school paying the teacher nothing. So—[laughs]—anyway, that whole thing. That—it was great that we did it. And it took a lot out of me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there was a great guy who actually is a—in town on the board and his daughter was going to school there. And after Bob died, he came over to talk to me. And he's a banker and more. And anyway, he came over to talk to me, and he said, "Sandy, we know who's paying for all this stuff, Bob Arneson; you just can't keep doing this. We need to make plans to close the school and how to close it in the right way so that all our children can go on." So we got them all into school in Walnut Creek and, you know, but—so the point of all this is I was not—and why they didn't go to school—Benicia has plenty good schools, but, you know, parents get crazy about their kids' education. Really, I mean, Benicia has very good schools. And I just wasn't around Viola very much. And even Squeak—I mean, Squeak started teaching at Davis. She was driving up and back from Oakland. She was working in her studio. She had a very different relationship then as a professor, a colleague of Robert Arneson's. She would come over here, and our friendship had changed quite a bit at that point because she had talked to him about school stuff, and I would get a little irritated. So it was just not—it wasn't the same. And I wasn't around Viola at all, you know, in the end of her life.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I really was not part of all that. You know, I mean, I saw her—I remember going to, I think her last opening in her lifetime at Rena's [Bransten].

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, we'll pause. This is a good time to end this.

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is MIJA RIEDEL with Sandra Shannonhouse at her studio in Benicia, California on July 22, 2015 for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, card number two. Where were we? Let's see. All right. So we were talking about how your thoughts about Viola's work have evolved

over time. Maybe we were ready to move on to what Robert Arneson's thoughts about her work were.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, he just was so blown away by her work and loved it and all of it—[laughs]—and was so amazed. You know, one thing about Viola, she didn't drive until—I can't remember what year she finally—when she got mugged, then she went out and learned to drive and bought a truck because she was walking to school in Oakland.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was daylight, right? She was mugged at gunpoint, if I remember.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, middle of the day; it was ridiculous. So you know, there were years when, I mean, if she had been—wanted to come teach at Davis, but she couldn't drive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, Bob would like ruminate about this. "Viola, can't"—you know, "What are we going to?" Anyway—

MIJA RIEDEL: So he would have been interested in having her to come teach there?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, he always took time off—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and she could have gotten more from the university than she was getting from CCA at a certain point, I can tell you that, even as a visitor. Sabbatical replacement or something. But anyway, she had her truck; she probably would not want to take the time to drive anyway. She—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That sounds right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She—he would never pass up an opportunity to see a work of hers. And always—we went to San Francisco a lot, or New York, but actually, I remember going to the Whitney show she had. It's very interesting in the article that Beth [Elizabeth] Coffelt wrote in *California Living* about the Six Ceramic Sculpture show at the Whitney [*Ceramic Sculpture: Six Artists*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1981]? There's something—Viola's mentioned in here.

MIJA RIEDEL: What year was this?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that was 1982, and when was her show at the Whitney, that Patterson [curated –SS]?

MIJA RIEDEL: '84.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, so you see, the thing is this show was developed, six ceramic sculptors working in California, and Patterson realized that this woman had been neglected.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And he gave her a show. That was extraordinary. And Beth Coffelt writes about that in here. She was a great writer, Beth. Oh, what a sad loss. She was just the funniest, smartest woman, crazy writing. I mean, brings in things and, boy, did she know her Bible.

She grew up in Michigan, and the Bible was part of her upbringing, and it was a work of literature. And she could do these references, and you would just be rolling on the floor. But she talks about Viola somewhere in here. And then after that came the show that Patterson did, and that was great. That was really great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you see that show?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And what was your take on it? You loved it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes, it was great. Yes, I mean and it was so—un-New York and un-Whitney. I mean, hip hip hooray.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I know he was really proud of that show. I have read that he—and that it was difficult for him to do that show, and he felt like there were a lot of people that didn't understand that work and that it was not New-York-centric which was all the reason that he wanted to do it.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, yes—it was a great thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: I know that Garth was frustrated with it because he thought it was too crowded, that there wasn't enough space, but I think that was part of the power that Patterson was going for.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, you know the Whitney has these—he also couldn't have probably gotten a big gallery from the curators. You know, they have to—they divvy all the stuff up. You know, even Viola's show at the—the *Bigger, Better, More [The Art of Viola Frey]* show when it was in New York at the Museum of Art and Design—that's just such a bad space for looking at big work. And then they have to put ropes around it, tie it off so nobody can get near it because all the things—and one of our board members, Steve Oliver, was explaining to us that it's the design of the building with that elevator in the middle and then all this stuff you have to have and the safety stuff, that's why those galleries are so constricted—

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —because they have all that crap right in the middle of it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —so you don't get that great space. I mean, I just saw Richard Estes's show there, and that was a wonderful painting show, and it looked great there. I was very happy to see it. I mean, I thought, well, are we going to finally have—it just all came together: the installation and the work and the—you know, it was amazing.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think that—were you—certainly knew her at a—during a very pivotal time in her work, from the Crocker show in '80 or '81 to that Whitney show in '84; she was really emerging. Her—everything was really changing.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes. Yes, yes, and she was—she was delighted in it, you know? I mean, it was really—she knew she was getting her due, and she loved it, and she had every right to love it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. It seems there was such a parallel between her and Robert Arneson's work: the

irreverence, the modularity, the—well—the sense of humor, of course the figuration. It seems like, in many ways, they were almost two sides of the same coin. Did they—did they have that sensibility? That might be too close.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I can't even really talk about them. I think the modularity has to do with working in clay—

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and your kiln is only a certain size, so you have got to figure out how to—how you are going to do this. And the material is also, you know—I mean, when Bob started making these big heads that are on the floor, I mean, he and George—his assistant George Grant—and I went up the street to lunch one day, and we came back, and one of these big heads just collapsed. So, he was, like, furious. I mean, he had worked on this art, and he just thought he was beyond that kind of thing happening. [Laughs.] I mean, that was pretty late in his career. You know? But clay gets too wet, whatever. And he would, you know—Bob has a baseball bat over there and big sticks and two by fours, and he would take them and beat on pieces. So you can only do that so much. But Viola had all those lifts. I mean, we had lifts, here but not like she had. Not like you could put a wheelchair on and take you up to [the top of –SS] the room and make art.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, that was extraordinary, especially there towards the end. Did Viola visit your studio? Did you visit her studio? Was there any back and forth?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: We didn't really do studio visits, and I never went to the studio—her studio on Adeline Street. I mean, I have been in the storage space as a member of the Board, but I have never been to—I was never there. Just my life, by then, was so completely involved with my family here, my daughter, stuff going on. I just didn't—I mean, I really—we did go to see a lot of art, and we would take Tenaya [Arneson] or we had via Au Pair, an au pair in America for the first five years of her life, I guess. [Au Pair in America was a legal program so the au pairs were on J1 cultural exchange visas; their hours were restricted; they had to take classes, etc –SS]. And so that was pretty good. I mean, that really—and that's why we had an au pair so that the art life could go on. I mean, the au pair had great freedom. All of them took classes at the junior college. They had a vehicle to drive. They had friends, you know? It was like a—it was actually great. One of them is coming this summer with her teenage daughters and her husband—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so we were talking about Robert Arneson's response to Viola's work.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't really have much more to say about that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —you know, I mean, he loved her use of glaze. He loved her use of color.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. [Inaudible.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: He loved those forms. He loved those figures. He just thought anything she did was just the cat's meow. He just loved it. And he was a very supportive, just delighted for her success. I mean, really. Bob was generally supportive of artists. There was very little he just turned a cold shoulder to. But he really delighted in her success.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was there anything about Viola as a woman or a woman artist that affected you or

your relationship with her? We talked about feminism in passing.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I mean—well, we talked about how much work she got done and how she was able to snip out all those other parts of her life. And I'm either unwilling or unable to do that. I mean, I really enjoy this dinner hour thing—[laughs]. I enjoy like a—

MIJA RIEDEL: When you and Squeak and she went to lunch, what did you talk about?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, we would talk about fashion; we would talk about art. But I don't remember specifics. You know, we would talk about—we would gossip about people. You know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Did she talk to you about teaching?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, no. We had this little—the joke was always, "Oh, the Whitney called me today," which was a total joke, but, you know if we were having lunch either she or Squeak or I would show up and say, "The Whitney called today." You know? It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: This was before they actually called?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes, this was like a nod to being off the art chart all together—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right. So how terrific when they did actually finally call?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes. It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great that that was a joke, though, among the three of you.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes, yes. It was a joke.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Still a joke. I think that, you know, being a woman artist, obviously, there are strikes against you. I mean, that's documented and less so today, but nevertheless, it's there, and everybody has to acknowledge that. And then working in clay—so you are already working in the material. I mean, whatever kind of lip service *the New York Times* is now giving to it. I mean, some of the things—I can't even remember who just gave it—wrote the review. No, New Yorkers would not talk about it like this, but I'm going to because they will never say anything against a New York critic because they are afraid they will get blacklisted or something. But anyway, somebody wrote the Andrew Lord show—recent show—it was up in May. "You don't"—"Contemporary ceramics doesn't get better than this." And you know? I know plenty of good New York artists who are going around—people of all stripes, well-known and not well-known—saying, what was he talking about? What was that critic thinking? You know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Who was the critic, and where was the show? Do you recall?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Andrew Lord. I don't know where his show was right now. He shows at a gallery—a well-known gallery in New York, one of those Chelsea galleries. L-O-R-D, Andrew Lord. And I can't remember, but it was in *the New York Times*, that, "Contemporary ceramics doesn't get better than this." And people were just—I couldn't wait to see; I thought, oh my gosh, you know? What am I going to see? Oh, give me a break. Give me a break. They are going on and on and on about this gold—when something breaks, you know how the Japanese potters would use gold, real

gold inlay?

MIJA RIEDEL: That *wabi sabi* sensibility.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, so, I mean, you know, or now you take epoxy, and you put gold in it and glop it all over everything. Well, that's basically what—I mean, I was just, like, so disappointed. But to have the range of artists looking at it being disappointed was pretty interesting as well. And, you know, there are people doing marvelous things in clay. Annabeth Rosen up at UC Davis; Arlene Schechet works in—well, she has a show right now; it's at Sikkema Jenkins and also at the Boston Museum [of Fine Art]. You know, there is some good stuff being done. And there are other people, too. Oh, what's her name? Well I'll think of it. Anyway—actually, Annabeth curated a show at that gallery that Max Protetch became the last, very short time of younger people. Or not—yes, I guess they were mostly—but people working in clay in a different way. Sally Saul has been doing some wonderful stuff. And New York artists are buying her work; that's very interesting. Yes, S-A-U-L, Sally. Yes, she's a great; she's great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have any personal knowledge about Viola's relationships with other Bay Area artists?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, frankly, I don't think Viola had relationships with other artists unless they were working for her. Squeak would have been, probably, the closest person, I think, because, well, they were both in Oakland, pretty proximate to each other, and they developed that relationship when Squeak came to school there. And in the end, I know Squeak did a lot of looking after of things and helping and making sure—she wasn't the only one, she and Gary, I mean also Trish. I don't know; there were other people. Black Moon, her housekeeper—people really—that core group really came together to be sure she was cared for and protected because obviously—and Sam, I mean, my goodness, Sam Perry. But I don't believe—I mean, you might turn up something, but I don't think she really had big relationships with other artists. Squeak would probably be the one. I mean, maybe the gallery people would know, but I don't—I mean, we would all go to her openings, you know? Richard Shaw you would see and, you know, people, especially—people really honored her and at the end when they knew it was—she was getting into tough shape. And most of us didn't even really know what—all the things that have happened and were kind of unaware of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: When did you first become aware of it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I knew she had had a stroke, and I knew she had fallen in Oakland, and then Squeak had—they had gotten her, finally, down to a neurologist in Redwood City at a point and—but that she really had cancer that was active, I don't think I really did know that until quite towards the end. No, I just don't think I was—I was too involved. You know, I just wasn't there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Can you—what do you remember about the CCA or CCACs that was then that ceramic studio? Were the—what was the facility like?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, it's a pretty new place. It was a pretty new building, especially—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, but back then. Back then.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, that was the new building. It was the new building. But it just had

so many wheels and little cubicles in it. I couldn't see how anybody could make a sculpture there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And maybe that's been changed now. But, you know, it came really out of a pottery sensibility. And that was fine for a certain time, and then it's gone on. So I haven't been in the building for a long time, so I don't know, but when I got there, I was just like—it was so different from TB-9 in Davis. It was so, I thought, uptight, and there were still—there were big tubs of glaze, tenmoku glaze and this glaze and that glaze, and I thought, "Oh my gosh, what are we—Squeak's making all these glazes, and all the stuff's being—I mean, what are they doing this for, you know?" I couldn't—it was just so different, the way that studio was set up.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was run more like a traditional pottery studio, you think?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: More like a pottery studio, I think. I mean, it was really, to me—

MIJA RIEDEL: Surprising that Viola hadn't changed that as well because, certainly, her work wasn't like that back then.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, tradition at an institution like CCA is pretty hard to change. I'm sure Arthur Gonzalez and whoever teaches down there now has changed it. I'm sure they have, but I mean, again, I haven't been there. I don't know. Maybe it's all still little cubicles and pottery wheels. I mean, I have nothing against the wheel; it's just that you have to have space to breathe in. If somebody doesn't want to work on a wheel, let's get that thing out of there.

MIJA RIEDEL: So how did you teach when you were there?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I gave—I mean—one summer, I gave this—you know, I gave this big project, and I had little projects, but this big project was to make a figure any way you wanted to make it out of clay and any size, whatever works for you. You know, because—and so everybody—because you had to develop projects that this range of people could participate in, you know? I can't—and people would say, "I can't do the figure. I can't draw the figure." I said, "Listen, I can't draw the figure either, so you know, however you can do it, you do it. And see what you do, you know? Look at yourself. Or look at that person. And then however it comes out, it's going to be yours, and you have to learn to trust your hand and your eye, and only through continued making are you going to get anywhere. So this is a place to start. Next class, somebody else teaching, you don't have to do that. You'll do something else." I was like, "This is it. Don't tell me you can't."

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did it go?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, it was great. No, they had a good time—I think they had a good time. I think it was one of the best projects, actually, I did ever teaching. And, you know, teaching design, when you have to teach about, you know, color and Johannes Itten and all that stuff, you know, this stuff is a little bit boring. And I mean, it's important to understand about color and how it works and all that stuff, but that was great fun, you know? That was really great because you could just—again, you could just meet every student where they were and it was such a range of ages from high school through, you know, 60 years old. And, you know, serious artists and people who were good: you know, a teacher taking a class, summer class, just to get their units in in order to [. . . make more money –SS], whatever; it didn't matter.

MIJA RIEDEL: You just worked with it all?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: But very different than—yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But that was—that was—if I hadn't been wanting to do that, I couldn't have done it. That was—Viola made it very clear what it was and she was very up for it. But I still wanted to do it. I can afford to take the time off. I can afford not to teach this summer.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she wanted to work?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, so great. So, you know, but I—for me, teaching—I mean, there are people—I think I might have said this before. I mean, Bob Arneson, Art Schade, fabulous teachers. But they worked at it, and they developed the skill over a long period of time, and I just didn't. You know, it's like working in the theatre. I just didn't want to work for other people. Maybe it's like I had enough theater in the house, you know? I had all this—four boys, and then I had all kinds of other things going on, and then when I got here—one of the things that happened about Benicia is—you are in Davis, everybody is a politician, right? There's all kinds of people who are involved with politics in Davis, and they all are very serious about it. And we moved down here, and this is Bob Arneson's hometown. He was born here. And we started reading the local paper and figuring out that there is a company called South Hampton building all those houses up there. No provisions for a school; no provisions for any city facilities; nothing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Infrastructure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, infrastructure, parks, nothing. And you know who owns—one of the principles in the South Hampton Company, the guy who was here running it, was Bill Turnbull who was married to Paule Anglim at the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then his partner, one of the big money people was George Saxe of George and Dorothy Saxe. So I knew all these people, in a way, and then a very funny story. George, bless him—I mean, I really loved him, and there—Dorothy's wonderful. I mean, they're great supporters. But it's a very funny story. We were—Modesto Lanzone had a restaurant in Ghirardelli Square, and the entire art department had had a meeting, and they were driving to San Francisco to have dinner at his restaurant. And I think it was because—I can't exactly remember why—but anyway, I'm standing outside the dining room waiting for other people to arrive because I hadn't been in Davis, I mean, I—so I went from here and this guy strikes up a conversation with me. "Oh, you live in Benicia. I have some property in Benicia. There's this horrible woman there." And he goes on to describe me—[laughs]. It was—it was actually amazing—[laughs]—and I did not realize he was an art collector. But anyway, I finally just—I could not—I didn't know what to do at first. And I went, "I'm Sandra Shannonhouse, and I'm that woman. I'm really pleased to meet you, but I really think you should do better in Benicia."

MIJA RIEDEL: That's an extraordinary story.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was something amazing. So you know, we—

MIJA RIEDEL: Did he do better?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, kicking and screaming, things changed in Benicia. You know, we got new mayors, finally, got rid of the—I mean, Bob was instrumental. Right here, on a hot July

afternoon, we raised \$10,000 to keep a councilman in office having an art auction. No, we didn't do it here; we did that one at the Episcopal—the Church of the—the hall of the Episcopal Church up here, St. Paul's. We kept this guy in office and South Hampton Company put up \$60,000 to get him out of office.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Now, the guy was not a great politician, but his heart was in the right place, and his mind was in the right place in terms of what was right and wrong and how the town had to be protected. Then, later we had an auction here in the studio, and a friend of mine who was an actor came up from L.A., been a student with me in the drama department at Davis. So Sal [Viscuso] came, and he was the auctioneer, and we got Marilyn O'Rourke elected mayor. It was to raise money for her. And she is who got the library built, and also when she came into office found out that the city fathers, years before, being in bad straights—the city was in bad financial trouble because the arsenal had moved. You can't have a nuclear arsenal in the middle of Bay Area, you know? So all that place down there where all the artists are working in the industrial park, that was the arsenal. It moved, and military had gone away, and the town was practically boarded up. I mean, even buildings right here. And so, the city fathers had sold away our rights to [Lake] Berryessa water in order to keep the books balanced here.

And so we were about to have, like, terribly expensive water. So she had to negotiate, get all the Solano County mayors together to get that worked out. But our water—we get water now out of the—oh, somewhere, the Delta something—anyways, muddy tasting, I don't drink it. But it's treated, but it's muddy tasting to me. Then there was this business of an unlicensed, unmonitored toxic waste dump leaking into the Carquinez Straits. The state geologist—the state committee—what was his name? A great senator came here and had a hearing in our city hall. The state geologist testified that if you drilled a well on a 10-foot grid, the top of the hill where that toxic waste dump is down to the Carquinez Straits, the soil here is so fractious, you couldn't be sure to catch everything. They've got beryllium barrels up there; you know, that will kill you and all your progeny for 100 million years. So it—we had this auction, and everybody participated, you know? At that time, I mean Wiley gave something, you know? And a lot of people came. It was a great success, and Marilyn got elected mayor. So we were involved in this way, and this took up major chunks of time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Well, it's interesting. I know the—you know, it seems like the work certainly had a political bent to it—sometimes an increasingly political bent—but it's interesting to hear that it often was used to support local political action, too.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, on Bob's behalf?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Absolutely. No, he was very involved here. When he sold the George Moscone sculpture, the sculpture of George Moscone, to Foster Goldstrom he took—he sold it—I can't remember the numbers. But anyway, he had gotten a certain contact from the city of San Francisco, so he kept that money and then we had some expenses related to all the brouhaha and Mayor Feinstein. And so he kept that money, and the rest of it he split. He gave a grant to the San Francisco Education Fund and one to the Benicia Education Fund, equal amounts to buy art materials for elementary school students.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, when we moved here, the budget for the male—the boy's football team was so extraordinarily out of balance to the rest of the school budget.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's changed?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That's changed. I mean, that's changed a lot. But, you know, Bob had played football here, and none of these coaches—his old coaches were still alive. None of these people expected him to speak out on the side of, you know, education, academics, the library, the books, the teachers. I mean, sports was king, so it was pretty interesting. But we always—he said, "It doesn't matter that this person or that person had a business that is on the other side of the fence from us. You still go to that business, and you still smile, and you still say hello, and you treat them with respect."

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So he never boycotted anybody in town. I think we were boycotted in whatever way they possibly could. When we built this studio, we got a parking bill six months after we broke ground with a legal building permit from the then city manager who was an old football buddy of his. I can't remember, \$25 or \$30,000 or something for parking we didn't provide onsite. So, included in our thing—our building permit was this—that we would pay for one car. I can't—you know, honestly, I can't remember what the thing was. But then the building department didn't have a way to collect it. So I remember we had to sign something, or Bob had to say, "You know, tell us when to pay for it," you know?

So the building inspector said, "Well, when they tell me how to do it, we'll send you a bill." So then when the bill—when the city manager sends us this bill, Rena Bransten happened to be in the studio at that time talking to Bob. And she said—I came in here, and I was in tears because we didn't have this kind of money lying around. We were trying to do this. And we thought we had the budget all worked out. And so I was just in tears, and I gave it to Bob, and he was just—and Rena said, "Well, what is this?" You know? And so she says, "Well, call my friend Billy." William Coblentz. So it was like hiring a lion to go after a mouse here or something. Anyway, he wrote all the proper letters, and I can't remember if he had to show up here once; maybe he did. And laughed about it, you know? But, so this—the then mayor—before Marilyn O'Rourke—the mayor then got up, and he said, "Okay, just like the fishmonger, Mr. Arneson should have to pay on the gross square footage of his building, not just on the front, which could be a retail sales space. And we're not—so—and there is no research and development space allowed in this area," which is what the city building inspector had said; "Okay, this is research and development back here." So we had to pay a certain amount of money. I don't know whether it was \$2,000 or \$6,000 or whatever it was.

So, they got it down to something like \$2,000 we had to pay into the parking bank because only—the only person who drove to work was Bob's assistant. And we are not going to allow you to sell out of that front office space anything you make in the back. Now, this was a property-tax-poor—I mean, a sales-tax-poor town in a sales-tax-poor county, kind of at the height of Bob's career. Are we crazy here? So we said, "Whatever." Well, eventually, the city has recanted on all of that and given me back the money I put into the parking bank and, crazy.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it's interesting to have this long a relationship with such a small city and to have been so influential and so influenced by the policies over time, over decades now.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, well, I have been here since '75, and I never thought I would stay here that long, or '76 when we moved here. You know, we thought, well, when this town gets picked

up, you know, gentrified, we will be able to afford to move somewhere else. But you know, things change, and you have this great studio and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Tons of space.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —heat and light, you know? I mean, I'm very comfortable here. I have a small house, but you know, if I can't afford a housekeeper, I can run in there and vacuum it in three hours top to bottom, and I'm an allergic person, so I can't have a lot of dust around. I mean, I just want a place I can manage. I don't want to have a lot of—you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, the studio got to be much bigger than the house.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, yes, it is—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: At least twice.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes,

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you remember anything about Viola's memorial service at CCAC in 2004?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I remember Nancy was so lovely when she talked, Nancy Hoffman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, she is lovely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I remember—I remember sitting down next to, oh, great people in Kansas City, and he's since died—Eileen and Byron Cohen who were great friends and collectors. You know, people came, and it was just—we were outside. It was quite wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Does anything stick out? Anything that anybody said? Were there a lot of people there? Were there a lot of former students? A lot of collectors? Any sense?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I'm not really good about remembering those things, sorry.

MIJA RIEDEL: No worries.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I just remember sitting next to Byron and Eileen [Cohen] and being so amazed that they had come out of Kansas City and knowing that his health wasn't—I mean, it wasn't great for a long time. But, anyway.

MIJA RIEDEL: So how did you get involved with Artists' Legacy Foundation?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, that's really interesting. I mean, I—Squeak had said to me something once about doing a foundation. I said, "Oh, that's crazy. You can't do a foundation." This is after Bob had died. I said, "You can't do a foundation. That costs way a lot of money and, you know—you know, you have got to have a million bucks to do a foundation or something." I think that's what I actually said to her. So, anyway, she and Gary and Viola—well, she and Gary cooked this up, and then Viola wanted to be part of it. And so they had this lawyer in San Francisco who does that and, you know, and then Viola—and so they established the foundation, but it wasn't funded; it was just kind of in a bay waiting to be funded. Well, then when Viola died—so I guess they must have had a board. I don't know when the first board was—I don't know. Then they established the board because I know some of the people who were on it. But the problem—there was a problem, and it wasn't anybody's fault. Everybody was well meaning and very intelligent, involved in

it. But the way you do an inventory for an artist's estate and the way you do it for a gallery are very, very different.

MIJA RIEDEL: Can you say something about that? Explain it a little?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, galleries want to sell work, and they have certain ways they categorize things, and an estate, especially a charitable foundation, has quite other responsibilities. And since Viola left her dealer's daughter as the executor of her estate, she—

MIJA RIEDEL: Trish Bransten?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Trish, who is a wonderful and intelligent person, I mean, really smart as the day is long. But I don't think she understood all of the ramifications of what a charitable foundation was versus a family trust or a gallery. And this caused a lot of problems for everybody, unfortunately. People got angry and left the board, yadda yadda. I mean, it just was a mess. So—

MIJA RIEDEL: Does that have to do with the evaluation of the artwork and funds due? Do you recall what the problem was?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, I think it was that—I think it was actually the way work was categorized, the way things were dealt with. You know, you have to really get the nuts and bolts of that from somebody else because I wasn't involved. But I know there was a lot of problems, and I hope that they have been bridged. I hope that everybody can kind of go on and understand where these problems came from because I think that's where they were. I think it was really just not being—everybody not understanding the same thing and having different goals and different concerns and different legal concerns. So, people got—left the board who were originally on it, and Squeak knew that I had been doing this for Bob Arneson from the get go.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, we should say that yours is not a foundation; yours is a trust and an archive?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's a family trust and the archive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Two separate?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, we have set it up as separate things, the Arneson Archive, because the family trust is—the beneficiaries are the beneficiaries as established by Bob, and so you have a fiduciary responsibility to that entity, but then you also have built, over time, this archive, which is very different. And so, there is the work, the body of work, and there is the archive. And you know, we would expect that, at some point in time, somebody who really is professionally involved in archives would be able to meet our standards and take over. But, in the interim, we do it here. We maintain it. And I think even a family trust changes over time in some ways. Work is sold, or markets change, whatever. So, you know, there is always thinking and rethinking. But when you have a charitable foundation, you have some real specific legal responsibilities. You know, you can't—you have problems about self-dealing, you know, like the offices in Squeak and Gary's building, they can't charge rent for that office because they're on the board, founders, you know? There's something about we can't buy work of Viola's at auction. I can't remember what that whole sticky thing is about.

You know, if I want to buy a Bob Arneson that's at auction and I have the funds, I buy it. You know, I bid on it. Somebody else can bid on it. There's no law against that. But there are things that a foundation cannot do. And then—and then I want to tell you, these foundations cost a lot of money to run. I mean, a full-time foundation director gets more than \$100,000 a year. And there is a lot to

do. And then if there is board meetings and people are—you know, you have a board that's all over the United States or whatever, I mean, you have to pay for them to go to—you can't always have the board meeting in one place or the other, you know? Then you are paying travel, and then there is all kinds of different—I mean, if I want to build a crate for a piece of Bob's work or, you know, I mean, I know perfectly well how to take a small piece and double box it and make sure it has two inches of ethafoam around it and can't move inside there in that first box and then two more inches of ethafoam. I mean, a small piece. And, you know, take it to FedEx, or get it to New York, I can do that, but you know, they have to—everything has to be professionally done. Everything has to be—I mean, it's just a complete—it's really an extraordinary amount of money. It really is. And I think it's a great thing for Viola, who had no heirs, that she wanted to leave her work to nobody who was able to do this. I think we're doing a good job now, and I think we have a good—and we can do better, and we will. I mean, there is always room for improvement, but I think - I think the board is quite diverse and professional, getting more so. And that's good. But I really had—I mean, I have a real interest in preserving her work, and I had a lot of—I have a lot of experience at working with galleries, and I think you really have to treat your dealers well. I don't think being an art dealer is something that is necessarily—I mean, there are bad people in every crowd, and we certainly know of dealers who have gone to jail. But you know, these aren't the kind of people we have been dealing with. You know? And if either comes to you and says, "This is where the market is today, and I need your help here or there," you really ought to better listen to them and see what you can do to come to some agreement, especially when it's somebody who's actually a very—I mean, I find generosity is what—on both parts is what helps.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: [Laughs.] You just—you just cannot be—you can't call people up and scream and yell at them. And you can't—I mean it's only going to—it's only going to damage you.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it sounds like there was a difficult, just, transitional phase perhaps dealers used to dealing with Viola now working with a foundation.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I think that's also the dealers. I don't know what Nancy would have to say about this, but I think that it is a real—being a dealer for an estate or foundation is very different from working with a living artist.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I know that I could not make that leap with John and Gretchen Berggruen. And after Bob died, I just said, "This is not working." And when I came back from Europe, I just had made a decision. And I told them, and I had the work picked up, and I then went on, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Is Nancy Hoffman the sole representative of Viola's work as a gallery now? Is that true?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think so.

MIJA RIEDEL: She certainly was nothing but complimentary about ALF and—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, she's a dream to work with.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, she is.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She's—we have just been working together very well and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, and she said the same.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, I mean, she's phenomenal. I mean, I have known—she used to come to these—after every opening, Allen Frumkin would have a—there were always a weekend openings in the middle of the day. Then he would have a dinner at his house. I think it was the weekends. Yes, and Nancy was one of the few dealers who ever was invited or came. I don't know. I mean, and Sique Spence who works for her is great. Her staff is great. I mean, I know other artists who show their—Frank Owen is a really good friend. He went to Davis. He got a master's degree, so it was before the MFA program, was one of the first grads. Taught at University of Vermont. Really close friend of Art Schade's, and Art and I would go up and see him, Martha Lee. We lived in the east. We would drive up there every other year or something. Sometimes they were coming down—come down, and he was on the way to the city to take something to Nancy's, and he would stop and stay overnight or not. Now, we just talk on the phone—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: How is your work with ALF different with your work with the Arneson Archive?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I mean, on the Arneson Archive, I'm in there doing it with my son Kirk, Bob's youngest son, Kirk Arneson. And he's just been phenomenal about tracing things, tracking things down and tracking prints down and emailing museums, trying to get print edition numbers. It's actually shocking; the only museum that absolutely says they don't have time to do these kinds of things is [. . . a local museum –SS]. I do not understand that, but anyway, that's the way it is. I mean, everybody's just so great about this. They might write back and say, "I can't do this for six weeks," or "Our collection is in storage because we're having a new building built, and I can't get to it until then." And then they'll tell him when they're going to do it, and then he reminds them if he doesn't hear from them. They are all so polite, and, "No, I don't need a higher-res image. I just need documentation, so I know what the piece looks like. We need the addition number if it's"—whatever. People have just been incredible, and he just slogs away at this, a few hours a day. You know, he just is adamant about it and learning a lot about his dad's work.

And so I have done this for years out there, you know? And sometimes things would get—because I have more in the frying pan at one time than I—forget to do things or something kind of—so he's really been a great—it's even been better than having somebody who comes once a week or once —

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —every two weeks or something or once a month because he's just there, and he doesn't lose his place. So, that's great. What I do with ALF is I sit on a board. You know, we don't actually—we make policy, you know? They present things; we vote on it; we discuss things, and everybody contributes, you know—everybody contributes what they can to the discussion. I mean, there is a woman now who has legal—a legal background on the board, and she's fabulous, but we still have a lawyer for the foundation. So, you know, it's not—and we used to have Sandy Hirsch from the Gottlieb Foundation, and then he's on a couple of other foundation boards now. He's just gotten completely overwhelmed. I mean, it was very difficult for his schedule.

He's an artist, and he was just so important, when he was on the board, about ethics and, you know, all kinds of things. I mean, he was really—the time he served was an important time to have someone like that there and someone who had as much experience as he had and who really took the Gottlieb Foundation and built it because it wasn't—you know, it didn't have very much to stand

on except the work, and he's really—he worked very well with Mrs. Gottlieb. That's pretty phenomenal. And he was really—he's generous with talking to artists about what you can do or how you might structure the future going forward, talking to me, at one point, about how I might structure this family trust going forward and being sure what work gets, you know—identifying work that needs to go the museums, you know. So we have—I have worked very well with Brian Gross and George Adams about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: As an artist, what do you plan to do with your own legacy?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh my God.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Sorry about that.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You noticed about these slides. You know why you got slides from me instead of the digital archive? Because when I went to put the digital archive on a flash drive, I realized I have never—it has an ID number, so I can go—now, this is not how Bob's is. This is how mine is. Because Bob Arneson's been totally cared for. But mine, even though I have a FileMaker Pro database and all that, if I export it all from FileMaker Pro, I couldn't quite get that to all happen, and there were too many images. You needed a selection. You didn't need a, you know—you know, if there is, you know—I mean, I made hundreds of little cups, little porcelain cups. That was, like, my way to meditate and get into the studio every day. I would make a porcelain cup. Well, I mean, you don't need to see all of those. So all the stuff is in there, and you needed to see a selection. Well, I couldn't figure out how to do this. So I went to the digital—my digital file, which has every work but not related to the—I have the image in the database, but I couldn't figure out how to get you a selection. So I was going to give you that whole digital thing, but then it only has an ID number. It doesn't give you dimensions. It doesn't give you a title, nothing. So I thought, I'm just going to pull a bunch of slides. I was just like at the end of my rope, and then Kirk was great about scanning in some reviews and articles.

So, that—I thought, oh, this is—okay because I don't do—and I do need to think about my work. I do need to think. I should be giving away pieces. I should be—I mean, a museum just had a piece of mine on exhibition this fall. Oh my God. Somebody gave it to them, and it was one of these heart pieces with wire parts. So when they got it, I'm sure it came, or somebody put it into a box and squished these wire parts. So they hung it in the museum the way it came out of the box. So I go into the opening, and there is this vitrine and there is my piece in there. So, I was very nice, and I didn't say anything that night, and I just emailed somebody. So they invited me to come down. They had it on a table; they gave me white gloves, and then the registrar person got very upset and said, "Oh no, you can't move anything on it." I thought, "Well, why am I being given white gloves? I have got to put this in order. I sent you a slide of it." So I said this to the person.

"No, no, no, we are a, you know, public institution or whatever, you know? Once it comes to the museum, we have a responsibility. We have to get our conservator here." So the conservator wasn't available; then the [assistant –SS] cartoons conservator comes down. "No, no, no we can't do this now. We can't touch it." So then they decide they're going to put it back up. They put it back up, and they left it there for the duration of the show; months this was up. Totally looked like hell. I was so upset. I still don't know if they fixed it. They said they were going to fix it after the show came down when the conservation people could get to it. Otherwise, they were going to have to take it out of the exhibition; there would be a hole in the exhibition.

Now, when this kind of thing happens, it doesn't give you big confidence about loaning—I have just recently been asked to loan a major work of a major artist's to an exhibition they're doing. It doesn't

give you good confidence about loaning work to them, but I have done it. I'm going to do it. And it doesn't give you—you may think, what am I giving my work to? Anyway, it's a disappointing situation, and I know where it comes from. It comes from a lack of funding. It is probably not these poor people are trying to be disrespectful of my piece or anybody's piece. They also, by the way, have an Arneson with a big thing spilled on the pedestal. That's the way it came from the collector, and I told them how to get that fixed and who to call, but they're not going to do it because they don't have any money to do it. So I should pay somebody to come, the guy who made the wood pedestal from Cazadero and go down there and fix it?

—it's a big problem, you know? I mean, it's just like when the Napa earthquake happened and—well, the first Napa earthquake, the di Rosa lost a pretty nice Arneson. Well, they didn't lose it; they hired somebody to put it back together, but it was a major restoration. So comes the second Napa earthquake, and I mean, a friend's really wonderful, construction fell over and broke in a bunch of pieces. And actually, an artist is putting it back together for them, who had helped the [. . . –SS] artists [who made it –SS]. So I don't know what's happening. But you know, institutions don't have good conservation budgets. I mean, look at the city and county of San Francisco trying to take care of their public art, you know? And the money that people try to raise, people like Ruth Braunstein, you know? What a contributor to the community Ruth has always been.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know? But this is a huge problem.

MIJA RIEDEL: It is.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And with a foundation, since it's a charitable organization, the kind—so, you know, if a dealer wants to have something go to somebody's house for approval, then they have to go all—get the foundation's approval for that and how is it going to be shipped and who's going to care for it and who's responsible, and if it's a big figure like that, can you imagine the—all the dancing you have to do? It's pretty amazing, you know? Sculptors are a problem, you know? Like Squeak says, painting is the [queen of the arts –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't think it is the queen of the arts. I always say sculpture's the king of the arts. That's one of the issues, though. It's like so—well, it's just hard for people to deal with: dealers, collectors.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I think we have already addressed this. I assume you think it's quite important for artists to maintain a database of their own work and good records?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I do. And I talk to people about this all the time. I mean, some very well-known, older artists, and it's difficult because people don't want to take the time out, or they don't want to think about it, or they have already forgotten. I mean, I'm telling you, and it's a—even just labeling slides. The lucky thing with Bob Arneson is he taught at the University of California, and in order to teach there, you have to turn in all your stuff every year and show your research—every three years, whatever. So you really have to keep everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, and very well organized.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And people who don't—haven't had that benefit, I don't know. I mean, it's really—so—and at the university, anyway, in the art department, there used to be this great

woman who worked there, Jeannie Martin Bernauer, and Jeannie, in the early years, used to do all of this stuff for these guys.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, she really kept them organized. Now, they don't even have—the art department doesn't even have its own office. You now, the office has been—is all—it's like a—I don't know. Music, art, and drama have one MSO or whatever they call that person, manager. I mean, you can't go get a letter done. You know, if you are writing a letter of recommendation, you better be able to get it out on your own computer. Go take a keyboarding class. Well, you know, it was a different time when people like William Wiley and Roy De Forest and Manuel Neri—I mean, I don't know if Ruth Horsting wrote her own letters, but I'm sure she did the same thing all the rest of the guys did, everybody else. Just go in there and have Jeannie write it.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then when Jeannie left—I remember when Bob had to start writing; he wrote it by hand.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, we have done an excellent job. I think on these questions about Viola. There's one final one here. We touched on it briefly, but just has your work—has your relationship with her work changed since her death?

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SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, and how so? They knew about her work.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, just—yes, going on the board at ALF and really looking at a lot of it, and I mean, last year I had the opportunity to sit through a big slide show of all kinds of stuff, and it was very informative.

MIJA RIEDEL: All of Viola's work?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was [. . . a selection of –SS] Viola's work, yes. We were trying to figure something out, so they had it. I mean hundreds of pieces we looked at quickly, you know, and it was very, very, very, very good. I mean, I think it's something that every board member should do, although I don't think they hardly have the time to do it. But as I said, I really—initially, I did not like those early figures. And it was really the woman who's the *Mrs. National Geographic* that really—another really thought, "Oh wow," you know. But I think I did not really get the big collage stuff until after her death. I don't think I really—or these big tableau pieces. Like the one in the Hirschhorn that's on the cover of *Bigger, Better, More* or the *Western*—I think it's the *Western Civilization* or something? [It is actually *Family Portrait*, Hirschhorn Museum, Washington, DC 1995 –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I just didn't ever quite spend the time—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible]—of *Western Civilization*; mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —or whatever it was. And they mean so much now, so much more.

MIJA RIEDEL: Can you say some more about that? What they mean? What do you see in them that you didn't see before?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, the relationships of figure to object and they are kind of obscured personalities, but there are personalities, you know. And in a way, they are all—you know how Viola has—was very—you often didn't know what she was thinking. And I think the figures have that. Whether it's an individual figure or a grouping, but the groupage is so much more complex. And I like that, where I think, for a long while, it was just like, oh my God, it was too much for me. You know, it's too much color; it's too—and I truly do not love a lot of glaze on stuff. I mean, I don't care who's doing it—[laughs]. So, it's—but, boy, can she do it better than anybody.

I think with—one thing that I do think, especially that she and Bob have in common is that their drawings really informed their sculpture and vice versa. So for Bob, he always drew as a kid, and he always drew, and he did the cartoons for the [local newspaper –SS] sports cartoons for the *Benicia Herald* and all this stuff. But when he was—when Jack Lemon wanted him to come to Chicago and make prints at Landfall Press, then he had to really start drawing. He always drew, but then he had to really start drawing and the breaking up of the image into a litho plate, and then thinking about mark making, and then his drawings got better because he was making—his marks became really—everything was so important and—

MIJA RIEDEL: —really changed his sense of color too, that process, didn't it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes, absolutely, and the way he started flicking glaze onto these dogs, the of *Portrait of the Artist as a Dog* pieces came right out of how he was drawing, and then they just kind of, one worked off the other. And I think for Viola, too, she worked back and forth, and it's not conscious always.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's just, one informs the other, and if you don't do it, you don't have the opportunity for that to happen. One great thing that just happened for Bob Arneson is that the Whitney, through a very generous donor from California, has acquired the drawing for *California Artist*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Congratulations, that is fantastic.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And the curator David Kiehl wrote an extraordinarily, short but lovely little letter to the collector and forwarded it to me about that drawing. And I just—it's just heartening that people finally get—you know—[laughs]—so that's a major drawing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Perfect, shall we stop for that today? Final thoughts?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, final thoughts, I just think Viola's drawing should also be acquired by the Whitney—[laughs]. I think they should get—[laughs]—but, you know, just takes—you know, museums don't go out and buy things for the most part.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It takes a donor who's really committed and then goes to the curators and, you know, says, "Would you like?" And they have to have a relationship already. I mean, I was

shocked when I found out that a major East Coast museum director wanted this [Bruce] Nauman [. . . sculpture –SS], and he could not get his donors to pony up for this Nauman. I could not believe it. It's just—[laughs]—crazy.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that makes it all the more extraordinary that this Whitney gift came through.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, and I hope that Viola will have the same because I think her work—I think it's important to have sculpture and drawings. And now, which I didn't understand until recently, the new kind of lighting, LED lighting we have, drawings can be shown with sculpture and paintings, and so we don't have the same restrictions where you have to have this dark, little gallery for drawings, so they won't fade away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I didn't know about this. This happened because Rachel Teagle at the UC Davis Shrem Museum, the Maria—the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis, which is in the process of being built, and Rachel Teagle is the director, and she was telling me about this and how, when she went to the new Whitney, she—it was a real good example of this because of the way they have been able to install stuff because of the new kinds of lighting. So, you know, technology changes how—technology is good, and technology is bad—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —or gets in the way or doesn't get in the way, but this is an extraordinary development, which I didn't really understand until she explained it to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's one of the things that I thought was most striking about this show of Nancy Hoffman's is she had the plates; she has the 2-D work; she has the figures; she had some of the Sèvres pieces. It was extraordinary to see them all on the same floor and see the relationship between them, among them—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —to just get the sense of how that worked. She also said something really interesting, which is that she—that the number of groups coming to see this exhibition had gone up significantly. I don't know if she mentioned this to you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She's written—she wrote to Pauline about it. Pauline forwarded it to us, so it's really a—it's—we're just delighted.

MIJA RIEDEL: The response, she said, clearly, the word must be out and spreading because she used to get, you know, occasional groups coming through, but she was talking about groups coming on a daily basis to see this exhibition.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. It's pretty great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, what a real change, so we can see evolution happening.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that fabulous essay by David Pagel, I think, has been a help.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's extraordinary. And if you don't have—I mean, so many artists, you know, don't have this support structure, gallery—

MIJA RIEDEL: —foundation—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —foundation, all this. Somebody has to be paying attention; somebody has to be working on ideas, thinking about exhibitions, and it has to be multidimensional. It can't just be Nancy, you know. It's got to be—but she has done a remarkable job.

MIJA RIEDEL: And we'll get more into Arneson archive and trust tomorrow, but I think she has done an extraordinary job, and I think it's also one of the reasons is that she has shown Viola for so long, and that Nancy Hoffman, I think, is very unusual and these incredible long-term, decades-long relationships with, I think, at least half of the artists that she carries—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —which is very unusual these days, and I can't remember what the other point was. Oh, I was just thinking about the number of shows that you have put together for Robert Arneson in the past 20 years, which is extraordinary, the number of solo exhibitions since he passed away in '92 and the number of group exhibitions. It's pages and pages and pages of exhibitions, so clearly, you have been thinking about it quite a bit.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And the dealers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I really rely on them for a lot, and one of my—the frustrating things about being on the ALF board is I realize how much more I should be doing, and I'm one person and Kirk—

MIJA RIEDEL: For Robert Arneson.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, and, I mean, it could be—you know, I mean, to the point where I would absolutely subsume my entire being into that. Anyway—[laughs]—maybe this is where to stop.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay—[laughs].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I'm not doing that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is MIJA RIEDEL with Sandra Shannonhouse at her studio in Benicia, California on July 23, 2015 for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, card number three, and just one thing we would like to correct—I would like to correct from the start is that the wedding date of Sandra Shannonhouse and Bob Arneson was 1973, not 1972, May 19, which is actually her birthday. So we've gotten that out of the way.

So we'll go into your career today, as well as some additional conversation about the Arneson Trust and the Arneson Archive, but we're going to start off today's conversation with a focus on feminism,

yes, and what it was like to be working here in the '70s and '80s as a female artist.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, there was a huge amount going on. I mean, you know, when Judy Chicago moved to Benicia, the whole—I mean, one of the reasons she came here, I think, she found a big studio. Manual Neri was a friend of hers and encouraged her to come and look for places here because there was space.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you are in the middle of the Bay Area, but it's relatively inexpensive compared to what studios are in the Bay Area.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it's a decent place to live, and she's a runner, you know, so you could go out and run at the state park; she was running all the time—I don't know—five miles, 10 miles, whatever, and so we didn't know that this was happening, and one day, we looked out the window, and I said, "There's Manual Neri helping Judy Chicago unload a truck full of furniture." And so—[laughs]—we went out and anyway—but then she brought her whole group of people, plus a whole lot more from Benicia joined in. Like the woman [Sally Bobson –SS] who used to live next door to me who's a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful—oh, she's not just a seamstress. I mean, she is an incredible person with textiles and with needles and with threads, and she oversaw the stitched part of *The Dinner Party*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And a friend of Judy's, Kathy Erteman, moved up from L.A.—E-R-T-E-M-A-N, I believe, with a K-A-T-H-Y—moved up from L.A. with her husband Bill Concannon, who is a neon artist, and they're not together anymore, but she had all the—was in charge of the plates, all the ceramic, and so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Kathy was?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. As well as the fabric?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, the fabric was—oh, she's such a good friend of mine and lived next to me for so long. Well, we have to think of her name. I have to get her name. It has to just come to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Sally Babson. B-A-B-S-O-N. S-A-L-L-Y. So Sally was just a local person here, you know, and her daughters—well, one of them ended up babysitting for Tenaya, and you know, it was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Who is your daughter?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —they're really—at that time were really kind of—we were all very close, and living closely together, in close proximity next door to each other, but you know, Judy, they had to have all these group meetings and, you know, soul-bearing and soul searching and,

"What's this about?" and all this drama occurred, and, you know, new relationships were formed; old ones were torn asunder. I mean, maybe that should have happened anyway; maybe it facilitated things, but it just was such a tumultuous time for all these people, and you know, I did not need a thing of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She had a great photographer, Michelle [Maier], who later became a welder for—she was welding out at Exxon here, which is now Valero. So she was—you know, she got a license to do a certain kind of welding.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Because, you know, it's hard making money as a photographer. But she would come; she photographed a lot of work for me here. I mean, Lee Fatheree certainly did a lot, but she was—so she—there were just so many interesting people, but there was also all of this drama. And I really wasn't—it was kind of like being in the theater and working in the theater, you know? I have plenty of that at home. When you are raising kids, or you know, you have a sick husband, whatever it is, you know? Just the art world. There's enough. So I just stay away from all that. And I didn't really get involved with feminism; I mean, I don't read feminist theory. I probably should; it's been talked about to me. I just do my work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I have gotten caught up in some pretty weird things, like sometime about 1992, a couple of pretty well-known women artists from New York, friends, came here to make—they were in the Bay Area doing something, and they came to make a studio visit. One of them had a show, and the other one came out, then they came up here; we were going to have lunch, and they did a studio visit. And they were just berating me to just get myself out of this studio that I—this building that Bob and I had built, that I probably gave up a year of my life to oversee the construction of, even though there was a contractor. He was young, and we had a lot of—that was a scene. But why would I go work—their idea was I had to either rent myself another place or just go work out in the warehouse district where, you know—bad heat, bad light, yadda yadda yadda. Here I have this gorgeous place that we paid for, that has radiant heat, nice light. I like being adjacent to my garden. Plus, I could walk over to my sick husband and make sure everything was okay. When everything was okay, great, okay. You know? But if it wasn't, I was here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they probably didn't realize it, but they were just berating me, and I was just so offended by it.

And then another really weird thing: another artist, even better known, had a book signing up here in conjunction with the College Art Association and the Women's Caucus for Art, and this woman had called me and said, "Here, come to San Francisco. Get a place at our table," you know, at the Women's Caucus dinner, "but come early in the afternoon, and we'll do a few things together." Well, she didn't tell me this involved driving her to Mills College, which is in the East Bay, so you have got to go across the Bay Bridge, you know, and you are going to be in commute traffic. I hate driving in this commute traffic. And this was years ago. Well, anyway, we did it. I drove her to Mills; she had her book signing; I was fuming. We get back to the—probably the Hilton [Hotel] or something, I don't know—[inaudible]—and we sit down at this dinner, and it was a pretty great table—Faith Ringgold,

Whitney Chadwick, I don't know, bunch of people; it was really fun. And this woman begins—she pretty much carries on; she's just like that anyway. She's kind of queen bee of it all. And so she—everybody's being a little bit deferential, but not too, and then they would get tired of her talking, and they would just start another conversation and ignore her sort of. And finally, this woman says, "Okay, I'm ready to go, Sandy." And I just opened my purse and took out a \$20 bill and said, "Take a cab."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So anyway, I just didn't have a lot of time for all that stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But there were always a lot of women working out here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And one thing that happened—

MIJA RIEDEL: By "out here," do you mean Benicia?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean in the whole Bay Area.

MIJA RIEDEL: Bay Area, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there were always a lot of women taking ceramics, wherever you were.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So for one reason or another, maybe they didn't become the well-known people that, you know, we all know about.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But not the least of it, actually, was that the dealers out here were women of—who were a little older.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, they were probably the age of Bob Arneson, maybe a couple years older, maybe a couple years younger. But, you know, I mean, Paule Anglim, God love her, I mean, she just passed away in her 90s and worked in the gallery until the end, by the way. What a smart woman. Anyway, most of these women really loved these guys. They really were flirts. I mean, I saw it. I—

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, when I think about the women who were showing this work—we talked about Adeliza McHugh yesterday—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, she wasn't. But she was in a way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, there was Elaine Potter, Ruth Braunstein, Rena Bransten, Dorothy Weiss—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh I'm talking—yes, and then there was Wanda Hansen, Diana Fuller, Paule Anglim.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure. Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: John Berggruen had his own kind of thing—

[Side conversation.] Oh, let me get rid of this.

MIJA RIEDEL: Should I pause? I can pause this real—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. Well, so a lot of these—so they were different kinds of relationships. I mean, I would just see this thing that happened between the female dealers and the men. And I think the female dealers, maybe all of them or some of them later kind of changed their ways, but, you know, that's one thing. Another thing is women do get involved with family, with having babies, with, you know? And it does change—unless you are Viola and snip it away—what you do. It just does. And then if you are a real strong woman or a kind of a different, you know, take on life, and it doesn't fit into—I don't know what—the society part of the art world, you know? It takes more, to have happen.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, well, apparently, Viola could get herself quite dressed up, and I know she had gobs of great jewelry, which only toward the end did I ever see that on her. But she would, you know, be wearing her studio clothes, and she would have on some fabulous piece of gold or—it was something. But anyway, I think that she—it's this thing about kind of being—well, they responded more naturally to cute women, but really to sexy men.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, let's—so I was just—I started off this conversation, before we got on the card, just talking about what it was like to be a female artist working in this era of flowering for clay as a ceramic medium in the '60s and '70s and '80s, certainly the '60s and '70s, but how a lot of the names that came out of that, that we still hear about are Robert Arneson and Jim Melchert and Peter Voulkos and Paul Soldner who was more southern, Richard Shaw, David Gilhooly—and you—at the same time we were talking yesterday that there were a lot of women at the classes, in the clay classes you were taking. We certainly—Viola had that incredible show at the Crocker in '81, Judy Chicago at SFMOMA in '79, and just—what might have—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: What happened?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, what fueled or didn't fuel those careers? Was there—Marilyn Levine, I think of certainly, to be sure, but—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, there was another woman who I could think of who had a real drinking problem. She was a wonderful artist and—

MIJA RIEDEL: I mean, did it feel like—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and, you know, that got in the way for her and another person, a women who didn't work in clay, but a wonderful artist. Still alive, very fragile in a way, and you know, I think—I did say one thing that I want to kind of correct:

As much as the female dealers, the women dealers, really loved these guys, you know, culturally—

I'm not ragging on these women. They're all friends of mine, and I have great respect for them and for what they did. But it was just a change in the culture. I mean, even—so now, in 2015, it's very different, I think. I hope it is. I'm so not involved with all that stuff. I mean, I certainly—I don't really—I don't show my own work. I haven't for years. I don't—

MIJA RIEDEL: Would you—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —I interact with galleries, and they are men running the galleries who—for Bob Arneson's work. They are men who are younger than I am, that Bob had worked with for a long time. They both knew his work over a period of years, George Adams having worked with Allan Frumkin and then taking over the gallery and buying the gallery, and then Brian Gross, from the time he was at Whitney—what do they call that?—Fellow Program, and then he was working at the Barbara Fendrick Gallery when Bob Arneson was showing there, and then came out here and became Diana Fuller's partner, and then later was just on his own. He has a wonderful new space in San Francisco. He's had to move out of the downtown area [because of the high rent –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Now—and I mean, I worked with Wanda and Diana for years, Wanda Hansen, Diana Fuller; they were great to Bob. But I know, even Adeliza, she loved Maija, but she really loved those guys. And I could just see, in kind of the communications that went on, it's just a thing that happens.

MIJA RIEDEL: You showed with Steven Wirtz for quite a long time, 10 years or so and—during the '80s, no?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I did. I showed—

MIJA RIEDEL: I mean, how was your relationship with dealers? What was that like for you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, Rena was such a good friend, and way before—you know, when she was working with Braunstein and before Trish and when she went out on her own, and I had shown with her, and there just came a point where Rena really wasn't interested in the work I was doing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. This is when she had the Quay Gallery, yes? In the late '70s, early '80s, I think?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think she already had her own gallery, but I'm not positive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I really didn't like the ceramic knick-knack kind of shelves they had in that gallery, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Seems how they all started that way, doesn't it? Yes, and then began to shift.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I actually, then—I mean was really frustrated with the relationship; it wasn't, you know, it wasn't a fight or anything. It was just kind of a tea-time divorce.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, okay, look, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And Rena said to me, "Well, that's not exactly what I meant, Sandy, you know. I just wanted it to develop a bit more before I"—but anyway, so I started showing with Steve and Connie Wirtz, and that was okay. And actually—I mean, I'm not even sure—they just decided not to show my work. I don't know what it was, but I—they were appraised of what I was doing. This was after Bob Arneson died in '92, and I did a whole show, and they had seen it in wax and it was cast in bronze, and it cost a lot of money, and they decided not to show it. And that was kind of a—that was very fickle.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course. Of course.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think that's a bad faith thing to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: At any rate, you know, they had a very successful gallery. Just closed it recently. Just—whatever. So, but I had some wonderful shows with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, you absolutely did.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they really put—

MIJA RIEDEL: Catalogs and—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Connie had a great—yes, and Connie had a great, great way of installing—especially little figures, getting them all on one—so they were seen as a whole thing, which is really probably how that environmental business—you know, so they're all related to each other.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, when I put them on their own pedestals, that was different.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And that wasn't—but the smaller figures, the like up-to-15 inch, I guess, so anyway, I [showed with –SS] John Natsoulas.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, and that poor guy, I mean, you know, I [don't –SS] know what happened to him, but that wasn't typical. Anyway, he had a great gallery in Davis, and he had great support from Bob and Roy and Wayne Thiebaud, even, and everybody was so excited that John was going to have this gallery in Davis, and he did a very, very good job. And then somehow works started getting lost and broken, and other weird things happened, and you know, we just couldn't continue with that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. When you look back on your work at this point in time, do you see it in terms of different series? Do you see a thread of continuity running through it? Because there is a real back-and-forth over the years between figuration and abstraction and slipping from one or shifting from one to the next, and we were looking at *Rosemary Place* yesterday, and to me,

that was one of the most interesting, fully-realized synthesis, it felt like, almost, of those two, and—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or this piece up here. This is wax.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh right. And which—what's that piece?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The *Blue Skirted Form*.

MIJA RIEDEL: The *Blue Skirted Form*? Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, it's like—and again, so it's abstract.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I think I'm more—it's really just taken me a long time to be really comfortable with abstraction.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Or to really even really get it in a painting. I think it's—when you grow up in the country or in Northern California and you are really not involved in—you are involved in reality.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The reality of "oh my gosh, it's pouring rain, and I have to go out there and feed those cows in my 4-H project." It wasn't my parents' cows, but it was mine. You know, stuff I brought on myself. Or you know, whatever, taking care of a piece of property with your parents, and they're always—not that I was—it wasn't like Viola, and it wasn't so rigorous, and I certainly didn't feel like it was in any way abusive. I had a great childhood. I mean, and I—as I said yesterday, I still have that piece of property on the lot, but there is a physicality to it and a reality to it. And so the kind of abstraction—abstract art—it took a long time for me—not that I couldn't appreciate it early on when I started studying art, but to really internalize it and see where I was in that. What would that have for me?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that, now, the object for me or the figure as just a whole figure is less interesting to me than the possibilities that one has in the abstracted form.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That alludes to the figure in some way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's not that I'm not interested in the figure. I'm very connected, bodily, I guess, to these pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And there is—I mean, there is also a real back-and-forth between the very abstracted figurative pieces: the long vertical pieces with the different organs, the suspended pieces, and then the abstracted, fragmented figures that are plaster, that are clay, full-size, to the very ecstatic, dancing bronze figures. It's the figure in so many variations, but there

is—it feels like a deeply metaphorical examination of the figure. And you have talked about it. You have talked about transformation in terms of your work, maybe more in terms of the symbols you use, but—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, but I think the figure is the same. I think especially the exuberant female nude has the same place: a shape-shifter; it has had different significance in different eras.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And cross-culturally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, you know, it's not a straight-line thing, straight line.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: In any way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It's always—you know, I mean—when the thing about the gaze came up or the this or that, so you are always—the relationship of our society or any individual viewer to the figure is always so different, and I don't think we have it clear—like Viola talked about women—men's power is in their suit, and women's power is naked.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well I didn't—I don't think I used nakedness in the same exact way she did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, it's a totally different—and it is another symbol, like a triangle or a cross or a cup or a chalice or a symbol for water. For instance, in Central Park in Davis, on B Street there, I have a commission there called *Cnawan Stone*, C-N-A-W-A-N.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it's a huge, big, tall piece of basalt that I was able to find in a quarry up on—near Snoqualmie Pass in Washington and have taken to the foundry in Walla Walla, and then we sandblasted on the—so this basalt, I think it's a seven-sided piece of basalt, so it broke off—you know, it forms this kind of crystalline—let's see. We're talking about a piece of rock you put in a semi. It's huge. And so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes it is. It's like 9,500 pounds or so.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, so the top of it, which, actually, was the bottom when it broke off of the column of basalt as it formed volcanically.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it becomes the top of the piece—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —mounted by these seven dancing nudes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Which are bronze, yes?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Which are bronze.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And up the, spiraling up the outside of the basalt—which is kind of a buff color, and then you sandblast into it, and you get this charcoal gray, slate gray basalt—are images that relate to transformation. So this is something that is in the herb garden. It is a site-specific piece for the herb garden in Central Park in Davis.

And then a great follow-up was that, across the park, is a Davis Community Church, and they commissioned me to do a baptismal font, which was really interesting for me because I worked with a Methodist church, I think, or Presbyterian church in Pacific Heights. They wanted a cross, and I had done a couple cross pieces, and so that was about to happen, and then the pastor got shipped out to another place, and I kind of wondered if that wasn't part of the reason. [Laughs.] At any rate, he was very supportive, and a couple of his committee were very supportive, and one woman, in particular, was a collector of my work and was instrumental, really lovely woman, but that didn't happen. So I was really happy that I was working with this church in Davis. And I'm not a religious person. I mean, my mother was Jewish; my father was Irish Methodist, nothing, you know—I was raised to be a good citizen and a good human being, and—so it's—the baptismal font is the knotted form made out of rope that holds it up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, kind of a Celtic knotted form, and then up and then around a bowl, and around the rim of it are, I think, water and fish, something—honestly, I'm a little fuzzy on that right now, but anyway, it's—the inside is all gold leafed, and then we have a piece of plastic that sits over it when they're not using it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was a wonderful thing to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was really a—but, you know, I had to work with—these people come down here, and Davis is—you know, Davis Community Church is not a real—I mean, it's a pretty liberal place there. So it was okay; they were used to artists, and they knew my piece in the park, and they would come down here. But there were a few of them that were a little worried about what this meant or what that meant or how it could be interpreted this way or that way, and it was always something to explain to people that, you know, that is the power of these symbols.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That they have been with our culture for so long.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So really long.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And why does a snake bother people?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Why does a snake bother people, and what's the power of it? And how, in China, there is a myth that the earth is born from the snake, this Mat Chinoi, the snake, almost like sheds its skin and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —becomes something else.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. It's interesting to me because I think about transformation as, really, the single unifying thread that I can see running through your work, completely. Like we were looking yesterday at an early oil pastel on your walls, and it had a chalice and a snake and a cross, and we were also looking at *Dicta*, the installation that you designed for the Benician—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, the library piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: The library. And so there are certain pieces that are very three-dimensional, beautiful bronze sculpture, full of images and symbols and iconic symbols, and I think that, when I think about your work, I think of either the symbols themselves being present on the work, like the *Cnawan Stone* that we were talking about that has the symbols on it; there are symbols included in the commissioned piece at the library; there are symbols in the two-dimensional piece on your walls at home, but then I think about the figures, and they all seem to also be in some form of transformation. They are either, literally, transforming from some abstraction to figuration and back and forth, or they are in an ecstatic form of dance, which feels, of course, like another kind of transformation.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And even those figures are very elongated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I was very, very influenced—one of the great things I did when I lived in Rome in 1969-1970 for just six months, I happened to go to the Etruscan Museum—what? —in Villa Giulia, up there in the park [in the Borghese Gardens –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And there was an American Academy lecture going through, an American Academy of Rome lecture going through, and I just followed them along.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It was fairly early on when I got there, and my Italian, I really didn't get [. . . everything –SS]. The place [was amazing –SS] and the last time I was in Rome, it was actually closed—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: [The renovation –SS]—it was long overdue. I'd love to go back now. But that was—seeing those at Etruscan, figures, you know, all those things, you know, that was an amazing, amazing—[inaudible].

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And on a totally different trip to Italy, I was in Florence. I mean, years, years, years later, I was in Florence and I went to La Specola, which is the anatomical museum at the University of Florence on the Via Romana, south of the Pitti Palace.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And you know, you had to pay to get in to see these things. Extra to get into the gynecological room because it has all these things. You have to pay the guard off to get into that room—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I'm telling you. Otherwise, this stuff, you know, these beautiful damsels lying there on tattered silk beds, you know, disemboweled, and they were actually casting, you know, taking molds and then making them in colored wax. And they're very, very detailed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And they are just—

MIJA RIEDEL: What is this book, Sandy?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, okay, so this is—it's by Arnaud, A-R-N-A-U-D—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And the Italian name is *Le Cere Anatomiche della Specola*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you can get that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. We'll get that.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: They now have it in paperback, but this is the [hardback –SS] copy I have—[inaudible]. They didn't even have the book at the museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No. I had to buy it on the Via del Corso or something. I can't remember. But yes, it was—

MIJA RIEDEL: So these—[inaudible]—looking at these images?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But by the time I saw this, I had already started—I was really had been very involved in Vesalius years before that and those reprints. I can't seem to locate that book. It's available as a paperback, and it has reprints of all of his etchings. You know, some of it is very

abstracted, and others, you know, these people's—like they're alive, standing on the hill somewhere, but they're completely skinned, and you see the whole circulatory system or the—whatever they were working on, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, it was—so that was in the 1600s?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So some real early sources of inspiration for you.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Early. Yes, yes, yes. And I'll tell you, when I came back from living in Rome, one of the incredible things I saw that weekend when I arrived: Nancy Graves had an exhibition in San Francisco at the Reese Paley Gallery, and she had been working at the San Francisco Art Institute, and they did that big totem piece, which I think now belongs to a museum in Canada. Very abstracted, very—I mean, now, I can see it as related to David Smith's drawings, but I didn't get that then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I was still—what?—21, 22? I don't know. I didn't get it then, but it was like, "Oh my goodness, this could be sculpture?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, and all these pieces are hanging.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Do you know the work I'm talking about?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I do have a catalog over here, and I can show it to you. We'll find it later when we pause.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But yes, I guess she came out to teach or do a workshop in the Institute, and I don't know—

MIJA RIEDEL: What—this was what year?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I was just coming back from Rome, so it was 1970.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Winter 1970, I'm sure that's when it was. The catalog will tell us for sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Because sometimes I do conflate things. I mean it's like, when did she do the camels, you know? I try to get this in my brain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But you know, she was working with a lot of materials. And they had a lot of stuff in it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, lots of kind of—what do you call that?—resins and—

MIJA RIEDEL: I think, when I look at your work and Viola's—we talked about this—and before I forget, was there something you wanted to say also from last night that you'd thought about in terms of Viola? You'd mentioned?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, I had been thinking about this interview before, and I was cleaning my desk last night, looking for something else actually. I found this Post-it: "Viola internalized what she saw and spit it out." She was a master of the visual, and she could sort of see and mediate and re-employ it, call it up. Not always too specifically, but she just re-invented it, and it became part of her. She internalized it, and it came out. And that was that thing yesterday, that Viola showed you how to see something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But also she was employing stuff she saw in her work, and, you know, we all do this, but it wasn't always conscious, maybe?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think that's one thing an artist who's visual—I mean, there is plenty of art that comes out of other kind of places, but I'm not sure I totally always—I really love it when I can see the emotional—that somehow the artist made it. That's important to me. I really—I get all of the Jeff Koons stuff; I get what he's doing, but oh my gosh, I would not want to be that artist. Just would be no fun for me to make art like that. Managing all those folks, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I don't know. I would not do that.

[Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I think about—I was thinking about your work in relation to Viola's, and I was thinking in particular about gesture and texture, and that, to me, seemed to be a place where the two could speak to each other and overlap. Is there—gesture in particular. Does it seem true to you or no?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I find her big figures as fairly—I mean, the gestures are so constrained because of the way she works.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Though certainly, I'm not thinking of your exuberant dance pieces at all, but more of the hanging pieces, hatted—the hatted series.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where it's very minimal.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: But there is a sense of—they feel gestural to me.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Maybe not so much to you. Do you think of—did you think about those ecstatic dancing figures at all in terms of Matisse?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, of course.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, I did—there is a piece at the di Rosa preserve, gold-plated form on a tripod kind of form. So it comes up and then there is dancers levitating off, and it's an homage to Matisse. I mean, it's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Is that the title of it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think it is the title of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh okay. It sounds like a variation on—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Homage—something—we'd have to look it up. "M's Dancers" or something, but I mean, it's very clear to anybody. If you have ever—you know, the circle of Matisse's dancers, it's those dancers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course. Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, it's a clear, you know—I just—

MIJA RIEDEL: And it feels like that—I mean, I feel like, oftentimes, some of those dancers, though, are just—are variations on that, but then it goes to a more ecstatic, exuberant sense. And I think in particular about the witches piece, *The Witches M*—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, that's it. *The Witches M*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Is the piece I'm talking about, that's the Matisse, *The Witches Matisse*, retaking their own vessel, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I see.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The women reclaiming their stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Would you say more about that and why the vessel was an essential part of that? Because that's—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I mean, that vessel is a symbol, you know, of the uterus, the woman as a vessel of knowledge or the vessel of—there is a myth about a snake drinks the blood from the vessel—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and transforms itself into a bird and flies off and takes the power to the guys in the sky.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: All the guys.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: In the sky. I mean, you know, if you look on my bookshelf, I mean, you've got *the Holy Bible*, *The Golden Bough*, you know, something—*Women's Dictionary of Symbols and Objects*, and *Fun with Hieroglyphs*, and *The Presence of the Past*, and *The Civilization of the Goddess*, and it's all goddess stuff. But I mean, it's like the Celtic world, you know. *I Am The Transformative* something up there; I can't see the title now, but I went to Lascaux, the real Lascaux.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: In 1984, Lyn Kienholz had done this show of California sculptors—and of course, they were all men—and it was at USC, where they have the Olympics down there, a big Olympic stadium and—what's his name?—Robert Graham did those figures on those big things for the gates of the stadium [Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum]. Anyway, she, Lyn, such a smart woman, so lovely, she arranged for a tour of Bordeaux because the show went to Bordeaux.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And Bordeaux is L.A.'s sister city. And so she arranged for all these collectors in L.A. to pay enough money for her to tour them around that it paid—I don't know—the artist's hotel, and you could bring somebody, and then—so I went, and everybody came with their wives, and—almost everybody, and I think Judd Fine came along, can't remember exactly. But anyway, and Kirk Arneson, Bob's youngest son who's working in the archive now, here, was—he was taking a year off from college, and he was working that fall at a vineyard, at a winery in the south of France out of Bordeaux. And so he then met us in Paris, we picked up a new car, a Peugeot, and we drove south to go down to this show. And anyway, we had been in Paris several times, so it wasn't a big deal for us to rush back from Bordeaux to Paris.

All the other artists rushed back right away. Okay. So all the artists were rushing back to Paris, and we stayed because Lyn had invited us to go on this tour, and she had [Jacques] Chaban-Delmas, who was at that time the mayor of [. . . Bordeaux -SS]—and he had this fabulous dinner for the artists, all at the Mairie [de Bordeaux; city hall]. And the reason I remember about Jeff Fine is because Lyn said, "Everybody, the guys have to bring a tie. You have to wear a tie to the mayor's. Get dressed." And you know, Bob Arneson never wore a tie, but anyway, he did. [Laughs.] So we went down from the hotel to get a cab, and Judd Fine gets in first, and he says, "To the mayor—to the Marie!" Anyway, and so I could say a little bit of French, and so I got it across that it was to the Mairie. And the guy looks at us, and then I had the card, and I gave it to him, and he said "Oh! Bonne."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So anyway, off went and it was a really great dinner, and Bruce

Beasley was in that exhibition, and he was there with his wife, Laurence, who—her family has a chateaux in the south of France that we later visited. But Bruce had arranged for us to all have a tour of the real Lascaux cave with the guy who is the caretaker, who is the guy who discovered it, the guy whose dog fell through—at that time. I mean, I don't know if they're still living there, but his dog, they were out playing in a field, and the dog fell into a hole, and when he went to get the dog, he was in this cave, and that was the discovery of Lascaux. So then, [Francois] Mitterrand came into the area, and of course, we all got bumped. So we couldn't go to Lascaux; that was canceled. But yet we stayed—

MIJA RIEDEL: So you didn't get—you weren't able to go?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, we did because, then, the night before we were leaving, they came from the hotel, knocking on our hotel—on our door. If we were still available, they had space for three Americans and two French artists were going. And so it was Bob Arneson and myself and our son Kirk, and these two French young people. And we had been told, "You will only be in there," I don't know, 15 minutes or something. "Don't speak," yadda yadda. We were in there for well over two hours. It was extraordinary. The guy spoke wonderful English; he was so giving of information. It was one of the most emotional things, to stand there where people painted that many centuries ago, you know? You are just like, it was phenomenal. So we had already seen, of course, the fake Lascaux that they have there, but to go—

MIJA RIEDEL: What year was this, Sandra?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It would be 1984. The fall of '84.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it was just an extraordinary thing, but there is a wonderful—is it *The Transformative Vision* or something? Anyway there is been all kinds of stuff written about Lascaux or those cave paintings since then. Oh, here it is: *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light [Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture]*, by Thompson. I think it's this one. *Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture* by William Irwin Thompson. So this was a really interesting book for me and got me thinking about a lot of different kinds of things, as opposed to just what I had learned in anthropology and those kind of places.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, it was a great—a lot was going on in the '70s and '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And it kind of grew out of what happened in the late-'60s culturally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then as those people matured and became historians and stuff and started thinking about things in different ways and exploring, I just think it was a great explosion, a great time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think about your work in terms of spirituality?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes; yes. I mean, and it's—oh, there is a couple journals that publish spiritual—something from—we'd have to look in those materials I have.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: A stack of—because I can't remember who did what, and I—one was in San Francisco. Was it out of Grace Cathedral or—I don't know. I can't remember all those things. But yes, I think they're—you know, I think artists are—I think there is a spiritual part of, probably, everybody, and one thing that artists can do is tap into that in some way. And it's not specific to any religion.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, those symbols all have so much going on.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I think one point you have made is that many of those symbols appear in different cultures.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they just—they're more archetypal than specific to any certain religion.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, right, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think about the work in terms of feminism or any kind of gender commentary?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, yes, certainly, there is an aspect of that with all the chalice stuff and the vessels. I mean, I just picked right up on that, you know. I mean, you describe—the way you describe a pot, you know, the foot, the body, the shoulder, the neck, it's always described in bodily terms.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Especially when you start making these vessels, you know, and they're like your size.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Your figures seem to be exclusively or almost exclusively female.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think—didn't—on the one at Davis, on *Cnawan Stone* didn't I sort of have to mix that up a little bit or kind of—I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But for the most part, pretty consistently through the years.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, I made it—I redid a Picasso painting of two female figures and a male figure dancing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And that was the—you saw the male figure yesterday in the warehouse.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Alexander*, we're talking about. Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. So that was right out of a Picasso painting, and I had a giant drawing of it here on the wall and worked on it. Anyway, I made it in clay. That was, like, the end of it for me with clay because you just cannot really stabilize those things, and I didn't want that clunkiness. I really wanted a lightness and motion, you know. Real gesture, real dancing, and you just—it's not the way clay is. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that's when I started working with bronze.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it's exceptional, I think, thinking about the vessels that we saw yesterday at your warehouse, they're very—the huge vessels, probably four feet tall and maybe two and a half feet wide—how thin they are in ceramic. I thought, at first, they were metal because, when you did go back to doing those ceramic, very large vessels, clearly, that the weight and the thinness was important to you.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, it was. But ability to do that—and also working in bronze really influenced the textures on those pots and how I was able to use glaze to build up a texture that I would then—like a lot of glaze kind of bubbles on the surface.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Thin it out and draw with it. So it had these little—well, I wasn't making granulated gold, obviously, but it gets this granular kind of form—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So then when you brush over it with lustres and you are really drawing—so you are drawing with the glaze to get a kind of surface, you know, with the full knowledge, "This glaze is going to be shiny, and this glaze is going to be bubbly and textured." And so you know where you are going with that. You are not just slopping color all over, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: That was very influenced by what I could do, the kinds of textures I could get in bronze because, when you are working, especially when you are working with wax, you know, you have to get it soft. It's—microcrystalline wax is pretty hard, so you use heat to soften it, like a lamp with a can. Put the wax in there, sit in the window over here in the morning in the sun, and then have a bucket of water in case it gets too soft, you know. So you are able to get textures and do kinds of things that are well-preserved in bronze. And with the kinds of molds we use today, where we can use silicone, or you can shell, use ceramic shell.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you get real textures, and Walla Walla's very good—like [Deborah] Debbie Butterfield's pieces are a good example of that. They—she often makes those, what looks like sticks; they're in bronze.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So she makes those out of sticks that she finds, and then they cut them apart and mark them, and they actually dip the stick in ceramic shell and burn it out and then—and get the—blow the ash out, and then pour in the bronze. So those are unique pieces. Those are not—there is no molds.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it's just a different way of—when you realize what you can do with the material, it's very different. I mean Kathy Butterly does a lot of texture stuff with her ceramic, but she's working with that really fine little porcelain, and she keeps it on a small scale. But I wanted to work in a bigger scale. You know, I mean, I used to always make—keep porcelain going here. I always—I must have made hundreds of cups because I made a cup every day when I came to the studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: A little thin cup, about four inches high, pinched as thinly as I could. But when I decided to make those big vessels, I was actually using a sculpture mix that was available here that—it's what Bob Arneson used to make his big heads. So it's sewer tile clay with extra grog in it, and you know, some bentonite to make a little bit more plastic. And so you could roll out a big coil, and then, you know, and put it on the plaster table, and then just take your hand and, you know, kind of hatch it, so it's spread out into a big, flat thing. But, you know, it depends on your hands, so you only want it probably the length of your fingers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And then you start. You put it on, score and slip, and put it on there, and then you are pinching it up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And you build up and coil. So they are basically coil-built pots. And you are building with coils, and you have the right clay, you can get very thin.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But it's tough on the hands.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I can't do it anymore because, now, if I do the pinching—

MIJA RIEDEL: Especially that kind of clay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE:—my hands just swell up like a, you know, a mitt or something, and I—it's some kind of nerve or vascular thing. I mean, they don't even—and you know, my hands actually get black and blue marks, and it's very painful. I think that I damaged the blood, the vascular system because I will get—the ends of my fingers will be black and blue and swollen. The doctors just [shrug –SS].

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, right, okay, if I don't do that, I'm fine, so—but it's hard, you know. You get older and you have abused your body doing sculpture. I mean, gee, I tried to take care of myself.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Have your travels affected your work?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: We talked about Rome, of course, and—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: You spent a year in Paris in '95-'96. That's much later though.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, that was later, and that was about something else. That was about, actually getting out of dodge. I mean Bob had died, and I had finished this inventory, and my brain was totally fried. And my daughter was going to school in Walnut Creek, so I was in this big carpool, commuting these kids back and forth, and trying to keep all this together here, and didn't really know where I was going with Bob's work or what—how we were going to do things. I wasn't organized about it, and I just needed some time away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So a friend was going on sabbatical. That whole family was going, and they had—it was actually John Fineberg and Marianne [Malone] Fineberg, and their two daughters and son. And so the middle daughter Noni was Tenaya's age, thereabout, and they had come out in the summer before, I guess, and gone to Yosemite with us. After Bob had died, and we—so we—Bob always took us all—we always went to Yosemite, a whole family thing in June. So John and Marianne and the kids came out, and we did that together, and the Arneson boys went, and I went, and then we went—maybe that was the summer before that we went; I don't know how close in proximity that was—but anyway, everybody knew each other from, and we kind of got along, and I mean, they're good friends of mine.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so Jonathan and I actually met in Paris and went to look for apartments, and I elected to get an apartment right at the Commerce metro stop in a really ugly '70s apartment building, but it had a big window facing south, and it had two bedrooms across this big entryway, where there was a dining table, two bedrooms, and actually a living room and a kitchen, and, of course, a separate water closet, shower room, and I mean, it was just perfectly set up. And an American couple from San Francisco were giving up the lease; they were coming back, and so I was able to buy all their stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Including a computer. I said, "Just leave it all right here."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I was—so it was—I remember when I got to Paris that I think I went and I bought—I went to the Galeries Lafayette, and I bought a big Le Creuset pot because there wasn't a big pot to make winter meals in, and it was very wintery. But John and Marianne were about a subway stop away in a very, very beautiful building that they had a spiral staircase in which they'd stuffed [. . . –SS] one of these glass elevators [in the middle –SS] to get up to their—you know, and if too many people got in, it wouldn't work, and it—oh boy. But I mean, that was great for them. They were there, and it was just really—you walked up this great shopping street. My

daughter was there last year in Paris, and she said, "Oh mom, I'm in the Rue de Commerce; it's so disappointing. It's not like it ever was before. It's just all Subways and," you know, totally not—she would go around the corner to the butcher shop, and she would order double-cut lamb chops. I mean, she had it—she still does have a really fancy taste in food that would run you right out of your budget.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But they loved her because she could go and order in French. And they loved it. Even though I was having a hard time with that French, she was going to the French-American school nearby. That was why we stayed in this neighborhood because we knew the kids were getting into Jeannine Manuel, which is a French, a bilingual school in Paris.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how old was Tenaya then?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: She turned 9 there—

MIJA RIEDEL: How perfect.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —in August, where—after we got there July—we got there just before Bastille day because that's when I realized the bed that I was sleeping in—I didn't understand why they had it turned the way they did because you couldn't see the Eiffel Tower. But if you turned the bed and put it around the other way you could see the Eiffel Tower, and on Bastille Day, of course, they have all these laser going off. I mean, it's fabulous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So I could see just the top of the Eiffel Tower, but nevertheless, it was wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh absolutely. So let's talk a little bit about the Arneson Trust and the Arneson Archive and what the original inspiration was for both of them and how that is evolving over time.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I mean, one thing about having cancer for 17 or something years is that you have time to think about stuff and get your affairs in order, even if you do it toward the end. But Bob did do it, and so he—there was a lawyer in the Bay Area that had worked with some other artists he knew, and anyway, everything got put into a trust, a family trust for the benefit of the family. And I, as a trustee, have a fiduciary responsibility to, you know, do the right things with this work. I have had great support from everybody that—I mean, it seems to be working just fine. And we work—I work very well with the dealers, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: So the goal of the trust is what in particular, or is there a goal?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, we don't—it's not—really, the goal is to get the work placed, major pieces placed in major places, and to keep it available, to be exhibited, to maintain—we have tried to maintain a core body of work, so we would have work for exhibitions.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: As I age and as things change, maybe that is something we'll work harder at, dispersing some of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Nobody really wants to—well, we just have to see how that's going to work. I mean, we're—but it's something that we talk about a lot: how will this go forward? And then if you get knocked off walking down the street, or whatever, you know, what are we going to do? So we have a plan, and that's kind of all I really want to say about that. But beyond that, there is an archive. There's papers; there is all his correspondence; there is a lot of books: books about him, books, catalogs from group shows, catalogs of solo exhibitions, all kinds of family history, his own photographs that he took traveling or at Yosemite when he was getting ready to do the *Mountain and Lake*, which is at Syracuse. All the photographs of rocks and water and—so all the photographs and the xeroxes, color xeroxes he made of those slides.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sketches?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Everybody thought of—no, he would photograph people like Bob Hudson and William Wiley and Peter Voukos and everybody whose portrait he did, you know, or friends, you know. There's some great photographs of John and Debbie. He never did them. But—John Buck and Deborah Butterfield. Roy de Forest, me, Viola. Did a great portrait of Viola, and in fact, he had a lot of trouble with the pedestal, so there is a table over here with a big V on it made out of very heavy redwood pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that—

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SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —cost a little money to have made, but anyway. He didn't think the head looked good on there, so it's this big giant head of hers, which is now the di Rosa. And finally, he threw this pedestal. You know, made a big, clay pedestal. So it was just—this was just too open an area. It was wrong.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: There were only a few of those. There was another piece where he had somebody make a pedestal out of it, so it looked like an old packing crate. He had Atthowe [Fine Art Services] make it. Most expensive crater in the Bay Area, and the best, earns his money. Those guys are fabulous. So they made him this fake—he drew it up; they made it for him. And he had a piece, and he worked on his piece and—and he went, "Why is the piece all"—the thing just didn't work. So finally, he took the head, and he took a chisel, and he chiseled off most the glaze.

MIJA RIEDEL: This is on Viola's bust?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, no, this was on a piece Bob had made, which was basically—I guess it was basically a portrait of himself, but doesn't look like himself at all. It wasn't. It was a *Curator of Contemporary Curiosities* [1989] or something, and now, it has a totally different name [now titled *Dis-Eased*, 1991 –SS]. [. . . It was never exhibited by Arneson or by his estate. –SS] A wonderful collector foundation bought it, you know. Yes. It's a really a—I could show you pictures. It's really a nasty piece, I mean, it's tough. It's tough.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But, you know, the birthing of it was also tough.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean, lots of frustration and, "Oh yuck, what did I do now?" And then—You know, when you are—when you've got a whole piece, it's—you know, it's—what?—

MIJA RIEDEL: Three feet tall.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —35 inches high. So 35 inches' high head—just the head is that big—and you got the whole thing glazed, and you decide you don't like it, and you take a chisel and chisel it off and don't break the head, that takes a little bit of doing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely—[laughs]. It's amazing, actually.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. So anyway, it was a—

MIJA RIEDEL: So, the archive does not have a website.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: No, we don't.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is that something that might happen in the future?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh my gosh.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Sorry to bring it up.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, there is a lot of discussion about that and about maintenance of a website. At this point, I just have relied on the galleries to just put the work up on their websites. And they funnel stuff to me; people contact them. I don't, you know—I should have something, and it hasn't gotten done yet. I had a woman working for me for a while who had just gotten her—or was getting her master's degree at John Kennedy University here in Orinda in curatorial studies, I guess. And she did her final project on managing small estates, and her big recommendation was you have to have a website, whatever. She was here working on scanning. She scanned all Bob's notebooks for us. We [. . . only had –SS] Xerox copies of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: And are the notebooks journals? Are they sketchbooks?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, all of that. All of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. From travels? From teaching? All sorts of—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Mostly just—yes, it was studio, traveling, and—I mean, yes, it was a few—when he traveled he didn't do—he did—took a lot of pictures, like in Rome, you know, some of those big heads and stuff, you know; Greece, less sketching, some notes, and, often, on a little flip—you know, a little something you get to keep in your pocket.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Traveled with a camera wherever he was. His Nikon.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that pretty much throughout his career, the camera went along?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I don't know. He got the camera around 1969 or '70. He and Art Schade had ordered them, and they had to go down to customs and get them and [. . . take –SS] something to grind off the Nikon thing because they ordered—I can't remember how it works. But anyway, they were just great old Nikon cameras. Out of date now, but still have them—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: So what are the goals for the archive?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, we are not archivists, trained archivists. This is eventually not how it should be done. But our goal is to get all the information we have, and my memory is a—I mean, there is a lot of things I can sort through quickly.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Now, we're at the—because I worked side by side with Bob in the studio from the time we got together. And certainly, later in his life, helped run his office, although he had Patricia Thomas working for [. . . him –SS], and I mean, she's just been on—and we—so there is been a whole number of people then. Kelly Lindner—who now is—L-I-N-D-N-E-R—who now works at—she runs the gallery and the public art program at California State University, Chico. But she was working for a while. She was, for a couple years, commuting from Chico down to the Bay Area a few days a week, working for ALF and working for me. And before that, before she went to get her degree at Bard College at the Center for Curatorial studies, {and prior to that, –SS} she worked for me and so she was living at San Francisco.

I think Tenaya was in—still needed—there were still times she would stay with Tenaya. Tenaya's 29, so sometimes, she would stay with Tenaya when Tenaya was in junior high, and I was traveling. So, you know, long term. And she'll still—I just emailed her the other day; she said she would come down sometime and do a tune up for us. But I don't know—I think about what—you know, Kirk has done such a phenomenal job of researching images. We have boxes of images; we just didn't know what they were. He's just painstakingly gone through all these records from Allan Frumkin and George Adams and every letter anybody wrote and just any records to a piece and got that all coordinated, so we found we were able to place a lot of pieces, or we were able to say we had the wrong date on them.

We still rely a lot on the slides that Bob hand labeled. We try to keep them in their—you know, of course, it's not dark enough, and it's not cold enough, but you know, I mean, one of the things about the notebooks was getting them years ago, when I xeroxed them, was getting them into a safe deposit box. Because bank, you know, that's the cheapest climate-controlled storage you can—if it'll fit in a bank box, it's great. You know, we would keep an extra set of slides in there and an extra set of 4x5s and, you know, really, you know, you could travel to somewhere like—there are art storage places. I'd have to go to the Bay Area and rent a climate-controlled room and have it all there. But, you know, for me, I don't want to be driving from Benicia when I need to reference the original. And then, this is just as safe as Oakland or San Francisco.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Would you ultimately like to see the archive in an academic setting?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. But, you know, there has to be—there have to be people who

are interested in it, people to work on it, people to keep it going. I think that that's critical and, you know, we have talked to some people, but it's kind of—I mean, at point, push will come to shove, and I'll say, "Okay, we will do either this or that." We'll have to make some decisions. But right now, we are kind of waiting just to see what happens next, and you know, there are some shows being talked about. There is some this and some that. So you just—you are in this—with this kind of in between point where we just want to let those things settle out. I mean, I'm telling you—did you see this article on the archives of Robert Rauschenberg?

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I mean, this is phenomenal what they have going on down there. There is so much stuff, and he was such a collector. You know? And that—every bicycle he ever bought and all kinds of things. And I will say that we are fortunate that Bob Arneson was really not a collector in that way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: This would—I mean, I couldn't have managed all that—[laughs]—because he threw a lot—had a lot of stuff and he—I mean, he collected art of other people's, and he has—we have a lot of ceramic stuff stored out in the warehouse because I just can't keep dusting it. I can't keep it in my house; it made me crazy. And again, when I was going off to Paris, I had to change what was in my house because one of my sons had two young kids, and he was going to be here and—living here and, you know, it's just not fair. They have never been around this stuff, you know? They don't know to be careful and not throw a ball in the house and, you know. I mean they were pretty good. I had some big paintings up, but small, fragile things I just thought, "Relieve the parent of the worries here." [Laughs.] But if I had that massive amount of stuff, I mean—that Rauschenberg has, I wouldn't have the money. And that's what people don't understand about—you know, it is our cultural history. I think artists make a really important contribution. And unfortunately—well, you have read how hard it is to give away a library even. You know. I mean, people don't want books. They don't want this—and yet, when—now, a really tired art historian curator who is about to retire said, "Oh, just keep the ones he made marks in, make a note on the edge, and get rid of them."

MIJA RIEDEL: Get rid of them, being?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: The books.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, get rid of the books.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I mean, then you have somebody else who says, "If he read it, if he looked at it, if he kept it, if he kept it and he didn't get rid of it, you don't get rid of it." And that's kind of the way we have operated. We have just kept everything. You know? And we are fortunate that we have storage in several places. I mean, one of the first things we did was photocopy all of the reviews, all that stuff several times. And they're stored in different places, and we have the original. Somebody comes to do research here, and they look at the photocopy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Does that happen often?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It doesn't happen real often, but it happens.

MIJA RIEDEL: So was that, for example, Jonathan Fineberg's book, it must have been fantastic for him to have access to all this material over years.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that, in itself, is an excellent example of why it's wonderful to have it all here.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, and in one place. Joan Simon is working on a book, the independent curator, Joan Simon. And she's done—been here and spent many hours just looking at the Pollock books. And we have a—I don't know—two-and-a-half feet of Pollock material that Bob read. Some of it, he annotated; some of it, he didn't. Some of it has clay splatters on it because he was making *Guardians of the Secret II*, and you know, that's a painting, and he made it as a sculpture. So of course, it has a back side and, you know, you go around it, and it's a three-dimensional thing. So his interpretation of what this is and what the secret is and all that stuff is all—so all that's—that's resource material. And people working on—Bill Berkson's working on part of that, so he's involved. In fact, he just asked me for a photograph. I have got a photograph of—Bill's done a lot on Philip Guston. And I have a photograph of Bob and Philip Guston when Philip came out for his retrospective here, just before he passed away.

And so we were all in the bow of a—or in the back of a yacht on San Francisco Bay, and so it's Phyllis Wattis and Philip Guston and Bob Arneson. It's the only snapshot I took—[laughs]. I mean, I have—you know, so it's all this family stuff, you know? What's family, and what's—you know, and I have to go find that photograph because I told Bill I had it, and I do have it. I'm pretty sure I know where it is here in the office. I'm sure it's been taken out of family photographs, but it used to be in family photographs, you know, so—or pictures of the kids in here, you know, in the studio. Tenaya, when she was little, was always in here working with Bob. You know, pictures of—Bob told a terrible story once. He had a—his youngest son—his oldest son, Leif, came down to TB-9 with him and—and wherever; I don't know if it was TB-9 yet. But anyway, Bob had thrown all these pots, and he was whacking on them with a stick, and Leif started whacking on them with a stick and that—and Bob spanked him.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Now, you know, Bob says, "Oh, I feel so badly." You know, that was, like, not what you do. You know, he was just following my example. I just—he was too young to get it. So by the time Tenaya came long, you know, it's many, many years later. I mean, like 25 years later or something, so Tenaya's out here; he gives her a stick. "You want to work on this dog with me?" [Laughs.] Or some pieces they made together that we have. A mask, especially, she worked on. Really, you know. So to those—are those—yes, they're archived. I mean, and all kinds of videotapes that we have to get digitized. This is my next big thing to work on. So those are archival things that are—hopefully, enough art sells to pay for that maintenance of that stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Best case scenario, where would you like to see the archive in the future?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I'm not sure—you know what? Again, who's prepared to do it? Obviously, Bob taught at the University of California at Davis.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And was very connected there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: They are building a museum. I keep saying you need an archive. The provost will almost look at me and—[laughs]—go the other way I have said it so many times. I know

they are not discussing it right now; they're just trying to get the museum built. But they also don't have a Ph.D. program in art history. So what will they do? Develop a fellows program and bring people in? And you know, my opinion is, always, the University is a multi-national corporation, and it needs to support the cultural life of this country. Of course, the University of California, particularly with its relationship with the California State Legislature, et cetera, is more and more a private institution that has not developed the donor base the way an old-time, private institution like Harvard or Yale has. So then you get into a real bind. And the—and the archive may not go to the place that we would prefer it. Or that would make the most sense because there may not be any support for that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is it important to you that it stays in California?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, it makes sense. One time, a director of the Cantor Gallery [Cantor Art Center at Stanford University] came to see me; I think it was before I went to Paris or maybe after I came back. And his idea was, "Well, we would love to have all of this, but you have to endow it." [Laughs.] I just laughed and I was so offended. And the curator who was with him, who has—was just an incredible support over the years of Bob's work, and she has left Stanford now, but fairly—about a year ago, and there is a—an exhibition. It's been up since last fall and will come down in September.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, of Bob's work.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right. So she's the one that put that together.

MIJA RIEDEL: What's her name?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Hilarie Faberman. Yes, she was just a—you know, a real renegade kind of a person, I couldn't believe she was at Stanford because you don't think of Stanford as the kind of—you know, but she did an amazing job. She doesn't get along with their amazing new director; I guess they had some kind of—that was the end of that, but that's too bad in my opinion, but you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's the *Fatal Laughs* show, correct?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes. Yes. I mean, they have a wonderful director, so what can I say? You know, it's just things change. But I have learned. What I have learned is—and I have talked with Neal Benezra [Director, San Francisco-MoMA] and Gary Garrels [Chief Curator, San Francisco-MoMA] about this. You don't want everything in one place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why is that?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Because—because, the organization changes. The director changes; the curators change, so in the—what?—1992 or something, Jim Demetron retired from the Hirschhorn. He was the director of the Hirschhorn. Maybe it was 1990—I can't even—I don't know. But I gave a piece in his honor because he had bought so many sculptures of Bob's for the Hirschhorn. There is a wonderful collection there. Well, when Jim was alive, there were always Arnesons on display. Jim didn't even know, until very recently when he went back to Washington, I only talked to him a couple weeks ago. He called me; he said, "This is very long, overdue conversation. I want to thank you for giving that *I Have My Eyes on Me Endlessly* piece to the Hirschhorn in my honor. I had no idea. I was invited back to give a lecture—[laughs]. And they showed it." I said, "Oh my gosh, Jim, really?" —he was really embarrassed. I mean, he's such a lovely

man. And so that's an example of, you know, right there in Washington, some wonderful pieces.

General Nuke, which Bob gave after his retrospective, *The Portrait of Mike Henderson*, a great anti-nuclear drawing. Oh, there is whole bunch of pieces, you know? The Stedelijk, Edy de Wilde was the director; they bought—the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam—bought quite a lot of west coast ceramics work. Big pieces of Bob's, the Swimmer [*Current Event*, 1973], *George and Mona in the Baths of Coloma* [1976], the portrait of Pete Voulkos, *Clown* [1977], I'm not sure what else is—not off the top of my brain. But, you know, it's not—they don't show that. They haven't shown it for years. Edy died, and that's the end of that. So right now, San Francisco, Neal Benezra is the director, and he had done Bob's retrospective—well, he was the curator under Demetrian at the Hirschhorn when—he was at Des Moines, I guess, Art Center, which organized Bob's retrospective. And Demetrian was there, and then one morning, like about 7:00 a.m. here, the phone rang, and Allan Frumkin made me get Bob Arneson out of bed and put his hearing aid on, so he could hear on the telephone. Allan said, "I'm dancing on the table. Jim Demetrian's going to the Hirschhorn, and that means your retrospective will go there."

And it did, you know, and it came back to Oakland. You know, that was all—that was all great but—so Neal's moved around. So now, Neal, after Des Moines, he went to the Hirschhorn, then went to Chicago, then he came to San Francisco to be the director at SFMOMA, and Gary had been here and had went back to the Modern in New York and then came back, so they were both supporters of Bob's work. Gary did a wonderful show in, probably, '96 called *Self Reflections*. And you know, periodically, we talk about what—we have always tried to give work to SFMOMA because that's the museum—Gretchen Berggruen said this to me; "That's the museum your children are going to go to. That's where they'll see the work." Well, they'll see it if the administration is—puts it out. Anyway, at the current time, there seems to be—they just, you know—they spent a gigantic amount of money buying the George Moscone, the portrait of George Moscone sculpture a couple years ago. And that will go back out when the new museum opens.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course, I would imagine.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So, and I think other work will be out. So, it's some—it's just—but I said to Neal and Gary, "No, you know, I'm not going to give you everything. So don't even think that." First of all, I have a fiduciary responsibility to my children. I can't just be giving everything away. I only do that if I have a reason that I have to do it. You know, and whatever. And then everything can't be there because you guys are going to go away, and the next people might not want Bob Arneson's work out. So we want it to be dispersed around the world. You know, and I love that little college galleries bought stuff early on. There's some wonderful pieces, you know. Colby College in Maine. Whitewater, Wisconsin. I mean, all these places, you know, really small institutions. Up in Minnesota, there are some wonderful pots; I'm sure that's because of the influence of Warren MacKenzie. You know, there is stuff down at—I mean, there is stuff everywhere. There's stuff down at Claremont here. Scripps. Scripps Annual. But—and some of those things I didn't even know about until well after Bob died, you know? Something would happen; a show would come up; someone would email me, or they'd call the gallery. Bob Arneson is still listed in the phone book here, so they can always get ahold of him. [Laughs.] Why not?

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, and it is—it is wonderful to see—we mentioned this in passing yesterday—how many exhibitions have included his work or have been solo exhibitions in the past 20 years.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, apparently—I just had a text right now from Squeak Carnwath that the Matthew Marks show is reviewed in the Blouin Art Guide and—what did she say here? This is just now, "*What Nerve* show at Matthew Marks gets reviewed in Blouin online. Bob's coin

piece mentioned."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, so that's a show that originated at RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], wonderful catalogue with that. The book is incredible. I didn't see it at RISD. It's gone down to Matthew Marks, and we had been told they were going to borrow John Figure, which is a large toilet piece from us. And that—they were going to really expand the show. And I don't know what happened about that, but anyway. I'm glad Bob's piece is mentioned because I had heard from a couple of dealers that the California artists that were in that show really got short shrift. And I don't know if that was a shipping issue or what issue or what they could get their hands on. I mean, they certainly—plenty of work in New York. They could have borrowed more work or—but I'm glad the coin piece gets mentioned because it's—I know who owns that now. They'll be happy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that your experience, in both your career and in Robert Arneson's, that it is extra hard to get attention for California artists or not so much?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, New York is New-York-centric. That's always the way it's been. I mean, you know, if you—there are very few dealers who will deal with the shipping and the distance and the this and the that, and now, with all this social stuff going on where they want you to show—I mean, you know, I know young artists from here, have a dealer back there, and they are told show up for this dinner Saturday night or else. And they do; they get on a plane, and they go. You know, I wouldn't have the energy for that today—[laughs]. We went to New York three or four times a year, looked at everything. I mean, a hard march. It wasn't like go sit at the bar and drink. It was a hard march. And it was easier when everything was in SoHo. Chelsea made it more difficult because of all the up and downs, you know. In SoHo you only had a few places where you went up. You know, 420 West Broadway, you went up a few floors, and there were a few other places, but mostly, it was all on the ground floor.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And none of the artists were living upstairs. And then it became the dealers living upstairs, then it became the fancy people living upstairs. You know, it's just different. And also running up and down in Manhattan, going uptown to see this, and downtown, and the lower east side. I'm really fortunate in that when I go with Art Schade, since he lived there for so long, he really knows how to get around. And I have learned a lot. And I—when we had the house upstate, I would even go in sometimes by myself, and you know, I'm perfectly comfortable in New York and taking the subways and figuring it out and moving around.

MIJA RIEDEL: So one of the things that you focused on intensively over the past few years, it sounds like, is the development of a relational database that's specific to your needs. And it would be wonderful to hear how that's evolved and what it entails.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Okay, so before—I suppose in the late '70s, I believe it was, that was kind of a watershed time for Bob because he had done a lot of drawings and things. I mean, we are having still problems with that because he would send them off to galleries, and they wouldn't have photograph, and we never got a photograph, and they didn't get catalogued. And so whatever, whenever he had hired then Anne Kohs, who was working for Manuel Neri and taking care of his affairs, business affairs. And so Anne had Jeremy Stone as a young employee, and Jeremy's father, Allan, was this great hoarder of art, collector of everything, and had a lot of Bob's early work. So

Anne was able to get Jeremy to go to her dad's house in Purchase, New York and take a lot of—try to document the work that Allan had. And this is not easy because she's probably not allowed to move, you know, 10 trophies off of the grand piano or out from underneath it. So she's taking these little pictures and making these great little drawings. So anyway, this was the start of a database. And it was not online; I mean, it was not on the computer. And it was these big, very big sheets. I don't know what they—what are they?—like 18x10 or something? Ten inches high. Big—in big folders in there. So there is a color photograph or, later, colored Xerox of each work, and the work is described.

And we still maintain that hard copy, even though—at some point, the collector, Ross Turk, showed up here with a—oh, a wonderful man who just passed away. But he's a—he was just a great supporter of Bob's work and buying work at the Candy Store. They became—we all became friends and his wife, Paula Gaus, is just an incredible woman. So, Ross came here with a computer, a little tan, you know, off-white Mac, two C1 or two I. I can't even remember, but a little thing. And he brought some games, and he brought some stuff for Tenaya, so obviously, that was—must have been '90 by then.

And so we got on the computer, and we hired a guy, Chris Parks, who had set up the database on FileMaker Pro for the University of California Davis, Nelson Gallery of Art. And Chris came and formatted FileMaker Pro for us. But it was just a one page where it really just basically had identification for the work; there wasn't an image, but each work got an ID number and then the title and then the—you know, the year and then the materials and the dimensions and where it went, where it was, who owned it all. Didn't have too much. Then we kept getting better, you know, updated FileMaker Pro, and it was clear there were many more capabilities today. So finally, a few years ago, I would say after I got on the Board of ALF.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was 2006?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think so, yes. I hired—so all these big foundations seemed to use—there is one guy in New York who developed the rational database for the Motherwell Foundation—and he does it for lots of people, and it costs, you know, \$30,000 or something to have him do that. And I mean, it's a lot of money. I—that's a figure that I think was reasonable for today. I know what he used to charge, and I'm pretty sure it's gone—so I didn't have—I mean, I didn't have \$30,000 laying around to do that, so I found out that there is a man, Michael Carr here in the Bay Area, and he loves doing this work and would do it for me as I needed it: "So when you get the notebooks scanned in, when you are going to do that, you know, I'll do some work for you, and I'll charge you for that, and we'll make the next page, which will be from the notebooks. And then you will be able to write in an entry for the artwork."

So the whole thing now is very good because a researcher would come here; they would see page one of the database, which has a photograph of the work, of course, and tells whether it is at a public collection, the collection's name or a private collection, because we have to keep that information confidential. And we would not have collectors telling us they own pieces if we didn't keep it confidential because a lot of people don't want you to know—anybody to know where the work is. And I understand that, I mean, for tons of reasons. So we are absolutely confidential with that information.

So the initial page has all that kind of initial information, and then there are other pages for location, which has provenance and a page for remarks, like if a piece has been restored, and all this kind of thing. If it's a bronze, there is all kind of fabrication information. There is another page that has sales information. So we try to track—one of the things Kirk's done is go through all the old inventory

sheets and sales records he could find and enter what a piece was originally sold for or listed at. And then they would maybe track how it's—the sales record over the years, auctions, all that kind of stuff. So then, you can click on another area, and it will say "notebooks," and it will tell you if that artwork is mentioned in the notebooks and what page, because they are all—they all have a separate kind of notebook ID number. So you can actually, then, go into the notebooks and find that image.

MIJA RIEDEL: How many notebooks are there?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think there is 12? 14? They are those black mostly notebooks. And it was confusing because Bob would—he would have several going at once. He would have one at TB-9 and one at home, and if he had, you know—when he had a studio in the other end of E Street here in the late '60s, early '70s, I guess, he—early '70s, he would have a notebook there and then, you know, one would travel to another place and—oh, then he would find a notebook left in TB-9 that some student had used and start working it, you know, and they left it, and they were never coming back, so he would use that. So, you know, they are not all chronological, but toward the end, in the last years, he dated them, almost every day. And they would have notes like to tell his assistant what to do. And sometimes, it's as simple as walk the dogs.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, we would be gone, "We will be back; we are going to the city for the day, you know, walk the dogs, feed"—we had these Bouvier de Flandres dogs, big dogs. Or, you know, "Press three masks for me and do, you know, head from this size mold, press that because George—or throw a pedestal this dimensions."

One of the reasons Bob was so excited when George Grant showed up in Davis was because he came home, and he said, "You know, there is a guy who throws like I do. You know, kind of loose." And still, Bob had to cut it—"No, you have to make it looser," because George would get—he could get really tight, too. But you know, it—it was a great—it was just a great relationship, and George was very strong and young, and he could hoist this clay around. But you know, he had a lot of [hydraulic –SS] lifts here, too, but in terms of just taking, for a big head, you know, you got a slab of clay you stomp out, and then it is on burlap, and then you flop it over into plaster, and press it in, and the plaster's kind of a blank head, which has basic features, but you know, then you' are going to put that together, and you are going to work on that, so it's a completely unique piece. I mean, it's coming out of a press mold, but it is not—the press mold isn't the piece. That is just the blank; that's just a start. So George did a lot of that kind of work for him, helping load kilns and—I mean, he could get forms made for Bob and help—you know, Bob could lay pretty good directions for him, and he could do things, and then Bob would come back and work on it or change it or see that he left him the wrong dimensions, or we you change this or that. They never got—they just kind of just worked along and did it, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: How long did they work together?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, many years, I mean, first of all—well, at one point, George was commuting down here. And then he and his wife moved down here. So when their baby was born in July, I think, and Tenaya was born in August. So the kids are the same age. So Lillian [Grant] and Tenaya were good friends. Lillian used to come up to go on vacations with us and stuff, sometimes. Lillian and Heidi came to Paris to see us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry I—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Heidi works in clay, Heidi Bekebrede, George's wife. B-E-K-E-B-R-E-D-E. You can look that up, but she makes her line of Cuteware, C-U-T-E, W-A-R-E.

MIJA RIEDEL: So I have taken us away from the database; you were talking about the notebook pages—the notebook page on the database.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So that is one thing, there is the notebook page, and then there is the print section. You can go into "prints," and if the prints are related to sculpture drawing or there are drawings related to that print, it tells you that, so you can go look up that. And then the bibliography, and that we haven't—you know, we have not gone through every review and gotten it scanned in and entered with the numbers so that it will relate to—if the work is mentioned, you know that by looking at that page in the database. And then you can find that. Hopefully, it would have been scanned in—

And then you have all this problem with storage and how many hard drives you have and how many copies of that hard drive you have and where you keep them all and how they age and fail and links fail, and I mean, I just read some online magazine has just sold or given everything to a very important library. Is it the—I can't remember; it was in yesterday's paper, I believe—in *the New York Times*. And their concern is that, even though they are an online publication, that, again, links break; storage units fail, and you know, they are not able to maintain it. Well, if they can't, I can guarantee you there is going to be a point at which we can't either.

So we do have a database, a host. We are in the cloud. I can work on it if I'm in Oregon, you know, like on my laptop, and I can log in to work on it. Kirk can work on it here. I mean, there are some really fabulous tools today.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And even though I had to send you slides because I am—couldn't figure out how to send you a list of the images with the—digital images with the titles. I mean, I do have that. My database is not as developed. But every artist needs to keep records, and when you get to this—this kind of point, it is so critical now to capture as much information. I mean, as I age—[laughs]—you know, and Kirk is learning more and more about his dad's work, and then have a way to input new information that comes up and have it be a tool that'll go on—so this is something that, I believe, all artists' estates need an artist—preferably the artists themselves, you know, no paper bags full of slides anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs]

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Get those slides labeled with a title and what year you made it at least. And hire a kid, get a grant, you know There is some money around, not a lot for this, but, you know, get your records in order, on a computer, and have back up so that—have a—get a safety deposit box. Get some little external hard drives and back it up every month. You know, get from safety deposit box, have it—get it in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But then comes the point of whether you should be a foundation or a—or what kind of an entity you are going to be. And this is a very, very big issue because not everybody has a loving younger widow, which is who I am, whose—who either thinks, you know, not everybody wants to get involved in databases or, you know, really can't. You know, people just

throw up their hands sometimes. So who is going to run this stuff? Who is going to manage this? And then how much is it going to cost? And so Christine Vincent has done this great publication through the Aspen Institute about artist-endowed foundations. And part of it is a guide—I think it is a guide for people who are taking care of artists' estates who haven't really decided yet what to do. So she came here with a panel of people, and there were several different meetings at different places: one for people who already had foundations, one for people who had been identified as perhaps being a possibility for a foundation, like the Arneson Trust.

And then Leah Levy and I organized—hosted something at the—at Crown Point Press. Kathan Brown was lovely about letting us do that and cooperating with us. I think it was a Sunday morning where people came, and we—and again, this panel came, and one of the people on the panel finally said, "Okay, Christine is going to strike me down here, but I'm here to tell you that not every artist should have a foundation. You can't afford it. So figure out what you are going to do, bite the bullet, and get it done. Disperse your work; look at other avenues. There are lots of different things you can do."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And I thought it was just so refreshing. A lot of people in that room breathed a sigh of relief. But you have a number of people about Bob's age, that generation, who are getting to a point in their life where it is almost too late to—I mean, some people have lost parts of their memory or whatever; other people have died. You know, other people have health problems. And there is a huge amount of work to be done out here. And I'm—I know, in New York, I mean, the artist Ellen Lanyon who was from Chicago and had been a friend of Joan Mitchell's, and her son and daughter are now in her loft, and her son's an artist, very well-known artist and great guy and a teacher, and the daughter had been living in Jamaica, but I think she's mostly up here now at her mother's loft, and they're preparing for every—all of Ellen's ephemera to go to the Archives of American Art. Now, I'm not sure what kind of cataloguing they are doing or who they are working with, but I will tell you we were on this woman for years to do this.

And now, her son and daughter are—I know I talked to her son last Spring when I was in [. . . New York], and I can tell he was like, "Well, today I'm going to the art fair, but if you have—you know, if you have time"—it was during a Frieze—"Lisa is at the loft, and if you have time, stop by. We would like to show you what we are doing. We found some great photographs of Bob Arneson." I'm going like—I can't believe that they are doing this; you know, it is very, very, very taxing. And these people are very put together, smart, able to do it, know the New York art world inside and out.

But you know, Ellen should have done more. And her records and her—I mean, this stuff and her, you know, and it was a very—I don't know if you want to say tragic or very unexpected. I mean, she was coming back from making prints in England, and she was going through customs at JFK, and she had a heart attack, and that was the end of Ellen. And everybody was like, you know—[laughs]—could have happened to any of us. So I don't know. I mean, you just look around this studio, and you see the amount of work on my own work that—to be done and then the amount of work on, you know, cataloguing Bob Arneson's glazes or materials.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Side conversation.] I have a—[inaudible]—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, these things are important.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it—some of it just sits here, like you could come back, and there would be his brushes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. SHANNONHOUSE: Find a way and get to work on it, everybody. Do your loved ones a favor.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. So if—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —or if you want your legacy taken care of, I mean, maybe you don't care, but I still think you have a responsibility. I think it is a cultural history.

MIJA RIEDEL: So what are the other options that came up out of that Aspen Institute Conference other than foundations?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, just have it—just do it. Find somebody to do it. Decide if there is someone in your family that is going to do it, or are you going to hire somebody, or can you find—there is a foundation called POBA or something that does some of this. That is not a—the list of artists that they have helped do this is, you know—I just ran across this, again, in *the New York Times* the other day.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you have—you, at this point, are not a foundation; you are a trust and archive. Exactly.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: We are a family trust. And we have only—the archive part is—you know, it is actually part of the trust, but we have started to try to make a distinction, for one thing, so that whoever is working in the archive has an email address that is not my personal email address. So they can write to curators and things, and people understand where it is coming from.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: For another thing, to try to separate this idea of the body of art work—sculpture, drawings, maquettes, and the papers, and the—and then there is that middle ground of notebooks—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —so the papers, the books, the study material. So these are two—are really need to be—they are very related, but you have got to be cognizant of the fact that all the work may not be in one place—will not be in one place, but the archive needs to be in one place somewhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is that—

MS. SHANNONHOUSE: And it needs to be accessible.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that is the ultimate goal as well as the immediate goal.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right. So we just work along on it, keep as much information as we can.

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is MIJA RIEDEL with Sandra Shannonhouse at her studio in Benicia, California on July 23rd, 2015, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number four.

So in relation to all your work with the archives and the Arneson Archive and the Arneson Trust, you must bring a wealth of information and suggestions for Artists' Legacy Foundation.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I bring experience from this point of view, and it is—it has I think been valuable for the foundation, but I have also become really aware of how much we haven't done. For one thing, the foundation has professional employees who are a lot better trained than I am, all of them, and an executive director who oversees everything and has great experience and breadth in the art world, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That is Pauline Shaver now.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Pauline Shaver now. I mean, she has had to develop a knowledge of charitable trusts and what we can and can't do and how that is different because she was a private dealer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And so, for instance, they lickety-split digitized all these videotapes and audio tapes of Viola's, and they have—it is two different ways; maybe it is on a disc, and it is also online or in a cloud or something because they realized discs go away. I mean, there is all this stuff you have to do and, you know, they just did it, and it is really great that Viola left—I mean, I have a family to support here, and even though the boys are grown, I mean, my—I [. . . have a –SS] daughter [. . . –SS] and then there is me, and Bob very much intended that that is the way it would be—so it is great Viola sold—all of her—she saved a lot of money; she had a great house, so all that cash went into the—is really what funded ALF, and it has allowed for this professionalism that the foundation has, and it is fabulous; it is wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: They also started to issue an award starting in 2007.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, that was great. Our wonderful, wonderful, wonderful first executive director, Diane Frankel, I mean, she wasn't a computer—she didn't have the computer skills. I mean, she couldn't even do an attachment for a while, I don't know, but she said, "This is one of the things Viola intended; we need to get this award going now. We don't wait; it's very important for this foundation, and it is our responsibility," and, you know, they did it, and I think Kathy Butterly got the first award. It has been \$25,000 to an artist; it has to be a painter or sculptor; there is something about—well, it is painting and sculpture more so because of digital things. There is—we have these big discussions about whether some things are eligible for a [grant –SS]—What Viola and Squeak and Gary were really looking at was the hand in the work; the artists made the work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So this brings up whole other issues that we have to always deal with, but the—but the thing about artists giving back to artists—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —is just extraordinary, and it just shows Viola's and Squeak's real generosity and their—and their real belief in artists and helping other artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: And see, it is an—I don't know of another foundation quite like it; the mission is unique. Can you think of one?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, artists—no, I can't. You know U.S. Artists, is that what it is? Steve?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Steve Oliver, right?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I mean they—but that's a different thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think so.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But they give grants to artists, I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —Steve Oliver's thing was to work to replace what the NEA doesn't do anymore—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —which was—is grants to individual artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So we have a group of nominators. All the board members put in names, and then the executive director and the nominating committee pairs it down. The executive director contacts people, and they get nominators, and they have to send in nominations, and we don't know who those people are; it is blind, and we are not told. And then there is a panel of three who are the jury, and they meet, typically, in August, and after that process is done and the artist is selected and the jury is—it is then announced who the jury was. There is some laws about this, I don't know, but it's a kind of double blind thing, so the artists really don't know—are not supposed to know they're even nominated and so it's been very interesting. As a board member, you are allowed to sit in on that process of the jury if you wish. I was—I have only been here, I think, one time, maybe two, because I'm usually away in August, but it's fascinating. It is just so—it is so energizing, and you see the struggle of the jury with these different kinds of work and all these competent artists, you know, and does it matter? Is this needs-based, or is it not needs-based or—you know, and getting it clear for the jury; this jury has questions, you know. So it is really—it is an extraordinary process, and I think that they did a great job, when they established the foundation, of setting this up; whatever the rules were laid before I came on the board, but when I came on the board, I think that was about when we did our first award.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right, I think you came on—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and I thought we said 2006; I think the first award was 2007.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right, so Diane Frankel is really—she was just extraordinary about getting that going; it was, you know—hats off to her, and if we had more, we would definitely give more money, you know. We would love to double it. We would love to give another award, you know. It is really one of the main—you know, taking care of Viola's legacy and helping other artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And the foundation is structured, if I'm—understand it correctly, that it could grow to include other artists and other estates.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's very interested in becoming a part of that and—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Yes, yes, that is absolutely right, and that is also a very interesting part of the foundation and an issue—[laughs]. For instance, once an artist has died and left it into his heirs or her heirs, it is very—especially where there are real needs in the family, you know, you can't just give it away to a foundation to sell and make money to give grants to other artists. Plus, you know, you have to have—there has to be enough in the estate to support the legacy, and are you—and then is there going to be a separate curator hired for each artist's estate, and how is that going to be funded, and where is the work going to be stored?

These are very major issues, and they are major issues for any artist, but when you are dealing with a charitable trust and you can't have, you know, heirs meddling in there—

Now, Robert Rauschenberg's son, for instance, is on the board of that foundation. My understanding and I—Christy MacLear is the director of the foundation, and she would—she is a—was at this Aspen Institute panel, and she is incredible, and my understanding, and I could be wrong, but—is that he is more involved in the environmental aspects of that and Captiva Island and the artist residencies they have there. I'm not sure I have that all right. There is another artist estate which is a foundation, the artist established—left it to a foundation with his daughter in as the [executive –SS] director [. . . –SS] and she also owns work of her father's separately that he gave her over the years. Now, there is an issue of, if she wants to sell a work, she has to get permission from the board because you can't be—she has—you can't be competing with the board—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and you can't be taking information. "Oh, well, now I know that this work is on the rise, and I'll sell it now."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So it is a very complicated business—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —and here, we just go, "Oh, we can't deal with any of that," and the transparency, which the government rightly demands for a charitable foundation, you know, it is just—it is kind—it is something that we wouldn't be willing to do right now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it'll be interesting to see how ALF evolves over time and if someone is interested in becoming part of that foundation, if they are—if it's something that the foundation in turn is interested in taking on.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you know, we have had inquiries.

MIJA RIEDEL: I would imagine.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And we have been—have not had an inquiry that we could make the

numbers work, and it really is that and it is an equation and the equation is different for every—I mean, it depends on what kind of work you have. And let's talk about the next thing: what happens if an artist comes into the foundation and has a hotshot career and then interest wanes? You know, what if you are not able to maintain the interest in that person's work?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What if? Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: What do you do then?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So there are some really ominous, really serious things, and it—I will tell you it is something we talk about at board meetings a great deal, and it is something we have been talking about—[laughs]—since I got on the board.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. At ALF, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh yes, it is a big discussion; it is probably one of the most important things we, you know, as a board, really set aside time to think about, talk about.

MIJA RIEDEL: So it sounds like there is a continual commitment, conversation about how to not only continue, but increase interest in Viola's work and then—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And Artists' Legacy Foundation—

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —as a possible—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —repository of—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —other artists' estates. It is a great idea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It is a great idea.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: But it really—it is still a work in progress; how is this going to work? And we are all kind of waiting to see if we can—I mean, we are actively working on it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It is—I mean, there are board members who have said, "Look, you have to wait until you have done enough with Viola's career that people can see that you can do it."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Well, I would imagine—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: This is going to take years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And everything that you have been able to do with Robert Arneson's career over the past 20-plus years—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: —must be incredibly valuable to bring to ALF: the relationships with dealers, the exhibitions, the book.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: One of the—the relationships with dealers is a very big issue, and I really have, I think, been able to, well, really stand up for the dealers. I mean, I think—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How so?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, I think sometimes people think dealers shouldn't get discounts or shouldn't be selling from the discount, and yet, you've got to realize what the art world—you know, you are not in a vacuum here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, there is a kind of protocol that's developed in the art world, and you can't just say, "Now we are a charitable foundation, and we are not going to allow that," you know, that is just not going to work. It is not going to work. You know, Nancy [Hoffman] would go crazy; she would just like throw up her hands. But, you know, she was very smart in coming to the board—we met in New York one time—and meeting with us and talking with us about some of this stuff, and in her very lovely, low-key, sweet way, but very direct: "I can't do business like this," you know, and, you know, again, hats off to Nancy. I mean, what a smart woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes, she hasn't been in business for 40-plus years, successfully—

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —without having a lot of smarts.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: And you know, she is not a dealer who comes into the business with a giant inheritance. She makes her own way, so that is also different from some of the other—some other dealers, you know. I mean, you really—and, you know, another thing the estate has to worry about is, you know, do you want one of these dealers who just wants to buy everything out? I mean, we didn't think that was a [. . . good –SS] idea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And why not?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Well, you completely lose control of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: I think I know more about what would be better for Bob's work, and I think, as a foundation, we know more about what would be better for Viola's work than having no—if everything of Viola's was sucked up by one dealer—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: —which they would like to do, some of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know—oh my, you know, you would lose complete—I mean, you wouldn't have any control over it, how things were—what dealers want to do is sell things to private

individuals who will later put it back on the market through them, and they make more money in the secondary market. This is a very big thing today; there is a dealer here doing that. I mean, he doesn't have a gallery, but I think he's got a [show space –SS] and he is just doing it in a little, you know, just mostly ceramic vessels, but, you know—and then there is a guy in New York who started buying stuff at auction, and he will bid against me. You know, I have the other four drawings—five drawings in that series and the sculpture, so I wanted this one drawing, and I was willing to pay for it, but he outbid me, and he knew he was outbidding me because he says, "Well, if she gets it, it will never come back on the market; I won't be able to make money on it." That's their business.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So you have to know what you are dealing with. I mean, it is great in this person's collection, and you know, maybe it is the best thing, and it will have more exposure; it will have another life. We can't, like, get all hot and bothered about this stuff, but you have to understand the dealer thing, and not every board member has that much experience directly working with the dealer, so I think I have been useful in that, and as you get more and more museum people on, they have other things in mind and, "Yes, right, but we have got nuts and bolts going on down here—[laughs]."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right. Where would you see—like to see Artists' Legacy Foundation go? What would be your fondest hopes for it?

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: Oh, well, I would like to see it grow. I would like to see it, you know, pick up some other artists. I think it is just a fabulous idea, but again, getting that—all that stuff worked out is a lot to think about.

MIJA RIEDEL: Work in progress.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: It is a work in progress, absolutely, and you know, we are in there. We are trying to do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You know, and there will be other board members. I'll go off the board at some point, I'm sure, and then, you know, somebody else will be doing it. But the big thing is here you have a set of bylaws and executive director; you keep a core of board members who really understand that, and then you try to keep a variety of board members.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: So, you know, you don't want a friends-and-family board; that is one of the things Christine Vincent's panel really talked about. That does not work for a charitable foundation, and there have been all kinds of problems with that, and there has been stuff in court and, you know, that just wastes resources. Do it right; you know, be sure you are not piercing the corporate veil; be sure you are not self-dealing. They are just basic stuff, but you do need good legal advice; you know, you do need somebody to explain these things to you because, unless you grew up in the foundation world, you don't know that, and laws change. Somebody has to keep you abreast of that. So we will see what happens.

MIJA RIEDEL: Thanks very much.

SANDRA SHANNONHOUSE: You're welcome. Would you like to have lunch?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

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[END OF INTERVIEW]