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Oral history interview with Richard Shaw,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Richard Shaw on November 20, 2015. The interview took place in Fairfax, 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.

Richard Shaw 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: All righty. This is Mija Riedel with Richard Shaw at his home in Fairfax, California on November 20, 2015 for Smithsonian Archives of American Art. And we are—this is just not one—and we are going to jump right in our discussion of—

[They laugh.]

—Viola Frey and we're starting looking at images that Richard has that I will be sure the archives has a copy of as well. But let's just set a little bit of background for this. These are images that you took of Viola's work when you first became aware of it. Is that correct?

RICHARD SHAW: Yes. The backyard, we—it looks like 1982.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I think that's right.

RICHARD SHAW: We went to Viola—I don't even know how it happened but all we were there. Rena Bransten was there. I didn't even know she was representative of her but—

MIJA RIEDEL: I think by then, yes.

RICHARD SHAW: —and then there was [Robert] Arneson, probably Sandy Shannonhouse by then—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —myself, Tony Costanzo, it was quite a group. And for Arneson and I, we were aware of her; the thing is that she didn't really come on the scene until later. Like I became aware of her work in the '70s. There was a—I probably have it somewhere, but *Courant Magazine* was a magazine—an art magazine that came out in kind of middle '70s I think. And it was around for a while.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that in the Bay area?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: It could have been [. . .] in California but I think it was Bay Area. I'm guessing on some of this stuff. But, so—I'm sorry I'm not looking at you, and I can't remember—I'm going into my—

MIJA RIEDEL: No. That's fine. That's fine. That's fine.

RICHARD SHAW: I'm going into my brain here.

MIJA RIEDEL: No. Go. Please [laughs].

RICHARD SHAW: —*Courant Magazine*. It's been a long time since I've done it. And then she was—I think the name of the gallery she in, was it Lesley Wenger Gallery?

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

RICHARD SHAW: And so the first stuff I was aware of, I mean, was seeing her work, and the ones I saw were like this—the monkey, which was pretty impressive because it was huge. And then—

MIJA RIEDEL: Monkey was sitting in sort of a chariot with a rabbit.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And then I think, maybe this guy and this, yeah, '77—oh this was even earlier, so it was this stuff and it was like—

MIJA RIEDEL: '73, '74.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. That's—yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: It says *Chair Apology* perhaps? Is that, like, the title of that? Something like that.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. *Animal Chair Apology*. I don't know. I could have put that wrong.

MIJA RIEDEL: Something. Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: But, anyway, I shot this in a show—oh, so this is different. Well it's just funny because now that I think about it—because I was thinking, you know, after this conference and all of that hoopla, they—I was trying to think of when she, sort of, became evident that this person was a heavy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And it was later on because things like *Objects U.S.A.*, which was the big book [1969 traveling exhibition and 1970 catalogue by Lee Nordness -ALF]—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —that was probably '69 or something like that, and I'm sure she wasn't in here because no one knew who she was yet. And she may not have hit her stride until after that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: But I'm not sure—well, let's look and see what she was doing then. 1970. See here she is in 1970.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Probably was, you know, kind of more pottery oriented, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I think so. I think she'd started that *Endangered Species* series. I don't think the *bricolage* started until later in the '70s and assume the figures not until later in the '70s.

RICHARD SHAW: Okay. I think so too because, I mean, again, going to her yard in '82 and being blown away—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And that's the first time you'd seen her—

RICHARD SHAW: —really saw, you know, that she—all the work that she'd done. And the lady asked me in the conference because I had—it was in some book or something about—

MIJA RIEDEL: This is the conference you had just come back from being at Yale, right?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. It was at Yale. Nancy Servis [*Ceramic Presence: Conversations on Making, Looking, and the Museum*; November 12–13, 2015; Yale University Art Gallery -ALF] asked me—because I just remembered this right here being with Bob, and he looked at me and he said, "Does this make you want to get back to your studio and get going?" Do you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: Because it was so overwhelming.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, it was like going to a museum, and you can see by the foot, I guess, they're all just stacked on each other.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, I think I have a storage problem. Can you imagine hers?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: God. I mean I've got three storage units full of stuff going all the way back to the '60s. But can you imagine storing these gigantic figures and things?

MIJA RIEDEL: And so this was her backyard that you were visiting? You'd seen her work around—

RICHARD SHAW: At her house.

MIJA RIEDEL: But at her house—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. I mean, you know, kind of, you know, you were aware of her—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —but not until everybody walked into this backyard and realized what she—you know, like no one had seen these figures before.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: And the scale and the amount and just the whole thing was a mind bog; I'm so glad I had my—I always take my camera for my students. But, I mean, even things like these big piles of stuff she was doing all the way back then, you know, these big stacks of, kind of, what looks like kitsch or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, if this was '82, she'd already had that show at the Crocker. Remember, that was '81. Had you seen that? She had a piece at—

RICHARD SHAW: I went to it. Yeah, you're right. Okay, I did go to it.

MIJA RIEDEL: That, I think was '81. So do you think these could be even before that? Or did—

RICHARD SHAW: No, these are all '82. So it's afterward.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, we're definitely '82. Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Well, I just have '80s on here. But if you look at the slide, it says 1982.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh. Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: So we know it's then. So if she—so I must have been hip to it because I'm sure I went to it. Either I heard about it or I went to it. But maybe—I think it was the sheer shock of just that backyard and the amount of where it was all like there, and it went back like that great little self-portrait that's in there somewhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I think it's slide—I didn't even know I had a picture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I think it's a slide—it's this *Backyard 1982 Number 5*.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. But I think that I saw that—

MIJA RIEDEL: And she's holding something in her hand or something's falling—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. She's got her hands like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: This looks like it's just still bisque.

RICHARD SHAW: That looks like a bunch of leaves. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't even know if this was ever glazed.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, it's got a white glaze all over it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think so?

RICHARD SHAW: I think so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I'm guessing there, too. I can't really, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh yeah. Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: But, you know, when I went to her studio for that birthday. God, how many years later was that? 2002.

MIJA RIEDEL: 2002. Right. 20 years.

RICHARD SHAW: 20 years later. Just yesterday.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I think I went over into Dennis Gallagher's studio or some storage unit, and she had a lot of these things. I think maybe even this; that's something she never—that self—what I call a self-portrait. There was a lot of stuff from the backyard that was still there that hadn't sold.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In 2002?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: But, I mean, again, I took my assistant at the time—I do have more photographs than this of her. They said if I had more to send them, but they're so scattered around in different carousels from showing students.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And I sort of—I change them every semester, but you know, they're all over the place. But if I ever look through them and find more—because, actually, when we were in Paris—I'm skipping all over the place.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's—you and Viola and that was in '87 and when you were both at Sèvres?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. I took slides all the time of her working and her work. And that mold demo that we could run through at some point, which I didn't know if he'd be interested in, except of a guy named Jean Luke making a—making a mold of a little figure of hers. It's about this big.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I don't have quite all the slides. I couldn't find them but I know I've got 20 some odd slides because I just kept shooting and doing the thing. But it's an edited version, kind of skipping some of the detail-y sort of stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: So. Why did I bring that up? I just think it's neat that they—you know, that they were interested in the process of the guy doing this thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. It was kind of wonderful to do a mold of her pieces, giving the history of molds.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. You know, I would have just kind of flopped it on, and the guy built an armature, and he had all these things. Like he had dental floss around the figure. And when he got to a certain point, he pulled the dental floss out to—I was just like—well the guy got like his doctorate for like—or masters just up for a 90-part mold or something. So he was really good.

MIJA RIEDEL: He was really good. You're darn right. So when did you first become aware of her work? Do you even remember?

RICHARD SHAW: Well, I must—

MIJA RIEDEL: And what you'd seen?

RICHARD SHAW: Yes. About 1973. That show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. When you were taking those pictures of the actual work.

RICHARD SHAW: And it's right after Bob and I had the show at the Museum of Modern Art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Bob Hudson?

RICHARD SHAW: Bob Hudson. So, we had that show, and this is, I mean, by then—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was '73, I think it was.

RICHARD SHAW: Yes it was. Exactly. Good memory. So I'm just trying to—you know, because I was aware of her but not until '82 was I like—you know, did I swallow my gum?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: You know what I mean? I was just like amazed. And then, after that, of course, she's been a heavy forever and I remember going back east and seeing her shows at Nancy Hoffman and all that sort of stuff. But, you know, she wasn't kind of—she wasn't, like, one of the group. She didn't hang out with everybody. And she pretty much just worked all the time. And she and, I think his name was, Charles Fiske lived in that great house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is this the one in San Francisco or Oakland?

RICHARD SHAW: No. Oakland. I didn't even know she had a house in San Francisco. She had that great house—I've got the address somewhere—somewhere by that theater, you know. [663 Oakland Avenue -ALF].

MIJA RIEDEL: The one on Adeline and one on Third, I think.

RICHARD SHAW: It was near the something theater.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Whatever that big movie theater—it's just up the hill and to the right. She might have moved; after that, I think I went to the house one more time or something like that. I can't tell if I took this picture. It says—that's the wrong one. It says, "Influences." And I don't know if I took that picture; see, it's all these kitsch stuff. See, it's even got the rooster in it and everything. She just enlarged it. Now where that slide—

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, is this a piece of hers or are these just objects?

RICHARD SHAW: No. It's just objects that she—oh, put it on there and we'll blow it up. It looks like about 12 slides in the—

MIJA RIEDEL: So this is the backyard?

RICHARD SHAW: That's the backyard stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. We want to get out of the backyard and get into—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Just keep going. You just go one-by-one it's great. I can see that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, I see. Yeah, you're right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oops [laughs].

RICHARD SHAW: Well, it should be in the backyard—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's in the backyard. It could be also in the work.

RICHARD SHAW: It might be. Oh, that's true too. Or maybe they didn't shoot it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's see. I don't think it's in the backyard.

RICHARD SHAW: God. That's cool. I didn't know you could do stuff like this.

MIJA RIEDEL: I know, it's pretty nice, isn't it?

RICHARD SHAW: These were great big assemblages, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Here we go. I think it's going to be here.

RICHARD SHAW: God. Great. Maybe I never shot it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Maybe not.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, it doesn't look like it.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, it doesn't look like it. So what's the image you're talking—oh it's all just the objects.

RICHARD SHAW: It's just a bunch of little—it's kitsch.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: It's like—could you see it? You can see the rooster in there?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

RICHARD SHAW: I wrote, "Influences." I don't know if she had these out some place. It's obviously an amateur photograph because you see it's got all the—

MIJA RIEDEL: So you think this is something you took of her objects that she had in her collection?

RICHARD SHAW: Remember, didn't she always have like shelves and shelves full of—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: —ceramics in her house?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible]. Exactly. She collected, like mad, all those figurines from flea markets.

RICHARD SHAW: Right. Well I don't know where I got this picture, if I took it or not. But you can see everything in there, not everything, but a lot of stuff that she blew up 8,000 times.

MIJA RIEDEL: So there's a rooster in there. What else can you make out?

RICHARD SHAW: I can't. But I wished they had put it in there. They obviously didn't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, they didn't—oh, it looks like there's a little black and white dog, and there's something pink.

RICHARD SHAW: There's a Chinese figure of some kind.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Well, we'll have to try and get a copy of that. It's funny because it says, yeah, yours is in here with "Influences" is in here. It's on the sheet, but it's not on the slides we have.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Let's start and just see if they skipped it or not. But I think we already did it. You start from the beginning. I'll leave that alone—

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's see. It's not going to be in the backyard. It's not going to be—I doubt it's going to be in Sèvres.

RICHARD SHAW: Let's try the backyard anyway because it's in the backyard. I think they just left it out.

MIJA RIEDEL: It couldn't be "Viola Artwork" right?

RICHARD SHAW: No. Try, "Backyard" because if it's not there, it probably isn't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I see that I got Arneson in there, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, that is great. I don't think I've seen that image, so I think it must not have been replicated.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, they must have left it out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But, you know, I use it as reference for my students because they—so they can see where things are coming from.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. And how much she—because she had really such a palette of images and objects.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. I used to—yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you collect anywhere near as much in terms of things from mold-making objects and junk and images, things that you wanted use in your pieces? Did you collect it? Kind of, I've been thinking about that and the vast number of parallels between you two [inaudible].

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah. I did ones of remaking molds and all that stuff, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But you didn't collect the same amount of stuff that she did. The same amount of—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. No. Oh, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: —like cups and—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, I see what you're saying.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: No. I would cast it and take it to the Goodwill or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So you didn't keep them?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. No. Yeah, they didn't include everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I don't see that.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. That's too bad.

Well, it doesn't matter but it just was—when I saw that slide, or those pieces—I don't know where I got it—I went [demonstrates action]. You know, she just blew these things up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Not verbatim. She completely [inaudible] differently but the images, the actual things were just big. So that was neat. I'm sort of just skipping all over the place.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, that's okay. When did—do you remember when you first met Viola?

RICHARD SHAW: Well, I maybe—no, I don't really. Because, again, she didn't go to the openings much and she didn't—you know, I got to know her great once we were in Paris because I'd burn her breakfast all the time and stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: We'll get to that for sure. Well, I've just been struck—and I don't know if the two of you ever talked about it, but just the parallels between you two in terms of you both started as painters; you both have this huge affinity and love for these common objects and for mundane, you know, prosaic objects and for recasting them in a new light. You know, both an extensive use of molds. Switched to the figures in the late '70s. Legendary work ethics [laughs] came to mind.

RICHARD SHAW: Wish I was as tough as her, and then, of course, I had—we had five children and stuff like that. She was like Bob Hudson or Bill Wiley or somebody, and she would just tell us what she did, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: So you were always amazed at just the amount of stuff she did. And then watching her hand build was like—you know. In Paris she didn't just cast them; she made stuff too. She didn't—I remember watching her making like those figures then eventually bringing in a lift, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was the figures, got larger and larger. What first attracted you or drew you to her work? Was it the assemblage quality of it? Was it the use of color? Was it the molds? What in particular was it?

RICHARD SHAW: She was just another person in the Bay area working, and it was the stuff was good, you know? It was different from everybody else's. So it wasn't like—I just respected it, you know, and I didn't—again, I didn't really know her, but you know, I was definitely impressed with her craftsmanship, which you're probably not supposed to use that word.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fine.

RICHARD SHAW: But, you know, like she could make great big things. I'm just kidding you, but everybody else

thinks it's still a word. It's like a poetry; it's out of the vocabulary. You know.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think it will be coming back around [laughs].

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, maybe. I don't know how long she'd go on for because I feel like I didn't really know her personally that great. Again, we didn't hang out and drink beers together and that kind of stuff. But in Paris, we spent a lot of time together. And she was so generous, you had to really watch out because people realized they were going to get free dinners out of this, and I had to step in periodically and say, "Nuh-uh [negative.] I'm paying for it tonight." You know, kind of, like, knock her off because she would just go for it, you know, take everybody to dinner all the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: This was in Paris?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow. Wow.

RICHARD SHAW: She was very generous. Another thing she was great at was she would go into a bookstore and buy, like, half the books in the bookstore and have them shipped back.

MIJA RIEDEL: In Paris too?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I knew she did that in New York, and I've heard of her doing that here, but in Paris as well?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. So when—were you at Sèvres before or after she was?

RICHARD SHAW: I think I got there once. I was there one time before—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. You were there in '80—she was there in '86 and '87.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Okay. I think I was there in '86, '78—she may have been before me and then I jumped in. But I don't remember her work being there. When I arrived the first time, I think it was Adrian Saxe or somebody who was there. And then I kind of got started. I'd always bring kids. Martha and I and our oldest daughter went there the first time. Second time I think I just—maybe Martha and Alice came and then Alice stayed. That's when Viola was there. I think I was there four times.

MIJA RIEDEL: You were there four times?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

RICHARD SHAW: We did three or four. And Viola was—he's still bouncing.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] We'll pause this for a second.

RICHARD SHAW: Have you met Matthew? You probably have before—

MIJA RIEDEL: A long time ago.

[Audio break.]

RICHARD SHAW: I was here. Viola was—I think it was only one time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I could be wrong because Betty Woodman was there too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. She was definitely there.

RICHARD SHAW: And then I came another time, and I think maybe Viola was there that time. And Betty Woodman, I remember, just sort of stormed in and there was no place for her, so she built herself a cot out on—got a cot out of Viola's and just slept on the balcony. I mean, if any guy—the Parisians would have booted them because she was a lady. You know, they sort of forced her way, and they let her stay there. So she didn't even

have a place to stay. She just had a cot and I think—I don't remember feeding her so much. Maybe she ate—I probably did sometimes with—Viola was kind of her conduit.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I hope I don't have this wrong, but I—

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I know Viola was there in '86 and '87. And I know Betty Woodman was there at least ones of those time but maybe she was there twice.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. See when I was there, she was there because I thought she was there when Viola was. I'm sure she—

MIJA RIEDEL: She was definitely there one time when Viola was there, for sure. Maybe two.

RICHARD SHAW: I know, you're right. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know.

MIJA RIEDEL: But were you—you didn't work there with her or you both overlapped in Paris for a while? How did that work?

RICHARD SHAW: No. No. We were there together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh. You were there together working?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Because, I mean, that's the story about me burning her breakfast with Charles Fiske.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so that story. Is that—

RICHARD SHAW: He said, "Oh I came over"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh because he came as well?

RICHARD SHAW: No. I went over to Viola's sometimes just for—to visit or she had a little something at her house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Here in the Bay area.

RICHARD SHAW: This is at her house in Oakland, same as where the pictures are. And he was making fun of me because Viola had come home and tell him how I'd burned her breakfast all the time because it was a little, tiny apartment. We were right next to each other. But it had an electric stove. I'd never flipped on one, so I burn everything all the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: I understand that.

RICHARD SHAW: And then I'd have everybody over for lunch periodically, like some of the workers at the factory and stuff. I'm just trying to remember. I think the last time I was there I don't think she was there. Yeah, she wasn't there. There wasn't any other Americans there that I remember. It was just myself and a guy named—oh, what was the name of the neat guy that kept having us to his house? Jeane Pierre? I think his name was Jeane Pierre [Beranger].

MIJA RIEDEL: And he was an artist as well?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. He was French.

Martha Shaw: Not D'Albis?

RICHARD SHAW: No, that was the chemist. Yeah. There was a guy, a neat guy name Monsieur D'Albis and he—oh, that's another time. He was, sort of, like, ran the glaze lab and all that. He was sort of an aristocracy, and everybody didn't like him, but I thought he was great. But he would have us over to his house, which was really great, in Paris—well in Sèvres. And then, he came to the Legion of Honor to give a big talk and everything. I forgot all about this. And they—I don't think that was a piece of Viola's, but they got a piece of mine for the sculpture room—I mean, yeah, for the porcelain room.

MIJA RIEDEL: This was at the Palace of the Legion of Honor?

RICHARD SHAW: Palace of the Legion of Honor, right.

And Viola and I were in the audience and she was with Taffy Dahl, I remember. And Mr. Dolbies [ph]—everybody was falling over, was real handsome, and he was an expert on—you know, mentioned Viola and I and all those

kind of complimentary sort of things. Totally forgot all about that until right now. Anyway, that was kind of neat.

MIJA RIEDEL: So would you—how would you spend the day? Would you both get up together, and you'd both be working in separate studios?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Would you have lunch together and dinner? What would you talk about?

RICHARD SHAW: Well, periodically, she—I don't even remember any of that. Oh, we'd go out to dinner together. I remember we went to the Porte de Saint-Clair down by Versailles and had dinner, and who knows what we talked about? I don't remember. I don't know if we talked about art or Bay area, or—don't know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did she talk with you about her work at all, what she was doing or what she—the thinking behind it?

RICHARD SHAW: No, not the concepts or anything. Maybe some technical stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. I don't think we ever talked—we might have talked about other people's art a whole lot. But I don't think we ever discussed each other's.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you talk about different artists who influenced her? Did she mention anyone in particular?

RICHARD SHAW: I don't know. I sadly don't remember any of that. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Bay area artists or?

RICHARD SHAW: I don't know. I just can't remember any of it. She was pretty critical of people. I mean, not of people, but of their art, you know, if she didn't like it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I remember her saying of some piece of mine that was at the L.A. County Museum, was simply, "Richard's poor beat up something or other," kind of like, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh dear.

RICHARD SHAW: Which was fine. But I think she might have been critical. But that's not something I remember about her much. It was more like, you know, we got up—everybody got up and maybe I'd make breakfast. And I didn't do it every morning, once in a while. And then, she'd go to her studio all day, and I'd go to my studio all day. And we never went out to lunch ever. Everybody just ate in. I don't remember how much cooking. I loved to cook, so it was easy. But, then, a lot of times, what would happen was it—this is more about me than her but—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's good. We need to do both.

RICHARD SHAW: —I had kids there when they were kids. And they would go up to Paris in the morning—

MIJA RIEDEL: You're talking about your own children not students, right?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And then I was in my running mode, so I'd do this great run, medieval kind of run where I'd run out the gates of Sèvres, run through the Porte de St. Croix, come all the way back on with some of the guys playing petanque. And if the gate was closed—they gave me a key that was about this big and then I could unlock the gate to Sèvres and close it and go in. And I'd take a shower and then take the metro up to see the kids. And if earlier—and then on the weekends, we'd go to all the museums and stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's what I was going to ask next, did you do that with Viola?

RICHARD SHAW: But I can't remember if we ever went with Viola. I know she looked at plenty of art, but I think she, you know, probably spent more time than anybody in the world at her studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So you don't know—

RICHARD SHAW: And then again, she wasn't like, "I had friends in Paris," you know. Like Jane Ferrier, I was raised in the Second World War, had a great apartment there," and, so shoot, I would go cook there and stuff and hang out with those guys. But she pretty much, you know, she was just a work horse.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Good work horse.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. So, no, you didn't visit any galleries together or museums? Nothing like that?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, I kind of remember going up a couple of times because I remember going in the bookstores.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, the guy's getting tired. You getting tired? We must have—I just don't have any specific memories of discussing peoples' work or anything like that, which would be cool if we had. You know, I should be thinking more about this, about how—oh, here's a wasp. I should get it out of here. But, yeah, I don't remember. I should have thought out about this more. I've just been so busy with this thing here. About what—was—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] This four-month-old grandchild.

RICHARD SHAW: —thinking of him. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I just respected her and she had her opinions and I think I heard more about her opinions than she gave me it. Because people are—then there's that myth about you can't get married or have children. You won't be an artist, you know? I've heard that from a number of people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. And I think she gave that advice to a few people.

RICHARD SHAW: Mostly to women.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. No. I know she did because people would say that was kind of like a standard Viola kind of deal. Right or wrong, that's what she said, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So you guys never—did you guys talk technique at all? I mean you both work with molds. You both built things in a similar style. No swapping conversation about that?

RICHARD SHAW: No. I don't remember any big conversations about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Sorry. It's more like, just, you know, two artists working and—

MIJA RIEDEL: And you burned her breakfast.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, I think I made the slides that I did were—I was following that more than I was her, you know, I mean,—

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's take a look at this.

RICHARD SHAW: —because I really liked the stuff and, again, I shot all this up for my students. Because it was so impressive, you know. It's sort of like, "Look, you could do this if you buckle down," you know, "in your old age." These were in Paris. This is good. She painted this—go back one more—yeah, right back, yeah. The first time she was in Paris—that's right, I wasn't there, because when we got there, there was a show of artists working at Sèvres, and this is the first thing of hers I saw.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so this is a vase.

RICHARD SHAW: A big vase that she painted. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Painted on it. It looks like musicians, actually.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Oh, and then I threw some stuff and then she painted it. I wonder where those are.

MIJA RIEDEL: How interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: It must be in storage or something. But, you know, she just took it and china painted the whole thing, I believe, and then fired it. Then I had this thing I made but she painted it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: I wonder where the hell that is. This, she made there. There's my kid looking at the picture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: So this one, in 70—

MIJA RIEDEL: So these are small figurines.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, which was right because—

MIJA RIEDEL: These are probably—what?—12 or 18 inches, judging by the size of your daughter then?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah and I think that, yeah, because she didn't make any big things. I mean, that was like crazy anyway but she modeled these. And when Jean Luc, that guy made the mold—I don't know if she actually—she may have had some of that stuff shipped back, you know, to work with. Because I don't know about seeing that image but, you know, in the mold making slides you can see her—

MIJA RIEDEL: Here, I think I've got these on the laptop, let's see.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, that's actually in this—yeah, go back in that, yep, oh there, see now this is—go back. Stay on that one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Stay on this one?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. This is the wife of Georges Jeanclos, who—Matilde, I think her name was. And she—this is probably Georges right here it looks like. And so this is an exhibition of—I don't think I shot anybody else's work. If I did, I don't remember where the slides are but I sure shot hers. So now you can see the scale there of just what they are. Just smaller versions of her giant stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. This is Paris exhibition in the forward slide.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. This is—it's like—so I just shot these. And then I think if you go through you can see more work. Yeah, there's that one.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this must be it because it's the mold-making process.

RICHARD SHAW: This is the mold making. I thought maybe, before that, I had a picture of the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's see if they've got tapped in at the end.

RICHARD SHAW: I—go back a little bit more. Yeah, these were sitting in her studio at the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so back to the exhibition?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Now go back that way. Sorry. Let me do this, so I don't—I don't know how you do it, but is it—

MIJA RIEDEL: The arrows up and down. There you go. That's down and the other one is up.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, down and up. See. It drives my wife crazy. "No, you don't go up the valley, you go down a valley. No you go up the valley." You know? It's sort of like that. These are just part of the slice. See where he pulls the dental floss out?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. This is the mold that he processed and so—

RICHARD SHAW: So he just puts a splash coat on—I don't know how interesting this is but—

MIJA RIEDEL: It is very interesting. Please.

RICHARD SHAW: But look at it, see, there he is putting the—oh this is great. I used to love showing this to my students. So he puts a splash coat of plaster on it and then he pushes this dental floss in there somehow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Yeah. It looks like he's gently sort of laying it in there and then before he's going to—he'll add other coats—

RICHARD SHAW: He'll add coats and then he pulls it out, so he divides it. And then he puts this metal in here so he's got it in two parts now. And then he puts in the keys to—see right there—so it will match on the next coat. Here he does the other side. God. This is great because sometimes I've looked at this and I couldn't figure it out. And then he does the other side. Can you imagine how tough this mold is? He could drop it out of a 747 and it would not break. I mean, just that's beautiful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Number eight.

RICHARD SHAW: And then he opens it up and there it is, him having a cigarette. And then I think that—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Literally.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And then I think I had it—there she is working on it. Wait a minute. Is this like part of it? It is.

MIJA RIEDEL: It looks like it. Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

RICHARD SHAW: Maybe that's after it was cast or something and she's working on it. See, look at how much bigger these things are getting. So this is the second time. And the other ones who are about this big—table bottles. Here she is building these giant things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So they've got maybe—these look like it may be 36 inches?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, they're big.

MIJA RIEDEL: Twenty-four or something?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. She looks pained.

MIJA RIEDEL: She does look pained.

RICHARD SHAW: And then, just around her studio, I'm sure there's a shot at the same time. Yeah, I don't—that's —yeah, you could see it's just a studio or somebody's—that might be the same one which in the picture—

MIJA RIEDEL: I think so. It looks like the musician. Some sort of trumpet player, or—

RICHARD SHAW: —I'm not sure. Yeah. Look at, I shot exactly the same way; he's holding a trophy or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is it a trophy? I don't know whether it is a trophy exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: Maybe. But there—I probably—the same one again. Oh, we had these great stairways. Did they go up to our apartments? I guess they did. These circular stairways that go upstairs to where your apartment was. You know, that's a smaller version, probably done the first time. So they were probably still there. They wanted a piece after you left. Like I know they got some—well, in the end, I only took one of mine that I remember. I kept thinking mine looked like garbage, which, of course, it did.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

Martha Shaw: Yes. It was.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, because it was. Poubelle. Is that what they call a garbage can? Oh, is this the same one we were just looking at? Because it looks smaller, doesn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: It does look smaller.

RICHARD SHAW: And it's not. It's—

MIJA RIEDEL: But it's not because the hand is not—

RICHARD SHAW: It's—there it is. It's that one. Oh, it's big. Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's the hand on the bottom right, a male figure and then the female in the middle.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Right. Right. And she's working on a—sorry I'm going to get, yeah—if she finishes them off here. Let's see. Yeah. She finished off whatever she had. So this is before. And those are the ones, probably in the exposition.

MIJA RIEDEL: We've looked at the ones that we've seen in process, the finished ones. Certainly there's the hand, the male figure with something on top now has been added, don't you think?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Well, yeah, it looks smaller. Maybe it is done because look how little this looks and that's actually a big vase about that tall. And she didn't throw it. I think she just got a blank and painted it. This is great. How educational. You know, you're right. No, that's not the same hand, though, is it?

MIJA RIEDEL: You don't think so?

RICHARD SHAW: No, it looks too upright or something. Let's go back and look.

MIJA RIEDEL: All right.

RICHARD SHAW: No. See, that hand goes like that. Yeah. It's just the same—it's the same kind of—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's the same sort of fellow [inaudible] on his head.

RICHARD SHAW: It is the same guy. It's the same image but just littler. Yeah. But something's wrong here because I think those were bigger than that. I think that's the last shot there. I could be wrong, but that other hand looks like this more.

MIJA RIEDEL: It does look more—and I raise a question, could she have manipulated it after the fact?

RICHARD SHAW: No. I don't think so.

MIJA RIEDEL: It comes in a couple different pieces?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, I think it's two pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean that's my opinion. God. That's kind of interesting to see that she uses the same image over and over, then, too, because I've never really utilized that; yeah, I mean like two people in a hand and then the lady on his head. Huh. I'm getting an education here.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Did she talk with you about how the different kinds of work she did fit into each other or did you observe that? The painting back and forth with the assemblage or the bricolage?

RICHARD SHAW: Bricolage and all that? Not really.

MIJA RIEDEL: No. I know you've done—you draw extensively, right? Yeah. And so it never came up in conversation about the back-and-forth between the two of you, the three, and sketching and the—

RICHARD SHAW: No. Not really. Geez, I'm sorry. I've got no information on that.

MIJA RIEDEL: No. That's fine.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. It was just more of a kind of friendship. I don't remember any kind of discussions about our art or anything. I just sort of—

MIJA RIEDEL: She didn't talk about influences at all, what moved her?

RICHARD SHAW: Not that I—she probably did but I don't have any—she certainly didn't talk about—God, she bought books on everything. It just didn't matter. It was the kind of a great wide education. The time was so great. The way I got educated was, it wasn't just you were an abstract expressionist and you only did this, or you were a potter, so you only looked at pots. Or it was only ceramics, you know. So you looked at everything. Because she was interested in everything, you know? Whether it was history, photographs. I don't know. Anything—so she bought. I always think sometimes they buy these things because it sort of like maybe that's part of your brain over here. You can put it on the shelf. You know.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] And always be able to find it. Exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: Now I can't remember that but I know [inaudible].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. [laughs] Well, I know that's something that you've talked about with your students is trying to show them everything.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or you've exposed them to everything. Did you all talk about teaching at all in any way? Talk about the students and—

RICHARD SHAW: Not really.

MIJA RIEDEL: No?

RICHARD SHAW: I don't think she had—yeah, I was just trying to think. I know some people that were students of hers but I think it was later on that I met them. Or, yeah, I'm sure it was. Dexter was born in—you know—huh. There's a gal named Charlotte Raible, was a student of hers—

MIJA RIEDEL: Charlotte Raible?

RICHARD SHAW: —who's somebody you ought to interview because she was at this conference, and she studied with Viola. She's got a great memory, and she'd be a great—she's coming out in February.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: She'd be a great one to interview because when we were back at Yale, she talked a lot about Viola and, you know, like a kind of her being a student and going—well, she was talking about she was driving—Viola didn't drive, so she drove Viola to L.A. and how she went and sort of bought out this bookstore some place. Yeah. I didn't think of it until right now. But you ought to talk to her because she is a student, and she was kind of an older student at the time, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Charlotte. Raible. I think I remember her. She was here and then they moved away. Is she married?

RICHARD SHAW: You got it. You got it. She married and they lived in San Geronimo for a while.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: And then they moved to Hawaii forever. And now they're back on Long Island. And so she came up to the Yale conference. Her daughter just got her master's in art history. And she moved out here. And she's going to start working at Anglim and Gilbert, or Gilbert and, you know, Anglim [Gilbert] Galleries [San Francisco, CA] as an intern.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: You might even talk to her. She's great. She's just like her mom. But I don't know what you could get out of her about Viola unless it was her mom's stories. But you can get them directly from Charlotte.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so Charlotte studied with her?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I didn't remember that. Interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And I should, you know, get you her email or her address or—I'm feeling bad about this Viola thing because, I think I told you on the phone, months later, I found the letter from somebody at the Smithsonian, and it was when we were back at the Smithsonian. I mean, we sort of crossed, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. No worries at all.

RICHARD SHAW: But I didn't know it was going to be you that was going to do the interview. I thought it was like, you know, I wasn't sure of if I should have done it while I was in Washington, D.C. or what have you.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's fine. No problem at all. And then the beauty of this is, because we have a couple of days; you know, oftentimes, when we start talking about things, it'll occur to you in the middle of the night. We can jot it down. And we can talk about it.

RICHARD SHAW: Well, you got my brain definitely on it now, so I will remember a lot more than I remember. I will wake up. I'm waiting for that clear thinking you do in the middle of the night.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, you just came back from the East Coast and I know you had a big conference there and you're trying to get ready for a show. You have to send that by next week. So it's—there's a lot going on. It was a long time ago.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. But you'd think I could drag up some kind of—I just liked to work and I liked her and I didn't ever have any deep intellectual conversations that I remember.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Have your thoughts about her work changed at all over time?

RICHARD SHAW: No. I still think it's great. Yeah, it's real—no one else does this stuff, you know, whether you like it or not.

MIJA RIEDEL: You know, I thought about the fact that you both loved to draw. You both liked figure drawing. I

know you teach figure drawing. You both have a real love and appreciation for the figure. Did you ever think about showing your paintings or your drawings at all?

RICHARD SHAW: No. Most of my drawings were drawings for the sculpture. So I've got a lot of them and I've kept them. I don't have any anymore. But everybody always wants free art for the non-profits, so I frame up one and send it off somewhere. I should take pictures of them. There's supposed to be one going to the Richmond Art Center, but I forgot about it and then they want me to deliver it, but I don't have time, you know, that kind of stuff. So.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But, I mean, I love drawing because it's sometimes better than the actual finished painting, for instance, because it's got thinking involved in it, and you're watching decisions being made, not that they've already been made and you look at the result of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: So you're seeing the guy, he or she, as the case may be's brain going, "Let's try this, oh no, let's try that." You know what I mean?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: And then trying to, kind of, understand the whole thing before you put paint on it or something. And I think that's the same with seeing drawings of people's sculpture, especially if they're not trying to impress you with their drawing or, you know, make it really good. But they're just like, more like, not doodles exactly, but just sort of, you know, trying-to-figure-it-out kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: So I like drawings like that and I hope—so I used to do studio drawings. I'd get busy and do them again. I'd just get a big—I should show you some. I've got them out here. Like those big kind of pads and I would just get pen and try to draw what I was going to make next.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I was going to ask you, do you always start with a sketch? Does your work always start with a sketch?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, it's funny because Bob Hudson just starts working. He doesn't do that. I have to think about all the parts I have and draw up some possibilities. And sometimes the best stuff is when you are kind of—you run out of—all you've got is parts sitting around. A lot of Viola's looks like that where she just sort of took everything and stuck it all together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And I think sometimes you have to make the decision because just what's there not because what you—you know. And so it's the more spontaneous kind. Kind of like the way Bob works where he just kind of quietly starts making this thing, then develops itself, the form. I have to sit there and go, "Is this going to look good like that?" or that kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: So will you work both ways? Do you sometimes work with what's at hand, or do you pretty much always stick with the sketch first and then go from there?

RICHARD SHAW: No. Like I'm saying, when everything's done, and I walk in the studio and there's none of the parts left for the drawings, there's just parts. And then I'll start putting them together, and it's sort of like more, not so thought out, not so planned.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: So it's neat, like, "Oh, I did that." You know, rather than having to draw it all out all carefully and that sort of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly. So then the initial idea might start with a sketch but then it unfolds based on what's at hand.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Well, some of it I do almost verbatim. But, like I'm saying, when I don't have that object, I just have the things—in other words, just pieces of two sticks and a ball and a shoe and something like that—and I've got to put them together, I just have to do it. I can't, you know, do any plans, like, "Well, I know this will make them look bitching," you know, that kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: So I just have to do it, and then it has to do it for me, kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Are you still bouncing? What a good guy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, you know, maybe we should shift gears. And I was hoping this interview would do two things, which is one, is talk about Viola and her work and, you've been saying that, and one is talk about you and your work.

RICHARD SHAW: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: And a lot has been done of your work. It's been wonderfully documented. There's been great catalogs. There's been wonderful interviews. What I thought we could do is maybe talk about some of the things that I haven't seen explored in depth and maybe just look at that a little bit. Spend maybe an hour or so talking about that.

RICHARD SHAW: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then maybe we can come back to Viola, see if that sort of—

RICHARD SHAW: Sure. Because there's so much great stuff—yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —primes the pump. Or if things occur, by all means, we can jump back and forth. We don't have to stay focused on one or the other.

RICHARD SHAW: Sure, sure. When I look at this, I think at one point, she reached her gig, you know, what she did. The figures and things like that? And she would go back, like I do, and repeat things. Like say, "Look it, here's the same old rooster in the studio," but it's not a repro; it's the same rooster. And these are old guys from the past too. I don't know if she moved out of that house and brought it in studio or something, but, God, it was a great house. But I think she got to a certain point, got her style, as they used to say, and then she just kept going on that with variations.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Well, I know Sam or Neil, you know, her two studio assistants—I think it was Sam who talked about—don't remember if it was Sam or Neil, but one of them was talking about just casting a ton of different stuff for her. So she would have all sorts of pieces lying around ready to go and that she would just begin to build like that. She would say, you know, "I'm going to do five of these or 10 of these, or"—

RICHARD SHAW: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that the way you work as well?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you cast just a ton of different pieces and then just start—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Bob [Hudson] and I would take—we started that when we worked together. Like we'd spend a couple of days just casting stuff in one room and then put it in another room under, you know, like plastic, and then we would just come and start picking things up. We didn't work on the same figures ever or the same pieces ever. We'd work separately across the table. And, of course, we influenced each other. And the books that we'd bought influenced us.

But what I was thinking about Viola is I think she got her gig down because, when you look at the studio in 2002, you can see, pretty well all the way back to '82, where we're kind of working with the same images and things. I'm not putting that down. I'm just saying she sort of got her act and then she kept going. I don't see, like, some huge change somewhere when she suddenly started doing real figures or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

RICHARD SHAW: And I'm going to get this. You're getting to be a sleepy guy, aren't you?

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. We'll pause this for a sec.

[Audio break.]

There. Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I was just going to say about Viola, as I look at her work, maybe the scale changed in a way, but I think she got a—I'm not putting this down at all, you know, but she got her act together in '82, and she carried it on until when she—when did she pass away? I can't remember.

MIJA RIEDEL: 2004, I think.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh. How could she be that long? Oh, 2002. I'm saying. Yeah, that's great. Because—when you—here's a good—see this one of the bench? That was an interesting period. I shot that at Nancy Hoffman's. But I thought that was a kind of a neat variation. I mean she's still painting them kind of the same and everything. But, you know, just to make a bench, that's kind of different.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, that was different in '91. Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Or even in the—oh, I—you know what the myth is? I forgot about this too. When the earthquake happened in '89, was it? When was the big earthquake?

MIJA RIEDEL: I think it was either '89 or '87. I can't remember. I think it was '89.

RICHARD SHAW: I think it was '89. I'm not sure. But a lot of the figures came down, and that's, so they say, is when she started doing the ones that were lying down. Now, I don't know if that's just a myth or not, you know what I mean? So they wouldn't fall on her. Because a lot of these ones that I took like in Hawaii, like these are around pools in Hawaii and this—some are at the di Rosa Preserve, but they're all reclining figures. I wonder what—see, they stopped putting the stamp and the dates on them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Well, wait a minute. Maybe there is a date. If they incised the date. Oh shoot. So I think maybe it was the '90s that I shot some of these ones in Hawaii. Oh, you know, I'm wrong because in '87—'87 is when I went from Art Institute to U.C. Berkeley. And I think it was—that's when I saw her—some reclining ones, '87. Yeah. Oh yeah. That was before the earthquake, I guess. But I saw reclining ones at Twigg-Smith's house and at the Contemporary Museum, I'm pretty sure. And so I think that maybe is a myth about the reclining figures now that I think about it because I was standing in the Contemporary Museum. It had just opened—my baby. You're okay? He's an 8,000 pound baby.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh he's been working out for an hour and-a-half [laughs].

RICHARD SHAW: Yes, he has. And he—I was standing next to Ruth Braunstein and Deborah Butterfield, and they were getting into a big argument about whether Eddie Blackburn or Bob Brady should get the job at Berkeley. And, just about a week before, I had written everybody letters of recommendation, and I'm like, "Why don't I apply?" So I sort of did it secretly. I don't remember whose letters—I asked for letters. So I was thinking of them having this battle and thinking, "I'm not going to say anything. I just applied to the job, too." You know.

But I think that's when I saw reclining figures because I think that's when I shot these guys, like around—this is di Rosa. But this is—I think this is somebody's house, like Twigg-Smith's house or this—wish I could figure out ocean—what I've written down now. It's a terrible picture. So maybe she did more reclining figures and not so many standing figures. But by the time I got to her place—her birthday party in '82, I guess that is.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that was a big birthday party, that backyard party in '82?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Yeah. It was at her studio. And everybody showed up. You could see Daniel and Mary in there and all kinds of people. That's—I can't figure out who she's talking to. Oh, that lady that—there was a gal that everybody loved that went to Arts and Crafts that died suddenly. She was—what was her name? [Tré Arenz -ALF]. Somebody that was a student of Viola's and was teaching in Texas or something at the time. They did a little catalog on her. Damn, you can't interview her but she was a real source of energy and she was there, I remember, at this thing. But, I wonder what—oh, this is 2000 this show. So this—see, this show here is pretty much—this is an older—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Some of them are reclining.

RICHARD SHAW: This is an older Viola that just happened to be in that show. But it's in that same—it's in Rena's gallery [Rena Bransten -ALF] but, oh, and then here—oh, this is the backyard again. I wonder what I stuck it in there for? You know what it is? It's in her studio—we'll see it from this slide shot. Yeah. Well, '82. Okay. That's the backyard. I don't know why I put it in here. But, you know, her—in 2002 going to her studio—I got these backwards I guess but like—now, I've got them all dated crazy. You know what? She had a show in 2002. She had a show in 2000. She must have had them every two years or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And I think the reclining figures actually started in the mid '80s. So I think we've gotten a

little—

RICHARD SHAW: I think you're right. I think you're right. I think you're right. It's just that the myth was that—she was right at the center of the earthquake practically. She was practically underneath the—whatever that freeway was called.

MIJA RIEDEL: That 520 or I-20 or whatever.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. What was it called? I forget—that fell down. [Nimitz Freeway, I-880 -ALF]. But, anyway, so that was just the myth of things that are trying to come back. I just thought we could keep going through here and see if I have any more things to say, but I think we've kind of covered the slides pretty much.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, let's see if there's anything else here that's helpful. We looked at the backyard. We looked at Sèvres. Viola's studio birth date. And then her art work. We could take a look at that. These are slides from her 2002 birthday party.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Okay, so that one show was in 2002, and one show was in 2000. So she—this is Manuel Neri and that—I don't know who that is. Let's see who I can see some other people.

MIJA RIEDEL: There's Richard Shaw.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Look at the size of that thing. This is Nancy Selvin.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, Dennis Gallagher. It looks like.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, Dennis Gallagher. God. I've almost forgotten what he looks like. And we were just back there with all those guys. There's Manuel. Oh, and this is Joseph, hell, Goldstine? No, you know the guy that was the president of the Art Institute? Hell. Sort of—Steve Goldstine. You know, he was a sweetie pie. Yeah, Manuel. I don't recognize the other people. I wish I could remember the name of this lady that everybody just loved. She's looking a little fragile there at this point.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. In 2002, she's already been through quite a bit, I think.

RICHARD SHAW: But, man, she just kept right on working.

MIJA RIEDEL: She did just keep going.

RICHARD SHAW: The size of these things. Jesus.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I think Sam was so important to help making that happen.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, he's still around. I see him periodically. But isn't it funny to find these Viola Frey paintings in the '70s?

MIJA RIEDEL: In '63 this one. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And I think she went to Arts and Crafts, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. She did. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: And I shot this somewhere, but we figured out how to date it, I think. Oh, it's early; I did date it, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: What do you remember about Charles Fiske? Do you remember anything about him?

RICHARD SHAW: He had a great sense of humor. I watched him once give a—I think he taught glaze calculation, maybe, and ceramic art history.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's what I think too. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: So I've sat—I don't know what I was doing there, but I sat in on a lecture he gave on art history. I don't remember what it was about, but ceramic art history. I thought he was good. When he had a—he was great at giving me crap, so I was like that, you know, especially about burning the cook—you know, burning Viola's stuff. Then he'd come up with other things to bug me about because he knew my work and stuff. So. But he was great, and I mean, again, the myth has it that he was sick or something, and he went to Viola's house to recover and never left. Isn't that the myth?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Something like that. Absolutely.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. But he was there until he died, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I think they were—they became—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. They were just buddies and that was it, probably dependent on each other. I'm just wondering. See, I have Viola always in that house because it was so impressive. If you say she lived in other places, when she got older, maybe, a little more fragile, maybe she got some other houses around—

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I think she lived in a couple of different places in Oakland. First she was in San Francisco on Divisadero and then she was—I thought she was on Adeline and then Third. [Her Oakland home was always on Oakland Avenue. She rented a studio on Third Street and bought one on Adeline -ALF].

RICHARD SHAW: I just wanted to get to Mills. There's this movie theater that sticks up. It's just up the hill from that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. In 1983, she was on Third Street, at 1089 Third Street. And then she went to Adeline, I think, let's see if that was before or after. '83, so that was Third Street.

RICHARD SHAW: Okay, no, I'm taking these—now, wait a minute. By 1982 is when she—

MIJA RIEDEL: In '75, that's way before we're talking about, which is in 663 Oakland Avenue and had a studio there. But '80—

RICHARD SHAW: That's weird because '82 is when I shot all those pictures in the backyard.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's right. That's right. But that was the studio. That doesn't mean that her house might have been the same.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh okay, but this was her house. Oh, there—oh, Adeline. That's the one she ended up in, right? Isn't it down by the freeway, down by the bronze place and the—what's the BART Stop there?

MIJA RIEDEL: I have to look that up. I can't—

RICHARD SHAW: I would look right down and could see her studio. That must have been Adeline. Funny. I went to the stupid BART stop two times a week for 25 years, and I can't think of the name of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: I heard you bicycled everywhere.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. But I'd take—I would bicycle to Sausalito and then take the ferry over and then ride the Bart and then go, you know, all over the place, and then just right up to school. Early, I used to ride through the city which—but then somewhere in the '90s I went, "I can't do this" because I'd be falling asleep before the end of the class. I'd be so tired from, you know, riding over the bridge and all that stuff, so I quit. And if—taking the ferry is great because I've met all kinds of neat people and stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. What an amazing commute. So you would cycle to Sausalito and take the ferry and then take BART.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. And then go home. But I remember being able to look straight down Adeline, I think it was, at her studio. And it was near that bronze place, whatever that's called.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I love that she got progressively larger spaces, so she could make—I mean, her work got progressively larger.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, again, I think—I could be wrong—but I assumed—yeah, because she had kilns in her house in a big room, not a very big room. But when I went, I think she was working at the house.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm sure she did work at the house too. She definitely drew with the house. I don't know if she did clay at the house, but I'm sure she drew.

RICHARD SHAW: Well, she might have been doing it at school or something because she had a lot of stuff. The next thing I knew, 10 years later or something, that she had that big studio where she had Sam helping her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Because there's kind of a space after Paris and stuff of, you know, just knowing her and going to shows, but not really ever going to her house. But I remember a couple of times she had us over to her house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So Charles Fiske, is there a—people have mentioned that he was very good

at looking at your work and talking about it in a way that was interesting and insightful. Did you ever have any experience of that?

RICHARD SHAW: No. We just kidded each other all the time, pretty much. I just liked him. I thought he was bright and he seemed like—I think he was good with the students. I'm pretty sure he was. I remember something weird about the lecture, something like maybe he got—I don't know what it was; I thought maybe too formal. Suddenly he became formal. Don't listen to me. Anyway, it was great, whatever it was, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: Martha's in the background playing with the baby all the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Believe me, I know you want to have that baby on your knee [laughs].

RICHARD SHAW: Nah, yeah, he's fine.

MIJA RIEDEL: Should we talk a little bit about teaching?

RICHARD SHAW: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so I wanted—your work has been covered wonderfully, as I said in, you know, really good interviews and Paul Karlstrom did a good interview, a video interview, I think, in '98. [1996 -ALF]. And there was the [Richard] Whittaker interview and then there was the SFMOMA Catalog. So there's been a lot of nice—

RICHARD SHAW: You know more than I do. Yeah. Good work.

MIJA RIEDEL: There's been a lot of coverage of your work. I think there's a lot of great information—material available, so I don't want you to have to repeat that all-over again [laughs]. But something that I wanted to talk about is teaching because I think that is something that's been a huge part of your life, that you feel passionate about, that has been, I think, also really influential to your work in terms of your students or the energy or the spontaneity. But you've talked about having wonderful teachers. You've talked about having Ron Nagle, I think, and Jim Melchert at the Art Institute. And then in Davis, I can't remember who was there, Arneson, and Manuel [Neri], and Wiley. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Wiley. I never saw Arneson. He was always on sabbatical. But, yeah. Everybody kind of knows it because we talked about this at that conference. It was like everybody was the same age or something. But they weren't the same age. But everybody respected each other because they were working artists.

They weren't, like, if you're a teacher in a junior college where he was there every day, and you loved him. Maybe they were influential. But they were a teacher every day. Sometimes they weren't really an artist so much, and they didn't really do work. But in this case, you know, you already knew what they did because they were pretty famous, at least in the Bay area. And you knew their work ethic and all that, like Danial and Viola. I mean, just their work ethic.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: So I think that was a big part of it. Well, like Jim Melchert, like I've told this story a million times. But he was like, you know, "He appeared in [inaudible]" ministerial voice and he'd come in and you'd listen to everything he said. And then I asked Marianne [Jim Melchert's wife] one time, I said, "Well, when Jim was my teacher and I was 21, how old was Jim?" And she said, "I think he was 32." I'm like, "30." You know. And he was like this 70-year-old man teaching, ya know. God. And he's just the same, you know, we just spent—we were on the plane together, and we went to conferences and all that stuff.

But I think, as far as teaching goes, what they taught me was visuals, lots of visuals of different stuff. And so that's why I've got this massive slide collection in all this era. I was going to go somewhere, to Paris or to a show of Viola's. I really cranked out the slides for students.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Not—some for me, but we shared both of them. Like I was really into badly repaired things that I would always show them because it shows a creative mind trying to, with all the wrong materials, fix something, you know. So I took turns at that. And then I discovered—this is just a couple of sections—but one time I discovered just taking pictures of coffee cups in advertising and just the variation of, you know, real primitive, badly drawn ones.

Once I found one that's probably one of the best ones ever, where someone actually scratched a cup and saucer into, like, a window that had frosted paint on it. And they scraped so realistic you can't believe it. And it probably

was, somebody didn't know what the hell they were doing, but it's killer. But, I mean, just that standard for what, you know, it starts from—it starts from the fully covered coffee cup of, who is it?

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MIJA RIEDEL: Oh sure. Yeah. Sure.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, anyway, that knocked me out. When I was in my senior year, I went to the Museum of Modern Art right before I was getting going, and I was in New York. I saw the Fur Coat Matisse Copper Person, which I'm sure Ron Nagle and Jim Melchert had shown me, and Manuel Neri, and then I saw—which I saw five versions of in the *Picasso Sculpture Show* of the Cup of Absinthe—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —and sort of went, "Whoa, I think I have it, you know. I think I figured out—not what—how people use their imaginations, you know, and the skills that they have." I couldn't even put it in words. I'm doing it now, probably all wrong, but it was like a kabaam! , though, "Wow, this is great." You know, kind of thing—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But so much of that had to do with showing you—not just, you know, straight line—I don't even remember Alfred—what they showed me, if they showed slides.

MIJA RIEDEL: I was going to ask about Alfred so—but let's finish this train of thought.

RICHARD SHAW: I know, I just don't remember anybody showing me slides—

MIJA RIEDEL: So it comes back to this idea of trying to show your students as much as you possibly can and make references: cultural references or historical references or pop references or—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah—

MIJA RIEDEL: —functional—

RICHARD SHAW: I can't even remember the names, you know. I've forgotten those periods and stuff because I'm not teaching anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. When did you actually retire?

RICHARD SHAW: 2012.

MIJA RIEDEL: 2012, okay.

RICHARD SHAW: But, yeah it just—it was just—if you're excited about it, you reckon they're going to get excited about it, you know, so I just think that was a big part of Jim Melchert, collecting images of things to keep everybody moving. And that's sometimes the only thing they'll remember about the class is someone's images, ya know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And I remember—pretty much, somebody's images—really influenced me that many of them—it was interesting; Manuel Neri and Ron Nagle and Jim Melchert would get together and—

[Baby crying.]

I'm sorry. Mr. complain-y boy. Manuel and Jim and Ron would get together, together, and then they would bring their slides of just cuckoo stuff or their favorite artists—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —whether it's Morandi or some guy that made this cuckoo desk. There was a desk that—I did a couple of things that were a takeoff. That's where those couches with the landscapes on them came from. This desk that—marquetry, I think it's called, you know where you do layers of wood—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right.

RICHARD SHAW: —and it's real simple. It probably was about this big; it was in the shape of a house and the desk, but then it had little trees that started big and then went back in space, so it—like you looked into the

thing—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —or past it. And then Manuel came, and I was doing all this—first I started doing—in my figure class, I would do—it was in Bob Brady's class. I did the figure, and then I started doing the figure on the couch and the chair. And then I just started doing the couch without the figure on it, trying to figure out what to do with it. And then the kids had looked at my paintings and looked at the couches and went to paint on the couches. So then, that's where that came from was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: —so I figured, "Oh wow I could put my—pretending I'm Vuillard on this couch.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: That was pretty neat.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. You were at Alfred for a year or two?

RICHARD SHAW: Just—I was there for one semester, and then I got an offer to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute—

MIJA RIEDEL: Now you were doing—it was undergraduate at Alfred wasn't it?

RICHARD SHAW: No, I was doing my first year of masters.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh okay so you had already graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute, and you went to Alfred —

RICHARD SHAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —towards a masters.

RICHARD SHAW: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, and then you were invited to teach at the San Francisco Art Institute.

RICHARD SHAW: So, then I went for a semester at San Francisco State—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: —and then by then, we're all showing together. I mean, we had a show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in 1965 at—when I was at Alfred. Martha and I drove all the way back there. Martha was pregnant with our first child who's going to be 50 years old here this week.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh my gosh.

RICHARD SHAW: And we went and saw some Beatles show, I forget what it was, "Help" or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And then afterwards we went to the show at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, but it had Michael Frimkess, they had Arneson. It had, I think, Jim and Ron, Kurt Fishback who was a guy in my—David Mackenzie who was in my class. It had—I don't know if Gerry Walburg and I'm not sure if David Gilhooly was in it, but Stephen Kaltenbach was in it for sure. Some other art—maybe Peter was in it, but it was like—it was—I think it was curated by Ben Watkins and Bruce Breckenridge. We should look that up sometime and see because that would be—but that was the first heavy show I was ever in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That was '65.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah so I came back and was going to state college, but I was showing with all those guys around the Bay area. I think Marilyn Levine had come along by then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Was she in that *Objects USA* show? I cannot remember.

MIJA RIEDEL: I can't remember either; I'd have to look that up.

RICHARD SHAW: It's right in there; I'll look that up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I've got it too.

RICHARD SHAW: But came back, and there was sort of a U.C. Berkeley group with Pat Siler and Nancy Selvin, and God, I can't think of who else, Marilyn Levine. I'm trying to think of who else was heavies. You know who you should talk to is Nancy Selvin; it's got her sort of history of that Berkeley thing because she's right there. Who else was involved?

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a good idea.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, and Harold Paris.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Pete, gee, I'm trying to think there are so many other guys. It's funny how Catharine Hiersoux said—I just got a little note from her; she was kind of in the background of all this, sort of, as somebody doing ceramics too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: It's just that period of time, Viola—I don't think anybody knew about Viola. I don't know if she was still in school or whether she was teaching quietly at Arts and Crafts and just making her work because, again, until—this is in '66, '67, '68 that all this—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —is taking place, and then I didn't really ever see her work or get knocked out by it or realize it until '73 when I started seeing her work at Lesley Wenger Gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I didn't really know—Art—that guy Art Nelson—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —everyone sort of knew who he was. He wasn't—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —really included in all of those shows. I don't remember.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think she started teaching part time at CCAC in the mid '60s, '65—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh really?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: That's—okay. '65 is when—we got back January '66 to start teaching at the Art Institute.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, and she was living in San Francisco.

RICHARD SHAW: No kidding—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, in—on Divisadero Street.

RICHARD SHAW: [inaudible] black out, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: But I think she'd just moved back from the east coast; she'd been working at the Port Chester Clay Art Center, and she'd been at Tulane, I think, by then.

RICHARD SHAW: Was she teaching or going to school or both or?

MIJA RIEDEL: She was going to school and then I think she was working with Katherine Choy at the Port Chester Art School. And then I think she was—I can't really remember how long she was there for, but she came back here in the mid-'60s, and then she started teaching part time at CCAC. She worked as an accountant at Macy's, I

think, yeah. And she didn't start working full time at CCAC until, I don't think, the '90s.

RICHARD SHAW: No kidding. Oh, I thought she was teaching there—

MIJA RIEDEL: She was teaching there, but not—but I think part time.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh okay. Because she was definitely the heavy act.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Well, who was her teacher at CCAC? She did go there right? Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't know—

RICHARD SHAW: I'm trying to think who would be a teacher there, this is something I should know, but I've forgotten. I'm going to jump in and go to the bathroom for a second. I'll be right back.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was Steven Corn for sure because she started as a painter.

RICHARD SHAW: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: We were talking about teaching before we took a baby break.

RICHARD SHAW: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] One of the things that you were talking about that—on the spirit of collaboration or the spirit of community, that was just a big part of your experience as a student. Is that something you've tried to bring in as a professor as well? Is that something that translates from that era to this era? Do you think that's something that can be part of university studying now, or are you having any success with that? Is that something you've tried to carry forward?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, yeah, but I mean, I think it just happens though.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And it just happened that there were these people there at the same time, you know? You're right. I don't know if that's carried—I don't know if it went passed that because, I mean, I certainly never was the professor with the tie on and removed from everybody; it was just the guide. It was teaching how to do—I mean, I spent as much time walking around, you know, like pretty active. So I didn't sit in my office and wait for you to come visit or something like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: But as far as your—that's a good observation because I think that just had to do with—especially of Davis, of just teaching personalities there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Roy De Forest, he wasn't quite as—he seemed like older, which he wasn't, but like Manuel—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —and Wiley, Arneson. There was—I mean, you—total respect for them, but there were—it was like a moving ahead thing going on, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Everybody—it wasn't like party time; you were always included and everything, like if—Ralph Johnson I think the guy's name was; he was a neat guy. I can't remember what he taught even, but he'd have everybody over at his house, you know, but everybody would always go: the teachers, the students, everybody kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: The Art Institute, I think there was a real community amongst us students.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Ron was two years older than me or something and Bob only three years older than me. So there was—I mean, everybody was kind of the same age, and it all had to do with how hard you work.

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

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, I remember getting lectured on not doing work like theirs one time, saying, "This is looking too—don't you do work that looks like mine?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Not that—I didn't mean I was trying to beat them at it; I meant that "to get your own act here."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, "Don't just imitate Richard Diebenkorn and don't imitate me," you know, so kind of like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: But you know, I think about Berkeley—I think—was I the youngest person there when I got there? And I was 47; I think I was. It's getting kind of up there. I think, at least with the graduate students, for sure, I carried on the same, you know, here we are and blah, blah, blah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I was just thinking the other day, they wanted me to speak at graduation, which I would've had a heart attack if I had to do it, but luckily I was going off to Sèvres, so I didn't have to do it. That's probably when I was with Viola, but I—when I got to Berkeley, Sylvia Lark said, "Well Richard"—it was going to be my first faculty meeting—said, "Richard I want to explain to you the political situation here," because I guess it was really bad. People really didn't like each other, and the secretaries didn't like them. There was real conflict. And I can go into all—I probably shouldn't get into the details, but there was a lot of alcoholism, and there was a lot of people not showing up for class and a lot of people resenting other people—oh, a lot of blocking people's advances.

And then I can—I knew there was something, and I'd heard about it when I got there. She said, "I'll meet you in the cafeteria and explain it all to you." So I went to the cafeteria and waited, and she came, and she said, "You know, Richard? You're a really nice guy, and you don't need to know what's going on." So I never knew what was going on, but I didn't get that. The Art Institute—there was nothing like Davis, let's put it that way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: The Art Institute was a little—you know, ceramics wasn't art; you know, that thing was still—

MIJA RIEDEL: Still.

RICHARD SHAW: That thing was still—not still, but that time. We were showing more than all the heavies you know, at that point, but it wasn't real art. So there was just kind of that conflict. It's all stuff I'd never really thought about. When I got to Berkeley, I guess was the youngest guy at 47, and then everybody started retiring, so, like, everybody took, you know, that early retirement thing—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —where they got the bonus, and they could retire, but I didn't—I never got into politics. I never—no one ever stopped me going forward. I even got tenure early because—is she cooking something? Yeah—Brian Wall and Jim—no, somebody else said, "Richard, you better go for it now or—while you're"—oh, I know what they said; I forgot this. They said, "You're kind of on the top of your game, and it may not get any better, so this is the time to apply for tenure."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And so I did. I made the excuse that Martha wanted me to do it, which of course, she would've—you know, she never tells me anything to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And so you know, I've never even called the lady that ran the department—I can't even remember her name—from New York. Ann Healey said, "Well, I think you'd better talk to Jim Melchert about this," and so I called up Jim, and I said, "Well, Jim, you know, I'm going up"—she was in the office, and "Martha thinks I should do this." Why, you know, and he says, "I think you should do it—I think you should do it too," you know, in that Jim Melchert voice.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And sure enough, I got it. So, it was great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yep.

RICHARD SHAW: The hardest part was, you know, putting in all the applications because I can't read or write, you know, and all that stuff. But we did it so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So I just kind of was out of the political part of that whole thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I was—they made me the department head once, and that was kind of a political move because they didn't want just one gal to go back in and be the department head again. So they said, "Richard, sorry you're going to have to do it," so I only did it for one semester; I was the head of department. And it was just when computers were coming in, and I, of course, Mr. Illiterate, I had literally—I mean I still can't really spell and all that stuff, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, I just remember, like, writing a whole letter for somebody on the computer, and I'd be in my office, and the door would be open and the secretaries—and I'd do something, and the whole thing would just disappear.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I know what that's like.

RICHARD SHAW: And I'd be like, "Fuck, fuck." And all the secretaries would run up and slam the door, so the people in anthropology couldn't hear me having this tantrum.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: But I was so bad at it. I mean, just so—and they just said, "That's okay; you don't have to do it anymore," and after that, I think—I'm sure that we got—we never had a person from the art department running the art department. We had people from art history and things like that, and the English department even—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: —instead of having any of us, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: No one wanted to do it. I wasn't capable of it. So now they've got a whole new crew who like—you know, they hire them, and they've already got tenure, and they're making the—they're the head of the department and blah, blah, blah and all that kind of stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have a little dyslexia, do you think?

RICHARD SHAW: Big time, yeah, I spent five semesters in the third grade and two years in the 10th grade.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, are you serious or joking because I do know—I mean, a number of the artists I've talked to, that does seem to be—especially for visual artists, that there is—I can't remember—I think a Richard Marquis and Paul Soldner told me about just—I think Marquis told me about taking classes a couple times in a row because he couldn't write it all down, but he could memorize it.

RICHARD SHAW: Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: And he would just—because I've heard a couple of artists I've spoken with talk about how they've dealt with that and that it was much easier for them to take their creative minds and put them in individual work rather than—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, I did that—one time—I just was thinking years and years—50 years later or something, I was going, "Why couldn't I pass geometry?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: But I could listen to a song once and memorize all the lyrics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I could hear a Joan Baez song—I went and saw her at UCLA one time when we were in high school; I just—I could memorize the whole song, one time through.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

RICHARD SHAW: How come I couldn't do anything else?

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: How come I couldn't spell "does?"

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: I finally had to call up my—the middle of the night I'm writing a letter of recommendation for somebody, and I couldn't spell does, D-O-Z, D-O-Z-E—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: I finally had to call up my sister-in-law because Martha was asleep or something and say, "How the hell do you spell 'does?'"

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: You know, I just—I'm still not really there—oh, yeah, no, I got it—but like it's just not there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. I understand.

RICHARD SHAW: It's nothing to brag about either. I mean, it's a tough one, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: It is frustrating.

RICHARD SHAW: Like when you sit up or down, right or left.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's extraordinary though because you have—clearly incredibly spatial orientation and intelligence for—

RICHARD SHAW: Maybe 3-D stuff, but certainly not right or left or up and down.

MIJA RIEDEL: Up or down, that's three dimensions.

RICHARD SHAW: But that's on a computer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh that's true.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't know if that means back and forth; you know what I mean? My brain wasn't getting it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Now, I know what you mean.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Down means—see, to me, up would mean to go forward, not down to go through the things. So my brain doesn't work that way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. No, I can understand. I actually understand that.

RICHARD SHAW: You should see me trying to pass the driving test.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: I'm just not looking forward to it again, five times; I mean I just can't get it. Martha just looked at me and said—the first time I failed it and said, "You just—doesn't your brain—I mean, you don't think like this," you know. I still barely made it; they made me take it every single time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why do you have to keep taking it?

RICHARD SHAW: Every four years, I have to take the driving—I've talked to guys, like my buddy I went to graduate school, says, "I took the graduate—I took the driving test when I got here from Oklahoma 50 years ago. I've never taken it again." Every four years, I have to take the driving test.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's so odd—

RICHARD SHAW: Not the driving test but the spelling.

MIJA RIEDEL: The written, oh, how awful.

RICHARD SHAW: So the driving test, I probably could pass—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —but I'd take them [inaudible].

MIJA RIEDEL: That would do it. [laughs] They would pass you immediately. So we were talking about teaching in community. It does seem that there has been through your—the sense of collaboration that is—I think about it both in terms of your work and, of course, with Robert Hudson in particular. But then I think about your own work, is this sense of collaborations, sort of, running through those standing figures? I mean, all those different elements collaborating—

RICHARD SHAW: Interesting.

MIJA RIEDEL: —don't you think there's a sense of—an unusual sense of collaborative effort or collaborative back and forth or an open exchange of ideas—

RICHARD SHAW: Within the art itself?

MIJA RIEDEL: Within the art itself and also within your way of working, within your working process over all these years.

RICHARD SHAW: I think so, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Has it struck you that way, as different than other people's?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, well, I don't know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Especially collaborated—

RICHARD SHAW: —because I change—you know, because I do thing for a while that you never see, and then I do stuff that I try to include that in and things like that, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

RICHARD SHAW: —you know, certain things will just knock you out, and they don't really particularly—it's not really anything that should probably be showing or something like that, but then sometimes—like it was great going to the east and going to the museums and stuff because that kind of got me moving again.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: It's kind of hard, you know, with the dude here; it's kind of hard to get moving, you know. When you're on, it's kind of hard because I want her to work—

MIJA RIEDEL: Martha, your wife.

RICHARD SHAW: —you know, to play her fiddle and paint and stuff, but then I want to do it, but it slows things down pretty much—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, when you have a four-month-old grandchild living with you. That would do it.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, and then old age, too, it's kind of like, it's going to be hard to do, but it's not that bad. But I look and think of the endless energy I must've had and then all the patience with my wife and, you know, letting me go down there until 2:00 in the morning and stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I wanted to ask you about that because I looked at your, you know, exhibition history, and it—you know, every year, it seems to be at least two exhibition and usually three, often four. For year after year, after year, after year, while you taught full-time at Berkeley and you have a family with four or five children—

RICHARD SHAW: Five children.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and then, how is it possible—I mean, unless—that's the exhibition history of somebody who would be a full-time studio artist.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't think that there were that many—most of them—I think one of those were group shows and stuff. I mean, I guess I've never really looked at my resume. Maybe I should look at it.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, I looked at the list; it has solo exhibitions. That was not even looking at the group exhibitions. It just seems like an extraordinary output.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't remember it, [laughs] but I mean, I just—you know, I do look back and think that I just spent a lot of time down there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, and do you have the—

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, not like Viola Frey, but still—time down there—

MIJA RIEDEL: And the studio was literally across the yard here.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah I should take you on a tour.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh it's downstairs, okay.

RICHARD SHAW: That studio is a drawing studio where I do—or mainly that's where I did all the teaching stuff. You know, I had the books and the ones that weren't at school—God, I left school; I had to bring, like, a library. I ended up leaving most of them, but the books were out there. I shot the slides out there; I organized some lectures out there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I'll take you on a tour, but the downstairs studio has the kilns and the spray equipment and the slip mixer and all that stuff. But you're probably—you're kind of tall. I might have to get you a bicycle helmet. You might bump your head. It's got a low ceiling.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] It's okay. I'm not that tall.

RICHARD SHAW: But yeah I don't know. I guess I just assumed that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have studio assistants? Did you have people?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, that's a good point; I haven't had one, but in my last big show at Paula's, we were doing the furniture. This guy's amazing, so he's from here; his mom was the mayor of the town and he has met—and went to school with Whitney, one of our twins, and now they're going to get married. They live together in the city, but if you want anybody to be a craftsman, this guy is it. And plus, he worked in ceramics in high school and stuff too, so he knew what he was doing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh great.

RICHARD SHAW: So when I get in a pinch, I go, "Help," you know come over and help me hold this thing while I put it together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: But let's see, I'm trying to—first student, which was the first studio assistant I had? I had a gal named—I think the first one was Phyllis Baldino.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: She came in as a ceramics person, and I think anybody that's been—and ended up going to New York and becoming a film maker because she probably realized how hard it was and how messy—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And the other gal I had was Sara Schleimer; she was a student at Berkeley who was interested in—she was great too. She gave up and became a doctor.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Something easy.

RICHARD SHAW: And then I had Alice, our oldest daughter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Your other daughter.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: And she was okay, and she was great, actually; she actually liked it because I let her do more than other people because I trusted her, but she was sort of, in those days, to have mentioned that she was—we used to call her our mother-in-law, so she would come in and complain about everything: our housekeeping, "How can you live like this?" you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: You know, so it was like—so we finally put her on paid leave.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: Now, we couldn't have a better—she's so great with this baby. Jesus. She shows up and takes care of it, a different person. Then—oh, I've had kids from—in high school come and work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But they would—mostly what they did was sit on the wheel and try to learn how to throw, so they weren't much help.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I bet.

RICHARD SHAW: But then Torren was there for a while, but I think Dexter, our son, our middle son worked too. That really pushes you ahead because, when you're paying somebody 20 bucks an hour, whatever we used to do—we probably should've paid them and gave them lunch or whatever, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: What did they do?

RICHARD SHAW: They would cast for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: That would be my thought.

RICHARD SHAW: They would mask—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —little, stupid things that were real picky, but they were good at it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —cast, mask, mix glazes, but I would—it would be twice a week.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: So it wasn't a lot, so they'd be here all day, two times a week.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: What I was going to say was, when you have somebody doing all that, you can't like hang out or anything because you've got them coming.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: You've got all this stuff to work with, so that really—I'm glad you mentioned that because I think that makes a big difference when you've got somebody helping you because you get way farther along and you have to be committed. You can't just sort of hang out and go do something and come back, and it's all this stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And you don't want to stiff them because you're trying to make a living off of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I probably never paid them, I'm feeling guilty as I'm sitting here. I mean, I never paid them enough, but they were great, and they kept me going.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: They were all great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I'm so glad you mentioned that because I remember someone was saying—I didn't go to Bob's lecture, but he had the show at the SFMOMA museum, and someone asked him if he had an assistant and he said—I don't know if you know Bobby, but a few words, he said, "Well, I guess Mavis is my assistant," you know, kind of his wife because she does all—everything, all the secretary stuff that builds up, you know, definitely the computer and all that now. Probably comes out and looks at his stuff and tells him to—hey, we're—is that still going?

MIJA RIEDEL: It looks like some light is on.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, oh, oh, it's a baby formula. Oh, gee, practically nothing left. I thought she was making tea or something. Do you want tea or coffee or something?

MIJA RIEDEL: No, I'm good, thank you.

RICHARD SHAW: I already had too much coffee.

MIJA RIEDEL: So an assistant from the start, so they were helping you—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, I didn't have any in Stinson Beach or—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah

RICHARD SHAW: We moved over in '76, we moved here.

MIJA RIEDEL: From [Stinson Beach -ALF] yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I probably got Phyllis Baldino working for me in this late—trying to remember when I went back east, and we had all of these great students at Hartford, and a lot of them came back out here to go to school, including Phyllis. Well, it was before I went to Berkeley, so its somewhere in the '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, somewhere in the '80s, I got assisted, and then there would be a space that I'd get another one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I just can't remember the years. That's weird. But they were great. They were all great, so it really makes a difference.

MIJA RIEDEL: What you taught: life drawing, you taught your sculpture, what else did you teach?

RICHARD SHAW: I taught sculpture. I once taught, for free, a seminar class at Berkeley where we would have—gosh, it's so funny because everything is so budget—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I would trade people to come in and give a lecture once a week on Tuesday right before I went

home because I'd have to do this whole thing of jumping on the bike right—just about the time the class was over, get out of there early, so I wouldn't miss my ferry.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right

RICHARD SHAW: So, I'd get to part people talking.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: About halfway through, I'd disappear. I feel kind of bad, but I mean, I taught it for free, and I had to—there was no money to pay anybody, so I had to trade them. I did that maybe for a couple of years, one semester, maybe three years, but then my assistant would help me grade the papers and all that kind of stuff. That was a little tough because that was like three classes rather than two. I would teach sculpture, you know, regular old sculpture, but I taught it over in ceramics. I didn't teach it in the sculpture that was sort of clay based; oh, it was definitely clay based, yeah, because I did portraits and stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: What is it—I know you started as a painter; you love—you draw, and I assume you continue to draw.

RICHARD SHAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: But they're not—the drawings and the paintings are never something that you were interested in exhibiting alongside or—

RICHARD SHAW: Well, I don't draw as seriously as like Viola or Bob or somebody like that. I don't have—you know, again, it's like sketchbooks—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —and ideas, drawing up ideas and stuff. The painting—the only painting comes in on the pieces themselves.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: Now, what—you know, it's funny you mention that because I have to do it; it's one of those things, I got ready to go, and I'm too chicken to do it, but I cast frames. I should show them to you, big frames, you know, really gaudy frames, but they've got the canvas in them too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So when I sit—someday I'm going to set up one of those easels. I've taken pictures and done drawings and painted them like it was painting, so if you saw it, you would think the painting, more or less, is made out of clay.

MIJA RIEDEL: That sounds great.

RICHARD SHAW: But I've got a pile of them, and it's one of those, like, oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: Am I going to do it? I saw the greatest thing in the world. It was—and I should've bought it, but someone got it before me. I came back; it was a very well-framed Vermeer. It's just the only cityscape I've ever seen him do; he did all people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And he even had the little gold plaque on it. This was in a thrift store in Healdsburg; she had Johannes Vermeer, dah, dah, dah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: The thing was so beat up; I mean, it was just the creases in it and running down. It was so beat up, but I thought, "Oh man, this is it." You know, it's kind of about the value of art, and then the non-value of art, you know, kind of get a cast off. I went back to get it, and Martha looked at me and said, "Who would buy that thing?" But you know, like I was going to buy it in a second, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: I should've bought it when I saw it. So I cast a lot of canvases that were kind of, like, really beat up, and then I was going to paint the scene in, you know, something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, you've done little paintings in your still lives, some of the paint boxes.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, Martha and I—and then Martha did painting; in the kitchen in there are ones that we've done together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: They're by the mirror; there's one of a boat, and there's one of something else. I forget, and I look at it every day, but that's—those are clay too. Yeah, I mean, the love of painting and art is there, you know, the—Martha's parents were artists, and my parents were artists. Their drawing teacher was Martha's grandfather, and it goes pretty—goes back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, well, back at the Art Institute of Chicago as I recall.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, you got it.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: So there's that love, magic of art still there, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And some of our kids have it.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's interesting—yeah, it's interesting too. I wanted to ask you because you just said the magic of art. There is, I think, a sense of that in your work. I mean, people have talked about it; I mean, you've mentioned it in passing. I can't remember the exact word, if Melchert used that word or not, but there is something about that magic in it, and I know your dad was a cartoonist right?

RICHARD SHAW: Cartoonist and a writer, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, and there is something about—I thought there was—there's an animation, and there's a life, and there's a sense of—well, it has been talked about "magic," sort of, talked about in terms of mystery. But I wonder if you think about the work in any kind of even remotely spiritual sense?

RICHARD SHAW: I don't even really know if I could say spiritual, but I guess that is spiritual. I mean, it's like—

MIJA RIEDEL: At some point, we were talking about it—

RICHARD SHAW: It's so exciting that people can do this and that they do it and then sometimes—I've written this down a million times—I want someone to look at it and get the same thing I've gotten, go like, "I want to do this. This means something to me. I know I can do something like this." I mean, not exactly the same thing, but that it's, you know, so moving and so magical, but it's a surprise too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, like, "Wow, look at this; who thought of this?" It's like a different way of thinking somehow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, no one thinks like this. I never thought of thinking like this. I mean, the decisions that are made, and not only just—well, I shouldn't use the word "technical," but the kind of magical things that people can do with their hands and their brain and their—yeah, their hands and their brain, so it's all there. It's not—it's just not mechanical.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, and the stuff that moves you just blows you away. Like we went to New York, and the first night we got there, we went over to the galleries, and it was pretty flat. You know, and we kind of—it was kind of a bummer, so we went up to Yale; there was some great stuff at Yale and a show and in the museum, which we never could really get to because they weren't on all the time. But then we went back down, got out of the—I don't remember how we did this. Oh, that's when we saw some of the show. But the morning that we left, we went back over to the gallery to see if we could see something.

God, the guides were all crazy; they were all shows that weren't in where they said they were supposed to be. But we got to a David Hockney show which was—blew us away. Bob went in and immediately bought the catalog from the bookstore there. And then we went and saw a guy named Frank Owen, was a student when I was a student at Davis; we graduated together, and he came up to the conference, and God, I hadn't seen him in 50 years or whatever it was, and—but—no, I had seen him some time in between, but I never could recognize him because he doesn't look like a kid anymore. We were both, you know—I don't know—28 or something when we graduated. His show was a knockout, and so there was a need to take Bob and Mavis to a show that they really looked like somebody knew what they were doing. They were doing something different, and it was like you looked at it, and it was not just the same old snores, you know, stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, how great.

RICHARD SHAW: So that was great and that—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was in the city. Do you recall where?

RICHARD SHAW: This is, oh, that was that Nancy Hoffman Gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, yeah, she shows wonderful work.

RICHARD SHAW: And then we went up town and went to the Picasso Sculpture Show and, like—I don't know—and we were there for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours, and a lot of that stuff, of course, you've always seen in books and everything or at the museum, but it was still like—other than having my book—Charlotte Raible—don't ever tell her this—talking to me every—I'm trying to draw stuff, you know, get new ideas from this, you know, and this voice is talking.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: Go over to another sculpture, start to draw, she's talking about the sculpture, but, like, you know, but that was great to see that show. That's the only show we saw that day? No, we went to the Whitney too. But we went to see the Frank Stella show, and it was pretty flat. I mean, the first couple rooms were okay, but never my favorite guy, but I admired his work ethic and all that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And there was some neat stuff in there, but it was like kind of disappointing. Oh God, the greatest show in the world, at least for ideas and what a neat, committed person, was on the top floor of the Whitney. I do not know the guy's name now. I should have written his name, was an African American artist—African American or Canadian? African American—who just painted of that period of—could it have been Hopper? I'm trying to think of what American period that was, but anyway, he just had some great stuff in there, and you could see he really felt what he was doing, and I got all kinds of ideas just by looking at what was in the still life's with the people in them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Just the presence of that person and the junk that they were with was like what I'm trying to do, but without the person kind of, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: So, I mean, that was a killer show. I don't know what the guy's name was, but I should have got the Whitney guy that I could remember his name. Oh, and then there was a guy at the Met that—but I did write his name down; I don't know where my sketchbook is. Is that—no, that's not your sketchbook. Anyway, some guy that sort of painted nothing. I don't know what period it was. I'm trying to think where my sketchbook is; it's outback. Oh, it's out back, but it was just like there was no subject. I mean, there were landscapes, but there was no subject. I mean, there was nothing. There wasn't a boat in it or something; you know what I mean?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: It would be sort of a sunset or something, or you know, kind of something that wasn't all that interesting but was great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: You know, that's what I want to do with those frame things out back, is I want to get—so I've been taking pictures of kind of part of something but not all of it, you know, so you kind of, what was the point of this, kind of, but it's beautiful at the same time, kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, it makes me think of this whole concept of dumb, and it actually makes me think of Viola as well because—I think Sam was telling me at one point she gave her students an assignment to just make something dumb and make, you know, three version of it or something. I've been thinking about the power of objects in your work and how that, either the mundane-ness or the prosaic quality of those objects, allow people a way in. It makes them accessible.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, that's a good idea; yeah, that's exactly what it's about too. You got it. Dumb is real interesting because I'm always—for a while, I was always being interviewed about what funk art was, what the definition was, you know. I didn't know, and no one seems to know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And in that *Objects: U.S.A.*, the [Lee] Nordness or whatever his name—what was his name?—I forget. He wrote, "Richard Shaw's steeped in the funk art credo." And I looked at it to correct it, and I thought, I'm not, but who's going to let him drop this thing out of here; it's just too good. So I didn't say anything, but when I retired, everybody made me beer holders, you know, those kind of—and they said "Steep in the Funk Art Credo."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: But everybody was—you know, Jim, I don't know if Brian used it so much, but Manuel, for sure, used dumb. Did he use it—that's really dumb; that meant the best compliment you could get from Manuel, so I kept saying—I think of Jo Lauria's thing from the—

MIJA RIEDEL: *Color and Fire*?

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, I think I kept trying to explain—I don't remember. I lent that damn thing to somebody, and it never came back but—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was a nice book.

RICHARD SHAW: —they—I kept saying—we were—before we went to Davis, where suddenly, the word was "funk"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —I'd be curious if I was in graduate—do you remember what year I got the catalogs, what year the funk show was?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't.

RICHARD SHAW: It's '60 something, I was wondering if I was—I think I might've been at Davis at that point when Peter Selz did the Funk show because Gilhooly and Arneson were in it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: And he had that typewriter and all that. We were all sort of aware of each other at that point. When I was in school Gilhooly was still there and Arneson obviously. But I just never—and then—oh, some guy came from France [Laurent de Verneuil -ALF], and he wanted to know what it all meant, and he was going to try to do something on the Funk show, and then he kind of came over a couple of times and then disappeared. But we all sat at Lefty O'Doul's in the city trying to figure out what funk was, and Wiley said that he thought it derivated [sic] in New Orleans from the Jazz scene or something like that, the first one. Everybody had a kind of a different version of what funk was. But dumb, when I got to Davis and there was funk art, I realized that dumb meant funk; I mean, it came from the—I mean, they were just simultaneously used as that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Seems like enigma is somehow a part of that too.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, that definitely came in. I didn't even know what that was, but Wiley used to throw that in his paintings all the time, the actual word "enigma." Yeah, right. That was a neat time; maybe that has a lot to do with the community as everybody was kind of influencing each other, and there was that kind of attitude towards art and so many people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: You know I didn't—I keep saying I'm steep in the funk art credo, but I just happened to be there at the same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: But you know, I graduated making these real tight, little scenes that you looked into, like with the—that I'd, you know, sort of put with photographic transparencies, but I passed, and everybody liked my stuff, but it didn't mean it had to be funk art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, they weren't graduating people because it looked like their work and stuff; you just graduated. If it was good, it was good, you know, so it was pretty interesting like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: I've never talked to a single artist who thought their work—whether they were identified as steeped in the credo of funk art or not, thought it actually was funk either. So, it's interesting to hear you say that as well.

RICHARD SHAW: It's just, you know, it's a west coast kind of thing but.

MIJA RIEDEL: It has a reverent sense of humor.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, no, definitely, humor was okay. What we, you know, because when we went to, I wanted to be Richard Diebenkorn, David Park, or Nathan Oliveira, Elmer Bischoff, and I just couldn't find my way with that. I mean, I still love this stuff. In that catalog, which I think is out back or someplace—should show it to you—that Yale catalog, they got a great little display of Manuel and Bischoff, Diebenkorn. No, Park, Diebenkorn, and a Bischoff that I swear was a Diebenkorn because it's a landscape, which Diebenkorn got, and it was sort of Matisse, kind of, like landscape, but anyway, that was kind of neat because that's—but see, now that's—like Manuel's included in—he's the progression, now that I think about it, because Manuel is the teacher, and he influenced me.

He did those ceramic loops; that came up a lot at Yale, but I don't think anybody had ever seen them. I don't even know whatever happened to them all. But that was hard for me to see because I thought they were just big, messy things, but so I thought Pete Voulkos' were big, messy things, and then all of a sudden, after a semester working in clay with Ron and stuff, I suddenly realized what they were—all the transitions and the different ways of handling it that were going on. But they were subtle because they weren't in your face; they were all making some stupid thing, and then you looked in it and saw, "Whoa look at"—this is through this, and they cut a slab and did this, and it's so beautiful and ugly, dumb at the same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So those loops of Manuel's—I don't even know if they're still around, but he had a show of these loops that are legendary, and I—when Bob and I were working, we had one picture, one of Manuel's loops in the studio the whole time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

RICHARD SHAW: The one you see might have been in the Funk show; I'm not sure but kind of understanding, you know, coming from southern California, a whole different kind of art and all that stuff. It was all brand new and real magical, so hard to see for a long time because I couldn't figure out what anybody was talking about, but seeing that Meret Oppenheim and then that Picasso thing, that did the trick with that. I just remember—when I was going to be a senior the next day at the Art—the next semester, you know, the next fall semester.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was those pennies dropped and that all of a sudden clicked for you?

RICHARD SHAW: No, I actually had dropped and started my senior year as a ceramics major, so I finally, I think I still took a painting class. I know I took a drawing class with Don Weygandt, but I pretty much.

MIJA RIEDEL: From—sorry, who?

RICHARD SHAW: Don Weygandt, he was the guy. He then went to Santa Cruz after that, and he taught there, which is funny because his son-in-law went there after he graduated from the Art—went some place and came back and soon was the head of the department at Santa Cruz, who was a student of mine, kind of. I don't know if I was ever much of a teacher, but anyway, it was just kind of neat to see that this guy, had—the son-in-law of Don Weygandt was now the head of the department down there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, well, it makes this—this whole thing makes me think of sort of this interchange of ideas, this fluidity of ideas, and working techniques makes me think of that whole exquisite corpse kind of idea

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And almost, you know, completing each other's sentences or finishing each other's thoughts or—

RICHARD SHAW: Getting totally inspired, yeah, it's true. Yeah, those figures of Manuel's are killer, you know; you saw those. That was another whole way of handling the material. A lot of this does have to do with the way that people handle the material.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: In a more abstract way than me, Mr. Realism, which I graduated to eventually, like Bob's magical way; he's got a good show now you might go see, at Brian Gross [Fine Art -ALF], doing stuff with the material—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I think I understand it; maybe it affects me in some ways, but, you know, I'm Mr. sort of doing realistic, but I've got drawings that, just somewhere, I was noticing something about learning from students as they were all in there making these things, and I looked, and I thought, you know, throwing a really bad cylinder and then maybe putting realistic objects, when it's all still wet, so it flows—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —that's something I would've learned from there, is that, like, goo can go into hard, go into—go play from real to just material kind of thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: It's funny because I just drew something out there that was that thing. I mean, I had to draw it a couple of times, thinking, why don't I throw a bad cylinder and then cast a bunch of objects and then take the clay and do this next to something really realistic, something?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Do it all together, fire it, and then paint some stuff realistic and try to make the other stuff look like it's still wet.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I'm sure I got that from all of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, and when I look at the work that came out of the Addison, in workshop, that you did with Bob Hudson, and the work is—the work is—the work is different. I mean, you can feel the influence; you can feel that conversation that happened over the table. And I would imagine that that's something that keeps—

RICHARD SHAW: Did you get that catalog?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I did get that catalog.

RICHARD SHAW: Okay, good. I was just thinking, I ran into—and it was kind of neat because I was standing in the gallery at Yale, and this person came up to me and said, "Richard"—and I knew exactly who it was. I haven't seen her since '96 or something like that. I didn't really look at her, but I knew who she was. And I said, "Oh, you're the gal that made the—between the two of us, we made a—oh God, I don't know how many part—thing, a violin. And she remembered it, but that was just really neat to have. I'm telling you this story. You just need to see here, and then I said, "Did you get the catalog?" And she said no. And I went, God. So I got her address, so I've got them all sitting out there, and I was going to send her that one, and the one that they did at American University where they took Bob—had work of Bob and I's since the '73 show, and then the work in the '96 show and then work we were doing now. Did you ever get one of those?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. No, I haven't seen that.

RICHARD SHAW: Okay, let me make sure—let me give you one right now before I forget because I'm starting to run out for some reason. I know I've got, like, 8,000 more of them.

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, you were talking about the violin. It made me think. Has your music or your musicality

influenced the work in any way that's interesting to you? I mean, I think about gesture in terms of movement. I mean, I think about rhythms; I think about different notes.

RICHARD SHAW: Geez, you know, I don't think so, unless it's all in my subconscious, and of course, musical instruments play into the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Definitely.

RICHARD SHAW: It was kind of neat because they had a show in San Rafael, and I had some stuff in there, and I can't remember what the piece is, but Chuck Wiley, who's Bill Wiley's brother, came and said, "Why don't you make a cigar box mandolin or something like that or a fiddle?" You know, and it never occurred to me because I'm making cigar boxes, and I'm making musical instruments. Although I did think—I have never done it, but I thought it would be kind of neat, at a show, to have what looked like used musical instruments hanging in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, if I could figure out some way to make them—not just that, but something a little past it some way; you know how neat it is, you go into a music store, and you see one, some old, beat up one that—

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

RICHARD SHAW: What I did in the show with the musical instruments with Paule Anglim's the last one in 2013, so I took the wrong keyboard, you know, neck and stuck it on the wrong instrument, like I'd have a fiddle neck on a ukulele or a mandolin or something like that. That was kind of fun. But in terms of influencing somehow, except that I'm listening to it while I'm making this stuff, I think it's pretty much—

MIJA RIEDEL: Separate.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, yeah, probably, yeah. But that's a great observation because I think some people, they—that is about rhythm.

MIJA RIEDEL: I definitely think of rhythm, especially, of course, with the figures and all those gestures.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, I looked at a Picasso at a show and went, wow, man, this thing is moving. And it was just a bunch of sticks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: It wasn't really—and I wrote it down, sort of, like, you know, movement. No subject, just movement.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there were—I was looking at *the Painter* from 2003 and the *Standing Figure with Goulash* and then there was a *Sitting Man* in 2007. There was such movement and such gesture in them, and they do—I thought of musicality to them.

RICHARD SHAW: That's important, yeah, to have some movement, yeah. Yeah, yeah, no, maybe you don't know what they're thinking, but they're moving.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you—there's been a bit of social commentary and political commentary in the work, not a whole lot. I'm thinking, in particular, *G.W.B.* and other clown jars from 2005 is the one I really would do, but given—

RICHARD SHAW: Boy, you did your research here, yeah, God.

[They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I try, but given that opportunity of objects to just carry that charge, you know, dominoes in particular and playing cards, that sort of thing, mayonnaise jars, you know, were you ever—did you make a conscious choice not to do that more often? I mean why are there no cellphones?

RICHARD SHAW: Just a little bit here and there. I think I was looking at titles that I'd come up with out there, and I thought, "Should I put this in there?" Oh, I did put it on a book just a minute ago, *Ethics and Politics*, or something like that—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: But I actually had Rumsfeld under it, and then I thought, I won't put Rumsfeld in there I'll just put somebody else's name, so it doesn't—so obvious.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: But I mean, I've snuck stuff in—I can't remember lately. I think when I went back, least this time, I wrote it. I had some stuff that was about maybe gender or things like that. I mean, I'm not coming up with it in my brain right now, but you know, edging toward something—today, I thought of something that was kind of embarrassing because, sometimes, you don't think about—you know, I just put things together, and then all of the sudden I go, "Oh no." I thought, "Hey, you know, my buddies"—Nancy Boas is a—

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MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, this is Richard Shaw for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art on November 20, 2105, card number two. And we were talking about Nancy Boas.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, it's just that her kids are buddies, and they're all athletes, and they're all real smart and everything, and then there's another buddy that we—anyway, they both have—oh, Natasha Boas you might know her. She's done some curating and things around. She ran the—this is John Balisa's oldest boy's wife—she just curated that show at the Art Institute of—with Barry McGee and—"Energy That is All Around" at San Francisco's Art Institute in 2013 -ALF].

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —and Alicia, and all those guys—Ruby Neri. Anyway, I—they had a birthday, so I sent them—they look like this. I'll show you one, except it doesn't have the—you know, cups like you get at a Starbucks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

RICHARD SHAW: This.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

RICHARD SHAW: See this one here?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: It's all full of cobwebs; it's ceramic. But you see, it's just got a bunch of nuts and stuff in there?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So it's not of anything at all; it just doesn't happen to be paper, but—so I sent them in the mail because I was going—I couldn't be at their birthday party in Mill Valley, cups just like that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —only they say, you know, "one and a half shots of decaf," or something like that. And then you're looking, and then there was a penny and a bunch of peanuts. And I thought—I said, "You know, they never thanked me. I never heard a word from them," and I thought, "Oh, shit." You know, did he misread it, like something's not worth anything? Like it's a penny, and then there's some detritus in it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I wouldn't think so.

RICHARD SHAW: Maybe not, but I mean, it was this moment of terror came to me this morning when I was getting dressed thinking, "I didn't hear from Oak [ph]. Did he think it was a put-down, like peanuts and money or, you know, something—

MIJA RIEDEL: I would think not, yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But I mean, you know, it's sort of like, sometimes you put things together because you think that they're funny or mostly beautiful, or they don't go together, so they make a second thing or a third thing. And then you suddenly realize that someone's reading it, like, completely different.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, given the state of the mail system these days, I think it's more likely that it was delayed.

RICHARD SHAW: [Laughs.] Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or missed—I hope they got there.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's true too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I didn't think of that, but.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. But—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, but it was just like, you know, some things—I mean, I've been towards, you know, trying to be funny about something—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —or make somebody aware of it that, you know—maybe what it does is it—so they understand where I am—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —in a way, or maybe other—that other—where other people—or that—in that place, and they say, "Wait, I get it," you know, like.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I've found it interesting that the objects, without fail, tend to be—they don't have a lot of—well, no, how am I going to put this? There's nothing that feels ultra-contemporary, like cellphones, or remote controls, or anything like that.

RICHARD SHAW: But I—you know, I'd thought of that. I kept thinking, like, you know, pretty soon, they started putting barcodes on them—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh my God, yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —just to try to get them somewhere up, you know, like—which, you know, brings them up to about 1960 or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: But I have thought of—again, I don't want to look like some guy that's an antique—well, I am sort of a junk, antique collector that likes the older things better than the newer things. So that's a good point, so I—maybe the only things that are updated are, like, a wine bottle with a—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —barcode on it, or something like that. But haven't really gotten into any—probably because I'm not interested in it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —but you know, it would be nice to have something that wasn't, like, from a past that no one had yet because they weren't born, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Stuff like that. I took the bottle out of his mouth, and he still had it in his mouth about five minutes ago.

Martha Shaw: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: And he went, you know, just automatically, like he was still eating, even though he hasn't touched it for 45 minutes. Okay.

[Audio break.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So we were talking about Viola's work and having a sort of a thread of continuity that ran through the whole thing, that there weren't any huge shifts that she made, that she found certain—

RICHARD SHAW: I didn't, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW:—unless you look at the very, you know, the very, very first slides we had of, like, the kind of pots, and stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Now, I don't know how much that—if you were—if someone was going to do a big book on her—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: You know, there was a great book—I shouldn't have bought it—at—I don't know if it was great or not, but Nancy Hoffman had a Viola Frey book at—I shouldn't have bought it.

MIJA RIEDEL: That mold? Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't have one of really early stuff. I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —again, the earliest stuff was like that monkey in the chair, I remember, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah—

RICHARD SHAW: 1973.

MIJA RIEDEL: —I mean, way back when there was the functional stuff, too.

RICHARD SHAW: But yeah. That's what I mean.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, definitely, from that monkey—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —forward is a progression. But I think she got her act down—and I'm not putting it down either; she'd—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —figured out what she wanted to do. It may have changed in scale and things like that. And the walls changed a lot—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —those great walls she did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, those huge plates and—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, God, talk about big. She just, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. And then the assemblages and then the figures.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So I mean, there was—it felt like there was a conversation with different parts to it that—

RICHARD SHAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: —it was constantly going on, a conversation—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —between the figures, between the plates, between the drawings—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and paintings. How does your work feel to you in terms of similarities and differences? Does it

feel like a single, long thread in a conversation that you've been going on for 30 or 40 years, or does it feel distinct to you?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, probably so. But then I went out and discovered a bunch of stuff I forgot I made the other day.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was that?

RICHARD SHAW: I'll show you a version of it out there, but—and then, like, I spent the entire year of 2012 making little plates with dead butterflies in them, or moths, you know, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: I saw one of those, yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So, I mean, I've got millions—I'm used to giving them all away mostly, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —for birthday presents and stuff, but I've hung onto a couple of them that I thought—or a few of them that I thought—because they're personal, and I don't know if I'd show them or not, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, they're along the same line of things that don't really matter, but that are beautiful, you know, like a dead dragonfly on a butter, or something like that, you know, or some plate. A lot of these are things that Martha collects and goes and hands them to me, and I go, you know, like, you see something—so they may be too subtle or not, you know, dynamic. I keep—Wiley said—hope this is the same trend—when I made those—the furniture pieces in the Paule show, that was a change, and the scale when up because Paule kept saying, "I want big sculpture, big sculpture."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And so I did that. So that was a switch.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I mean, it was the same ideas, but mostly about art because it was, like, tables full of, you know, paintings, and junk, and tubes, and all that. But it went up in scale kind of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: So there's a switch there, but then after I did that—

MIJA RIEDEL: What year was that? Do you remember when that was?

RICHARD SHAW: 2013, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. So very recent.

RICHARD SHAW: I could—or is it '11?

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: 2013? Oh, it might've been earlier. I'm not sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't think I was teaching, though, so it must be after—I'll have to look, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But I think that was a switch. But then I just sort of went and retracted and spent like—and went back to this residency, and everybody was—Annabeth [Rosen] was making these giant things everywhere, and it was great, and everybody was making all this stuff, and I was there and, you know, making little butterflies on plates, you know, kind of but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —that's what I wanted to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: That's what moved me, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: You—we were talking about glazes, and I know you were in Shigaraki—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL:—and I think that Viola was too.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah—oh did she go there? Great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, she did. I think she was there in the '80s, or early '90s.

RICHARD SHAW: I don't remember when I went there, but I probably had some of her pieces, I would guess.

MIJA RIEDEL: '91, I think—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: —she was there.

RICHARD SHAW: Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you all never had conversations about that kind of Shigaraki, Japan?

RICHARD SHAW: No, I didn't even know. I'm just trying to think; they had a great contemporary museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: They must've had a piece of hers in there. Too busy working the whole time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: It was a great, great time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: But yeah, Shigaraki was great. Their clay was great. I didn't use their—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I didn't use the Shigaraki. Well I did, actually. I made some stuff and they put it on an anagama kiln. It's funny because—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —they made one out of porcelain and one out of this other stuff, you know, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —other stuff makes it look so loose—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —you know, and great.

MIJA RIEDEL: So on a totally mundane, prosaic question—

RICHARD SHAW: Sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: —how is it that in this incredibly joint-filled porcelain work, fired to 2,300 degrees, doesn't crack like crazy?

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, it does, but I just, you know, I fire so slowly—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: —that helps—

MIJA RIEDEL: Still.

RICHARD SHAW: —but like, you know, I'm having a horrible time with my clay right now. Suddenly—I won't even tell you what a disaster it's been, but—or maybe I will, but it's not working anymore. It turns to slime when I make it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

RICHARD SHAW: Started it in about 2005, and I have to—I get it, and then, like, I just had a ton of it made, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: And I thought, the reason this stuff is turning to slime is because I'm putting—all the slip I use has sodium silicate in it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —because I cast it. So, I had these big clay make. I get it. I bring it home. It looks beautiful. It's in these bags like this—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW:—you know, like real artists have?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: I cut it open, and it goes all up, just goes, and then you put your hands in, and you can't get it off your hands. I don't know what's go—it's the same formula I've had since 1971.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, they're giving you materials from different places.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And so the—I'm just talking about cracking.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Then I have to wedge it and dry it out. And I just realized this last whole bunch of stuff cracked. I couldn't—"What?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I made these things over and over. I mean, it's variations, but what it is, is that one slab this big—because I've worked it so much, and dried it—it's a little drier over here, then adheres here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

RICHARD SHAW: So I put it together and so when it shrinks, it cracks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

RICHARD SHAW: So I lost a whole bunch of stuff. Now, I made similar things by taking the slip, which is perfectly fine, pouring it out into a layer about like this.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Half an inch.

RICHARD SHAW: And using it all at this same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Nothing cracked.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Because it's not this goo. It's the same body, but when you make it—when you don't deflocculate it, when you just try to throw it or something, forget it. Like, it's just goo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

RICHARD SHAW: But—and no one can figure it out. Everybody's going, "Well, it's because of blah, blah," but I already tried—I was sure it was that it had sodium silicate in it, but somebody changed one of those ingredients—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yep.

RICHARD SHAW: —and didn't say what it is, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And it's deflocculating that thing before it, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Otto Heino told me a great, great story about one particular ingredient, and it was iron—

RICHARD SHAW: Who was this?

MIJA RIEDEL: Otto Heino down in—you know, Ojai [California].

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And we'll talk about it off—when we're done here. But the same thing, and it was iron, and it was just where it came from, and he finally found an iron. For him, it was something he was looking for, for a glaze—

RICHARD SHAW: Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: —for a yellow glaze.

RICHARD SHAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: And a lot of the iron, apparently, had a lot of dirt in it, and he found, finally, an iron from Spain that was, you know, 99 percent pure or something—

RICHARD SHAW: Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: —that made all the difference.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah. Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So yeah, I think it's just where those ingredients come from, that they're made out of.

RICHARD SHAW: God, I bet. It's just been a battle.

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm so sorry.

RICHARD SHAW: I know not to—now, I know not to try to wedge it and lay it out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Because it didn't work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: It was all inconsistent still. Hard—a little bit hard here, a little bit—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —you know, kind of not the same.

MIJA RIEDEL: How has retiring changed the work?

RICHARD SHAW: I think I was retired when I did the show at Paule's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: —which was sort of the last big show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: Then I had one up at Barry's, and I'm getting the years all mixed up. I'd have to look at the things, but I don't remember. I had that tour.

MIJA RIEDEL: You retired in 2012, so three years ago.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So I think 2012 may have been where Paule's show was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

RICHARD SHAW: And then—but anyway, so I've been just doing those bigger things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: But then doing the cigar box full of junk and stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: So I've been doing this—I've been doing these things where I made these cigar box. I haven't finished any of them yet; I've been too busy. But those are moving slow because of the dude, but—and I wanted to have a cigar box that was all on this, and then I had these butterflies that I've been into. I cast them super thin and paint them super realistically, pinned into a box; I've done that, like, before in frames, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And underneath, I have Chinese fortunes instead of saying what the butterfly is. And then I was figuring out different things to do with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Well, in the process of the dude here, because we're—anyway, the mom was in rehab, and so we have him. And so I'm trying to get his birth certificate, so we can take him to Montana with us for a family reunion, and I go into the "senior center"—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: —over at the "civic center" to try to get his birth certificate. I had to keep going there. And they have art classes for senior citizens there, right? I'm walking down the hall. I'm looking at these things. This is what I've been making.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And I'm going, "Oh, no." You know, what does this stuff mean, you know? Like, it was definitely senior citizen art I'm making, so I've got to—when I went back to New York, I thought, "Now, wait, I got to change this somehow and have it be different and not look like I'm somebody in a crafts class at, you know, the senior center, working"—

MIJA RIEDEL: And it sounds like it comes from circle. It makes me think of William Wiley, "What's it all mean?" so [laughs]—

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —it's always—it feels like this is the next step in that conversation"

RICHARD SHAW: And I've got to figure out how to keep looking and going, "What the hell?"

[Music plays.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's the timer telling us that it's stopped, but it was four hours late.

RICHARD SHAW: He's still out in the [inaudible]; no, he's still out there. God, I'm glad I'm not doing that.

MIJA RIEDEL: When you look back at this point, we've talked about so many—you've talked about so many influences over the course of your career.

RICHARD SHAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MIJA RIEDEL: Are there any in particular that really stand out. I mean, we've talked about your teachers. You've talked about, you know, still life, trompe l'oeil.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: You've talked about—

RICHARD SHAW: I think folk art has always been a big influence.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Outsider art or whatever they call it now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, that makes sense.

RICHARD SHAW: Unknown, what do they call it? Unschooled. That. Because it's always sort of about intention of a person taking, sort of, like the—they were talking about people trying to repair things with the wrong materials, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

RICHARD SHAW: —coming out of it with something really great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sort of a wabi-sabi approach to repair.

RICHARD SHAW: What's that?

MIJA RIEDEL: Wabi-sabi—

RICHARD SHAW: Oh yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —Japanese for imperfection approach to repair. Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And so that's always an influence. Of course, the trompe l'oeil—I almost need to see the guy's that was in the Met.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: We went to so many museums. They all had a sense of humor, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: —pretty much all of them. What they chose, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a good point.

RICHARD SHAW: —especially [John] Haberle. People like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: And I think—you know, I think being fooled is cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: I think humor is good; I'm always looking for that. I mean, that's in a lot of things. Beauty. I guess beauty above all, but yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Humor is a way in. It really is a way in, I think.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: I mean, you were talking about the importance of—you thought about your work is—one of the things that was important to do was to make a shift.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: To take that—whatever that material is, the object is, and make a shift, so people see things

differently.

RICHARD SHAW: Yeah, yeah. Well, I think when you go—this isn't only—I hope I'm not making stuff people go in and go—look at it and go, "Oh, it's all because it's realistic," you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: But that there is something in there beyond. Plus, it makes them have to look at it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —to see just dumb things like those books and stuff. And like take the piece in the de Young Museum because I got all kinds of reactions from a docent and things like that on that, you know, well—I can't believe it. The cigarette thing, which I think I told you about, they—you know that piece that's got cigarettes put out in it. And somebody was going through the museum while they were setting up the show and went to the manager told him that the Italian guys who were setting up were smoking cigarettes in there, and he said, "No, yeah, those are not"—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

RICHARD SHAW: And he explained that to him.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great. You know, I think it's interesting that, when you talk about your working process and the magic in it, it's not just about the finished object, but it's about inspiring other people to think they can make something, too.

RICHARD SHAW: Oh, that's what I—that's what I—other work does to me, so I'm hoping mine will make somebody, as I said, swallow their gum and realize they could do this, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: Do—it's sort of like giving things to people, in a way. They now can do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

RICHARD SHAW: Because if they express themselves in some way where it makes somebody else want to go out and do it, or even if they can't maybe. I always think, at some points, thinking about artists looking at it them, but it's sort of a reward.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: You know, sort of like, "Hey, yeah, they got it, now they can go out and do it"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD SHAW: —sort of like that. I think, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, should we call it a day now? I know you've got to get that kiln loaded, and—

RICHARD SHAW: Okay, yeah. I've got to actually finish—

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[END OF INTERVIEW]