



Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Marnie Weber,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marnie Weber on February 10, 2016. The interview took place at Weber's studio in Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, CA, and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Marnie Weber and Hunter Drohojowska-Philp 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

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, interviewing Marnie Weber at the artist's studio at Eagle Rock [Los Angeles, California] on February 10th, 2016, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one. Hi, Marnie.

MARNIE WEBER: Hi, Hunter.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, here we are, after all this time, getting together. And I know—as I said, this is going to be a little bit of a—

MARNIE WEBER: Get more—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —process, by which we understand more of you as a person.

MARNIE WEBER: —there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are we there?

MARNIE WEBER: Slack.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Thank you. So, let's begin at the beginning, and that would be, when and where were you born?

MARNIE WEBER: I was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1959.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is the exact date? What's your birthday?

MARNIE WEBER: October 8, 1959.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 1959?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Five?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. 1959 with a five.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what are your parents' names?

MARNIE WEBER: Evelyn Weber and Charles D. Weber.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And do you have any siblings?

MARNIE WEBER: My brother, David Charles Weber.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And is he still alive?

MARNIE WEBER: Yes. He lives in Redondo Beach.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And are your parents still alive?

MARNIE WEBER: No. They passed away, individually, 10 and 25 years ago. My dad, maybe 25 years ago.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let me just also—one more time, how do you spell your mother's name?

MARNIE WEBER: Evelyn. E-V-E-L-Y-N.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And your father's name?

MARNIE WEBER: Charles.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Standard?

MARNIE WEBER: D—he was a well-known art historian, and he went by Charles D. Weber.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And tell me about exactly that—growing up in the home of a well-known art historian. What was his specialty?

MARNIE WEBER: He ended up specializing in Chinese bronzes of the late Zhou period, and that's, I think, fourth or fifth century, before Christ. I would have to look that up, but that was his specialty, and he put out a book for his dissertation about that period specifically. And he had many degrees. He had five, in fact. Zoology, meteorology, biology, general art history, and then finally his PhD in the bronzes.

And he was an old-fashioned scholar, spoke four or five languages—just, you know, brilliant speed reader. And he was teaching at University of Bridgeport, "General Art Survey after World War Two." [Oh, and he had a degree in fine arts from The Art Students League, because he wanted to be an artist. -MW]

That's a big important part of the picture. He wanted to be an artist when he got out of World War Two, with the Air Force. [He went to The Art Student's League to become a professional artist. -MW] A painter, kind of Abstract Expressionist paintings. I have some around the house I could show you. And, so then he went into teaching art history at UB, University of Bridgeport.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just to pause for a second. Did he want to be an artist, and then go into studying art history? Did it—

MARNIE WEBER: Art history was a fallback position, because they were living in Brooklyn, and he was making the gallery rounds, and he didn't feel he had the social skills needed to be an artist. So they moved out of New York, up into Connecticut. My mother wanted to have a family, and he thought he could continue to paint in Connecticut, but it was too isolating, and he had the kind of brain—he just had to keep studying.

So he went and decided to get an art degree. He went back to Yale for his general art history degree, and then, I'm not quite sure. I have his bio somewhere. I'm not quite sure if—he went to many different colleges. George Washington—I can't remember where he actually got the PhD out of, but anyway, I can fill in those gaps.

And then, they ended up in Connecticut. He decided to just paint on the weekends, and teach art, and then that's when he decided to go and specialize in Chinese bronzes. So he took the train into New York every weekend to take Chinese classes, because at the time, there was nothing written in English about what they were excavating.

Most of what they [saved -MW] in terms of bronzes were in Taiwan, because the Chinese weren't interested in their own history. In fact, they were melting down a lot of the bronzes. And so, he got a Fulbright in 1969, and we went and lived in Taiwan. I went to the American School for six months, and we toured all over Asia. We went to Japan for a month, South Korea, Hong Kong. He went to Cambodia on his own, because it wasn't that safe at the time, because the Vietnam War was in full-blown force.

And he studied at the museum, the National Museum in Taipei, the bronzes there. And also, he went through all their archaeological reports. Let me just grab his book.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Because it would help. Jim, could you reach it? So, he ended up writing the definitive book on Chinese bronzes, and he was—became the foremost scholar in the world on Chinese bronzes. In fact, he was responsible for dating the bronzes they have at LACMA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Amazing.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. So, he made this book, and he also did all of—from the rubbings of the bronzes, that he was able to get the rubbings, then he would draw the pictures of what was going on, on the rubbings. And then, he would decipher all of the mythology of what the pictorial references were, because there was—you know, like, for instance, a griffin, all the different things it would mean to him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was your mother at all an artist as well?

MARNIE WEBER: No, and she didn't—she sacrificed her own degree for his many degrees. But she typed all of his books and all of his reports, and he wrote a lot of magazine articles. So she did the typing, and in those days, you didn't—you only got one shot at a page. Like, for instance, when she typed this book, it was very stressful because if you make a mistake, you would have to start the whole page over from the top, because they didn't allow Wite-Out.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Maybe Wite-Out wasn't even invented. I don't know. But there was something about how she had to re-type the entire page, if she made a mistake. So, she did all of this typing, and proof—was a very good proofreader. In fact, the only arguments I ever remember them having, my whole life, was about word usage. And we had this giant dictionary, and it always sat on the table. And they would argue about whether or not, you know—the finer points of particular words, and then they would look it up and try to be right.

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: So that was—yeah. So that was—and, you know, it was very nice in Connecticut.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow. Let me actually write down the actual name of this book.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because it's so—I want to put it into your—into it. *The Chinese Pictorial Bronze Vessels of the Late Chou Period*.

MARNIE WEBER: It was published in Switzerland.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What year do you think that was published?

MARNIE WEBER: Let's see. Roman Numerals, darn it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] And it was also previously published in the journal *Artibus Asiae*.

MARNIE WEBER: I guess probably—if we were there in '69, it was probably 1970. He took all the photographs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, essentially, you grew up in a family interested in art history and interested in mythology.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: From an early age.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and my dad was also an Indian arts scholar. In fact, he went—when I was three, he went to live in India for three months, studying Indian art and Indian mythology. He came back with malaria, and was terribly sick, and nearly died.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So, that was also a big memory in my life, and my brother's life. But so, he knew mythology of all of the Asian cultures, as well as the Western cultures. And he wanted me to be an artist more than anything.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Because he felt he was a failed artist, and, you know, over drinks, he would lament the loss of not becoming an artist, to him. But he was so, you know—he was so well-known and such an important figure, in terms of Asian art history, that it seemed sad that he couldn't embrace that. But that's the thing, you have to follow your original dream, I guess. So going—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now is your brother older or younger than you?

MARNIE WEBER: He's six years older, and he—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And was he interested in art as well?

MARNIE WEBER: Not so much. He went into building satellites. He's very technical with his hands. And he's retired now. He worked for Hughes Aircraft for 30 years as a—putting together satellites. He would—but we

would all take trips into New York to look at the museums on the weekends, and so he did appreciate art, but he didn't want to go into it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But your father obviously—I mean, did you want to be an artist as a young person?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I did as a young person, and I have some paintings I did of clowns. And so then, when my dad ended up teaching—first he taught at UCLA for six months, and then he ended up getting a permanent job at USC.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, when was that?

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, well, first we came back from—1969, we were—he was at UCLA, and then he taught at USC for two years before the job became tenure. And then he got a job in Hawaii, at University of Hawaii, when I was in seventh grade. So we spent seventh grade in Hawaii, and then he came back to USC, and that's when he got his tenure position. But then he taught summer schools in Hawaii every summer, so we went to Hawaii every summer as well.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: So there was that connection to Hawaii.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was that in Honolulu?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, Honolulu. University of Hawaii, UH.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that's an amazing childhood.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. So, it is amazing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when you were in Connecticut, back in Connecticut where you were the youngest—

MARNIE WEBER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —in Bridgeport.

MARNIE WEBER: It was technically Easton. I was born in Bridgeport, but we lived in a small town, in Easton. Out in the country, with woods in the back yard, and we spent a great deal of time out in the woods, and just going different places. Lot of neighborhood kids were in the neighborhood. And we would go to peoples' houses, and we'd just be free all day long, and then at dinner time my mother would ring the big bronze dinner bell that my dad had brought back from India.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Which I rang in my movie, by the way.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And we would come in the house. And I've always felt those years were really idyllic, and wonderful, and my happy times.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And tell me about what years they were. What years are we talking about?

MARNIE WEBER: I was born in '59, so from '59 to '69.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To '69, so, 10 years?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, 10 years.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And then, I remember the conversation where we were going to go to Asia for a year, and live in Taiwan. And I remember specifically telling my best friend, Kim, "I'm going away for a year to Taiwan." And she said, "Where's Taiwan?" And I said, "It's somewhere near China. But I'll be back, don't worry." It's hard to—I get choked up, because we never came back.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: And what happened was, he got offered a job in California, and so my mother went back to pack up the house, and I—so it almost felt like a refugee, because we each had two suitcases, and we went all over Asia, and then instead of coming back, we just stayed in California. So—and my mom went back to pack up the house and sell it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, at age 10, or by that time you're about age 11, you came to L.A.?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah. And we were living in Manhattan Beach, because my dad had asthma pretty badly, and he thought he should be near the ocean, to breathe.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So, we lived in an apartment in Manhattan Beach for about a year, and then we bought a house at the top on—it's the highest point on Manhattan Beach, on John Street. It was a beautiful Modernist house with flat roofs and giant turquoise glass picture-windows. Turquoise kitchen, white carpeting. They had all Modernist furniture, and a lot of, you know, my dad's paintings on the wall. The abstract paintings and Chinese artifacts. So it was very beautiful. Big yard.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So where did you—just to quickly backtrack a little bit, where did you go to grade school? What was the name of your grade school? Do you remember?

MARNIE WEBER: It was Samuel Staples.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Samuel Staples.

MARNIE WEBER: Staples.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Grade school?

MARNIE WEBER: Elementary School.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Elementary School. And then did you go to junior high there, or were you in junior high when you came—what years?

MARNIE WEBER: I was one year in junior high at Kaimuki Intermediate—or Kaimuki. That was seventh grade, was in Kaimuki Intermediate School.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's in Honolulu.

MARNIE WEBER: Honolulu, and I sat behind Israel [Kamakawiwo'ole], the famous singer, Israel—I can't remember. Iz, I-Z. Very famous Hawaiian, that did "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Maybe you're familiar. You know? That famous song, "Somewhere Over—" And it was a Hawaiian mash-up.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: So, I sat behind him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: Because he would bring his ukulele to school and sing. So I remember that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: He became a very famous Hawaiian singer. In fact, he was laid to state in the main Capitol building, which nobody had ever been done before. He was laid to state when he passed away.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you're in one year. So you've had this kind of, like, East-coasty background in Connecticut, then a year in Kaimuki [Intermediate School].

MARNIE WEBER: No, then a year in Asia.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A year in Asia. And then a year—

MARNIE WEBER: And then one year in Manhattan Beach.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Where I went to—what was that, the name of that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hang on. You were in Samuel Staples Elementary in Connecticut.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Then you go to Asia.

MARNIE WEBER: Well actually, we stopped in UCLA. I went to Overland Avenue for fourth grade, for three months in fourth grade. Overland Avenue Elementary School.

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

MARNIE WEBER: While we were getting ready to go to Asia, and my dad did that temporary thing at UCLA. Then I went to Taipei American School in Taiwan, and then I came back to Manhattan Beach. And that was fifth and sixth grade, and it was called Center, Center School. And then I was seventh grade in Kaimuki Intermediate, and then back to Center for eighth grade. And then high school was Mira Costa High School. I stayed there the whole four years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's in Manhattan Beach?

MARNIE WEBER: Manhattan Beach, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mira Costa?

MARNIE WEBER: Mira Costa High School, Manhattan Beach. I think it's technically Hermosa Beach now.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that would be sort of—

MARNIE WEBER: And I graduated in 1977 from high school.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Okay, so basically you are in high school in Manhattan Beach. Now, it's a big change from Connecticut, but how did you—how did the change to Southern California affect you?

MARNIE WEBER: It was the '70s, and I always had this longing to go back home. And I think that it was difficult for both my brother and I, because he loved Connecticut too. And we adapted. People were much more conservative in Manhattan Beach than what we were used to.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, really?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. I was surprised. You know, I showed up in my Hawaiian clothes. It was hot, and I thought, "Well, you know, short muumuu. That could work."

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

MARNIE WEBER: But at the time, people were rather conservative. This was more like eighth, ninth grade. And then the '70s sort of hit—the music scene kind of hit the school, Mira Costa, and I started hanging out with the music people. And it was, you know, David Bowie and glam rock, and suddenly there was platforms. And we were going to concerts, we were going to—you know, to all the different concerts, and going to Sunset Strip. And I had a pair—my mother wouldn't let me wear platforms, so I used to—I had a pair of platforms I'd hide in my locker at school, and switch into my platforms when I got to school.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And then put on the makeup in the bathroom. So, I think that there was a group—there was groups of surfers, there was groups of musicians, there was the groups of the druggies. And so people really found their niche, who they were with, and I hung out with the musicians and the druggies.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What I loved in one of the interviews with you, I think the one done by Mike, is that you talk about—Mike Kelley—is that you talk about going to concerts by Genesis, and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, and Black Sabbath. And, I don't know, I just found that to be interesting.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Tell me about that, about that costume rock, or theatrical rock.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, theatrical rock. That's what inspired me to go into performance, was I would go to these concerts. My dad would drop a group of us girls off in front, and then somebody else's parents would pick us up at, you know, the Forum. And we'd see these huge, elaborate stage shows. In fact, the first one I saw was Pink Floyd, *Dark Side of the Moon*.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And it was, to me, it was just seeing heaven on stage, all these lights and costumes. And there would be a conceptual theme, especially with the early Genesis shows, that would run throughout. Peter Gabriel would choose a character, and then, you know, come out in a variety of different costumes. Unfortunately, there weren't any women doing that at the time. You know, I went and saw Suzi Quatro, but she didn't do character-based performance. She was, you know, herself. The Runaways were a group of girls that, you know, were at parties and places I went to as well. But they weren't—I think what I was mostly interested in was the character-driven artists. David Bowie, of course, and Ziggy Stardust from that era.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And so that was where I first got introduced to theatrical rock, and people taking on personas that weren't themselves, to perform onstage. And I was—didn't have the nerve to do it myself at that time, but I was studying guitar. And I was interested in art—making art, but I was also mostly interested in just going to concerts. Hanging out, going to parties, and getting into trouble. And you know, getting grounded. Getting off being grounded. Going out, you know, breaking curfew. Getting arrested for curfew. Getting picked up at jail by my dad, then getting grounded again. [Laughs.] So it was just a series of—I just remember it being a series of whether I was grounded or not—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And then, it was—but the interesting thing was, no matter how much trouble I was in, and how long I was grounded for—if I had tickets to a concert, they would still let me go to the concert, which I thought was very endearing and open-minded of them. They knew it was really important for me. So then I was at Mira Costa. I wasn't getting particularly good grades. In fact, I was getting bad grades the first two years, and then in junior, senior year, I realized my ticket out of there was to go to a good university. I thought if I could get into a university, I could move away from home. And so I applied to several, and I started—and, oh, I started getting good grades, A's, and then I applied to USC. And since my dad was teaching there, I could go tuition remission.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So, I got in to USC on probation, because of my grades. And I had to get very good grades, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to stay. So I took all art classes the first semester, to get good grades. And I was still living at home, and riding in with my dad, to school. It was a little bit humiliating, because I had this plan of moving down by USC. [Laughs.] And so, I had to have a—so I had to get a job at 32nd Street Market, working all weekend in order to afford this little room that I got near campus. A hundred dollars a month.

So I moved near campus, and I went to USC for two years, and then my dad retired. Backing up, there's a whole other story about how my parents had me at a later age. My dad was 45, and my mom was 43. So my dad retired at 65, and then my tuition remission got cut off. So I applied to UC Berkeley, because at that time I thought I'd become a writer.

So, I got into UC Berkeley, and then I was all set to go to Berkeley, but in the meantime I had joined a band, Party Boys. And so I decided not to go to Berkeley, because the band was starting to be a lot of fun, and we were playing downtown. And then I had moved downtown, so I got a transfer to UCLA from Berkeley.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you never actually went to Berkeley?

MARNIE WEBER: No, no. Never made it.

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

MARNIE WEBER: I remember I bought a coat in a thrift store, a warm coat, because I thought, "Well, I'm going to need it in Berkeley."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And then never wore the coat. And—it's funny.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, just to pause before we go forward to the Party Boys, did you find your upbringing—all the moving around and so forth, was it in any way traumatic for you?

MARNIE WEBER: Definitely.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: It was traumatic for both myself and my brother, and we've talked about it.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And I think it was mostly—had we gone back to Connecticut for a year, and then re-established our friendships, and then packed up and been an active participant—because now, you know—in those days, they didn't talk about closure. Or they didn't even discuss, really, the psychology of children too much. But I think that it was traumatic, and my brother was—had been adopted as well, so he—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are you adopted?

MARNIE WEBER: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: I was—that was sort of the surprise. My mother and father went through a difficult time in Connecticut.

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

MARNIE WEBER: She wanted to have children. They weren't able to have children. And so my dad spearheaded the adoption, because my mother said, "We're going to get divorced unless we adopt a baby." So, they got my brother at five months, and—I should double check that this is all okay with him, because we've never really talked about it, in terms of archiving the history. But I'll ask him. And then, my dad went on—six years later—oh, and my mom got cancer right after getting my brother.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: A bad case of breast cancer, and she had to have a mastectomy. And so she was quite ill when she first brought my brother home. And I think that was very stressful. And then, six years later, she got pregnant. My dad went on thyroid pills, because he had an underactive thyroid, which is what was keeping her from getting pregnant. And so, then she got pregnant with me. And she went to a variety of different doctors, like six different doctors. They all said to have an abortion. And she said, "No, I'm going to have this baby." And so, she found one doctor who turned out to be a Christian, and he went through the pregnancy with her.

So she had me, and the cancer didn't come back. And I was fine and healthy, and we had a very happy time of it. And then—until the big move at age 10. But I do remember that—I think that my mother had a lot of stress-related issues from having—I guess she was 36 when she got cancer. So, she had what they now call OCD. She was—has kind of a fairly difficult case of OCD. So, everything had to be immaculate and clean.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Which I think had a lot to do with how my brother and our lives ended up, and his work that he went into. And the work I went into, too. So, that was the whole family story. So, I think there was a lot of trauma built into the situation already from the get-go, and then the moving around constantly didn't help. Because they were always packing. They had 80—my mom would always remember, 85 boxes of books we had to pack, to move.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my god.

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: I know. It's funny, I always remember that, the amount. So—because, you know, it was—my dad collected books.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, the—when you are—so you're 10 years old, which is sort of a tentative age anyway, and you do have a lot of different places you go. You're going to Asia, then you're going to Hawaii, and then you're going to—you finally end up in California. So each place, are you able to make friends as you move

from place to place? Were you able to establish new friendships?

MARNIE WEBER: No. None. Zero. It was very difficult for me, and I was very shy. And in fact, I think that was why I had a hard time making friends. And then, in fact, in Hawaii, it was kind of a rough school, and I got beat up by the girls there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: They called me—they had—I can remember them circling around me and saying, in the kind of the dialect of pidgin English—they kept saying, "You think you have swell head." And I kept thinking, "What are you saying?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: "You think you have swell head." And then I realized later, it was swelled head, like a big head, because I was shy.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And they took blows, and I had braces, and blood was coming out of my mouth. So that was difficult. But I made a couple of friends later on in Hawaii that—the end of the year we were there, that I would go back and visit every summer. And then, another very sad thing happened. I had a best friend in Connecticut, just—we were inseparable. My friend Kim Kondratovich. And her mother was the school nurse, and she was also my mother's best friend who helped her through all the cancer. And her husband Walt shared an office with my dad at University of Bridgeport, so they were good friends.

So, my parents had a lot of friends in Connecticut, and we would all get together, and my dad would make Manhattans and whiskey sours. That was his specialty. And I remember a lot of fun and parties. And so, then, when I—so then I—Kim, that was the friend I said I was leaving behind. And I think that was very hard for her as well, as well as—I'm still very good friends with her mom, Jane Kondratovich, and all the sisters. She had a few sisters. But then, when I was 18, Kim was killed in a drunk driving incident.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So I never was able to reconnect with her. I reconnected with the whole family, of course. I'm very close to them now, and I visit them every time I come to New York. So that was another loss of a friendship. So, I think in terms of friends, when I was in high school, I finally got some good friends. They were mostly music and, you know, party and carousing types of friends, but nevertheless we were good friends, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did any of this, in this moving around period—when do you start making visual art? Is it during this moving around period, this traumatic part?

MARNIE WEBER: I wasn't one who would draw and paint on my own.

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

MARNIE WEBER: I took art classes at Mira Costa, and I know that I—and I wrote stories, and I wrote poems. And I did drawings. So, I think it wasn't really until high school that I started making art. And I played classical guitar, and read music. And my parents—in Taiwan, we were quite bored, so my mother got me a green classical guitar. And a Chinese man would come around, who didn't speak English, and teach me guitar.

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: So that was pretty funny, but I enjoyed it. And I didn't play electric guitar until I joined the band, the Party Boys. But I was still 19 at that time, so I was still a teenager. And yeah, so I think I did, you know, had the classic lonely childhood, and felt like a weirdo. And it was really going to these concerts that saved me, and seeing other weirdos on stage.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Well, you must have been a very cute little girl.

MARNIE WEBER: I mean, I think that I tried. You know, we did go to the beach. I liked swimming when we would go to the beach. It was—I think a lot of people at the beach are sort of torn between culture and the beach life.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And I was one that was torn between, you know, going to the museums and going to the concerts, and then being also surrounded by the surfers and the beach people—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, when you went to museums with your parents, when you were in Connecticut, when you were younger—do you have any memory of visual art that had any impact on you?

MARNIE WEBER: Absolutely. But the first piece that I remember, that had the biggest impact on me, was Kienholz's *Back Seat Dodge*.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And that was at LACMA. And we waited in line to see it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You saw it in the retrospective? No.

MARNIE WEBER: I think it was—that was '65, so that was too early, right?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's too early, yeah.

MARNIE WEBER: So it must have been the second time around. But we should look up those dates, because I—'69 was the first time I was in California. But I do remember *Back Seat Dodge*, and I remember how moving it was to me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MARNIE WEBER: It moved me emotionally. And that was really the first time I was moved emotionally by art. I think, going through all the temples—we went to every temple in Asia, it felt like.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: I think that was very moving, and I was also moved when I saw the—a group, a long line of monks walking through the temple, and they had taken a lifetime vow of silence. And I found that that was a real epiphany to me. That was very startling to see these men, these silent men walking through the temple. And my mother whispering, you know, "Don't talk, they've taken a lifetime vow of silence." So—and I think seeing all the giant Buddhas and all the, just the—the spirit, being surrounded by the spirituality. It was a real gift.

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

MARNIE WEBER: I don't—we never went to church. My parents were agnostic. This was the closest thing I had ever been to a church.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were your parents—did your parents feel the same sort of connection to the spirituality of Buddhism?

MARNIE WEBER: I think silently. My aunt always jokingly called my dad a "closet Buddhist." Because he was like a monk. He was very quiet. Very studious, and I think they absorbed all of this spirituality internally, but then didn't discuss it. And I remember when I was maybe 12 or 13, just having this need for spirituality. Just—I felt like, you know, everyone was going to church, and so—they had this ad in the back of a magazine. If you sent a dollar, you would get a cross, so I sent this dollar in, and I got this cross. And I thought, "Well, maybe this will make me feel better." And it didn't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And so, you know—but then when we had—but we also had this big Buddha when you'd walk in the house, this big fat Buddha, and you'd always rub his stomach, touch his stomach for good luck. So, I think it was just—and my parents were, you know, they—Darwinists, and so I think that they were conflicted with, even in themselves—but I had an Aunt Marny, and she would come to the house. She followed a guru, very unusual in those days. This would be 19[72- MW]—she started following her guru, I think in the early '70s. And she was vegetarian, and she was, you know, my namesake. And she would come to the house, and she would talk openly about past lifetimes, and spirituality, and psychic phenomenon.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And my mother would fall—when she was with her, my mother would fall into, you know, telling psychic stories of things that had happened. My mother was Ukrainian. Grew up in a coal mining—coal mining town in Pennsylvania.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was she actual Ukrainian, or first generation?

MARNIE WEBER: She was born in America, but she spoke Ukrainian before English, and her mother and father didn't speak English.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was her maiden name, again?

MARNIE WEBER: McClevish. M—big M, small C, big C, L-E-V-I-S-H. And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Evelyn McClevish?

MARNIE WEBER: Evelyn McClevish.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And her sister is—it's her sister who is Aunt Marny?

MARNIE WEBER: Aunt Marny. She had six siblings, and they grew up in a town, Beaver. Beaver, Pennsylvania, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so Aunt Marny's last name would have been McClevish?

MARNIE WEBER: McClevish as well. The whole family, yeah, it's McClevish.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Not a very Ukrainian name.

MARNIE WEBER: No, I think they bastardized it when they got to Ellis Island.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Actually—well, no. Yeah, the husband—that's another very long story. My mother—my grandmother was a war orphan, and she was put on a boat. She had no father. She was put on a boat by her mother. Engaged to a man for 200 dollars, who—and then on the boat ride to America, he got drunk, tried to have his way with her. She decided she wasn't going to marry this guy, and so when she got off the boat, some relatives saved her and paid off the 200 dollars, and then she married my grandfather, who was a nice guy.

He was a coal miner, and so it was a difficult life, living in all these coal mining towns, traveling from town to town. My mother tells stories of being in the uprisings, and then being held in their home by men with rifles, because they wanted to unionize. And so it was beyond the fact that, you know, a lot of people were being crushed in the coal mines, and the black lung, and a lot of cancer, there was also the whole unionization. And my grandfather was a union organizer, so it was unsafe. And they went from town to town to town.

So then, when my mother left home at 16 to go sell hosiery products with my Aunt Marny—they got a job where they would drive across country in a Packard, going into—going into shops selling things to wash hose. You know, the old fashioned hose with the seam down the back.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So she saw all of America, and they ended up settling in San Francisco, and then the war started. She never returned home. Her mother died of a goiter when she was 18. She went back for the funeral. And so, the two girls were a little bit like the black sheep of the family. They never—because they never returned to Pennsylvania. And then, during World War Two, my uncle, who was my dad's brother, he—my mother was not married at 33, my dad was not married at 35, and so my uncle had this idea that he could get them together, because there was not that many people who weren't married at that age.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So they corresponded. I still have all the letters that they corresponded when my dad was stationed in London. He was a meteorologist. He was responsible for the planes going out, and predicting the weather. So, he came back, and they married when he was on leave for two weeks. And they lived in San Francisco, and then they moved to Brooklyn when he got out of the war.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: So, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's amazing. It's almost like you know, your films and your performances, but specifically your films always have this kind of funny narrative aspect to them, that clearly I would think is, you know, grounded in this—in not only your own upbringing, but your parents and your grandparents.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, absolutely. Longing for home is a very big theme. Being displaced, and then finding empowerment from within.

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

MARNIE WEBER: A lot of—great sense of loss. There's always, you know, death in my movies. And then finding empowerment through spirituality.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that—did you find that the—well, I don't want to get too lost, but did you find that those stories evolved? And did you know what those stories were when they started to appear in your films and your visual art?

MARNIE WEBER: Where they sprang from? Did I know where they sprang from?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] When the narratives came out, did you know that they came from your own upbringing?

MARNIE WEBER: No, it would be afterwards. I would think, "Wow, that actually reminds me of something."

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

MARNIE WEBER: Including the new movie, which is really—a lot of really strange things happened in the new movie, which I had—to me, it's like a dream. You wake up, yeah, from a dream, and then you analyze it, and then you think, "Wow! that was what my subconscious was trying to tell me."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *The Day of Forevermore*.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, that's the new movie, *The Day of Forevermore*. And I wanted to do a movie about witches.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Because I always felt that my mother and all her sisters, they always reminded me of Ukrainian witches. Kind of unspoken. And a lot of predictions would come true. A lot of dreams my mother had come true. And, like, for instance: one story. When I was younger, I went into Zody's and stole some stuff with a friend. But the night before, I had had a dream that I got caught shoplifting, and I think that I knew that the shoplifting stuff was coming down, with my friends. And so, I think I was scared, and I told my mom, you know, "I had this dream I got caught shoplifting last night." And she said something—you know, I think I wanted to create a dialogue around it, but she said, "Well, you better not shoplift."

And so then, sure enough, the next day we all went and got caught shoplifting. They called my mother, and first thing she said to me, "How could you, after that dream?"

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: Which was very funny, because she always believed her dreams could come true, so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So your mother was—she was Ukrainian. Was she raised as a Christian?

MARNIE WEBER: A Catholic.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A Catholic. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, they were very staunch Catholics. And in fact, most of the family members still are Catholics. I think she abandoned it for my father, because he was so cerebral and intellectual.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what religion was he raised with?

MARNIE WEBER: Protestant. He was from Kentucky.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So—I don't want to lose the thread of our narrative, but I just—I thought that was so—having heard your, you know, how this upbringing—it seemed like these themes just recur over and over again, from your very first film.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, and the themes being which ones?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that of being just uprooted.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Of loss, of sadness, and so forth.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so, you're just—I don't want to get too far away from our narrative, which is—here we are at the Party Boys moment. And also, before the Party Boys—first of all, for the record, would you name all the members of the Party Boys, and how you met them?

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, gosh. Okay. Gillean McLeod was the drummer. Fred Arbegast, drummer. James Duck, guitar player—temporarily, for a couple albums, John Dyer. Donald Dunham, lead singer. Myself, bass. And I met them through one of the student—a student of my father's—art history student of my father's took care of my Cocker Spaniel when we went to Hawaii. That's one year, which was a huge loss for me, is the Cocker Spaniel. So she took care of the dog for the year. She was a USC student. And then I came back, and I was able to get the dog back, but he couldn't remember me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Aw.

MARNIE WEBER: So that was very sad. But then, you know, then he remembered, and we hung out for a few years until I went away to college. And then, so, this woman, Kitty Easton, she introduced me to downtown, and Donald Dunham—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you say Kitty Easton?

MARNIE WEBER: Kitty Easton, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: E-A-S-T-O-N?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. She was a USC student. So, Donald Dunham came from London. He was an architect, and he got a studio downtown, and just coincidentally, the other guys—James and Fred—got studios downtown. Gillean came over from London to be with Donald, and so we started hanging out downtown, and playing music at night just for fun. And we decided to be a band, just spontaneously, and we had a philosophy, a DIY philosophy. If you can't get a show, then just go ask somebody to play for beer.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So, there was a bar across—these studios are actually at Seventh and Central, above the Terminal Produce Market. And there was about 20 artists downtown, back in 1979. You knew everybody's names. You knew what they were—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And who were some of those people?

MARNIE WEBER: Jon Peterson. He did the iconic bum shelters. Stephen Seemayer, filmmaker. James Croak. He lived in the firehouse—the famous *Ghostbusters* firehouse. He's an artist in New York now. James Croak. I'm trying to think. Joe Fay. Coleen Sterritt. Marc Kreisel ran Al's Bar. Trying to think. The "Young Turks." Andy Wilf. There was a movie about the Young Turks that had all the artists that were living downtown at the time. Richard Newton. Michèle Lamy, fashion designer. She's with Rick Owens now, in Paris.

It was a great group of people. Lot of fun. I mean, a lot of—we had a lot of fun. People—our first show, we thought, let's do a show in a—the least likely show for anybody to show up. Wednesday night at midnight in a parking lot of a garage, like where they fix cars. So we said to the people that were fixing the Cadillac—because we all drove around in this convertible Cadillac, "Can we play a show Wednesday night in your parking lot?" A commercial superstition, and they said yeah.

[And, for some reason we switched parking lots. -MW] We got a generator. I ended up at—there was a woman who painted parking lots blue. She's a well-known New York artist now. [Her name is Maura Sheehan -MW] Anyway, so we ended up playing in her parking lot. We switched parking lots. A lot of people came, it was kind of surprising. We made fliers and mailed them with stamps, and put up posters all over downtown.

Jon Peterson and Stephen Seemayer were the landlords, and they—we decided to do a show in our studios, and put up posters all around town, which was really an uncool thing to do. So they stopped having public performance in the studios. So that's how we ended up at Jacarandas, this bar downtown, where we ended up playing many, many shows. Every Saturday night for a few months, in fact.

It was just truckers and the art crowd. I've even got some photographs from those early shows. They ended up getting strippers to open for us, thinking it would be more of a party. And, in fact, they called a private meeting with the guys in the band. They said, "No girls come to this meeting. This is a very important meeting."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And so the guys went to the meeting, and they said, "We're getting you some strippers for an opening act. And then the lights will dim, and the audience will yell 'Marnie nude', and Marnie will come out nude. And then the audience will yell 'Gillean nude', and Gillean will come out nude."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And so then, the guys in the band—the way the story goes, some of the guys said, "Well, we don't think the girls will like that idea." And then, I think Donald said, "Well, we'll go bring the idea home to the girls and see what they think." And we're like, "No, no way. Are you kidding?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: So, that show just didn't happen nude.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, are you in a romantic relationship with any of these people?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, Donald Dunham, the lead singer at this point.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how long were you two together?

MARNIE WEBER: From 19 to—from 19 years old to 27. So, a long time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you live together?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, we lived together, and then we ended up marrying and getting a house together, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how old was he, when you were with him?

MARNIE WEBER: He was nine years older, so he was—I was 19, he was 30—38. So he was quite a bit older. He was a practicing architect, working for a firm.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And who did he work for?

MARNIE WEBER: I can't remember the name of the firm. It wasn't—they didn't go on to become well-known, I don't think. It was more commercial architecture.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But he made a living that way?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, that's how he made his living.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then—

MARNIE WEBER: But he had come from London, where he was an architect, but he was also—had hung out with the crowd—Derek Jarman crowd, and he was in *Sebastiane*, and he was also in *Jubilee*.

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

MARNIE WEBER: He was roommates with Adam Ant, so—and Gillean hung out. Gillean typed Derek Jarman's scripts. She hung out with that crowd.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who did?

MARNIE WEBER: Gillean, the drummer in the band.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MARNIE WEBER: So after living downtown for a year in Los Angeles and playing, we decided we would go to London and do shows over there, because we had so many connections. So, I took a break from college. I took a quarter off, and we went and lived in London. Very cold. Just stayed on peoples' floors. Stayed at the wharf. No—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What years are these?

MARNIE WEBER: —[1980 -MW] we got on the plane—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I should back up a second. When did you—what year do you join the Party Boys?

MARNIE WEBER: 1979.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 1979, and then what year do you go to London?

MARNIE WEBER: We were on the plane between 1979 and 1980. We took a night flight.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So it turned 1980 on the plane. And so, we went, and we just showed up in London. We had no gigs or anything planned.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Those were the days. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. So, we had our cassettes, and we would take our cassettes around to different venues, and nobody really wanted us to play. We got—because we knew somebody, we got a show at the ICA, and we were—we all showed up with our guitars that night, and then there was a problem with the PA—it didn't show up. One of the members in the band tried to pick up somebody else's girlfriend in another band, The Spiders, and there was—and then we got attacked by these punks. I mean, punk rock band.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And they took our guitars, and smashed our car, and they were brutally—you know, really beating us up. In fact, the lead singer—they were cracking his head open on the sidewalk. He got a concussion.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is this Donald?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, Donald.

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

MARNIE WEBER: A bunch of stitches, and went to the hospital. And then, coincidentally, the cab driver—some of us arrived in a car, some of us arrived in a cab. The cab driver dropped us off, saw us being beat up, so he called the police, and so they came and they broke up this fight. London was very dangerous and brutal in the late '70s, early '80s. And they had hauled some of the guys off to Scotland Yard, and then when Don got out of the hospital, we went to Scotland Yard and identified the people in a line-up for the—so for the next—who beat us up. So for the next six weeks we were terrified that we were going to be found and beat up again.

But luckily, we didn't, for some reason. And the English—there was a band, English Wasted Youth. There was the Los Angeles Wasted Youth, but the original English Wasted Youth, their father had a bar in Canning Town. And he took a liking to us, and let us play a few times in the bar. So we finally got some shows, and the music was very noise music. It was, you know, kind of rhythmic art music. A lot of—Donald, very dynamic performer. A lot of screaming. We had two drummers.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You had two drummers?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, two drummers, and Gillean—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Gillean was a woman?

MARNIE WEBER: Woman, and Fred played congas.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So it was a very, very loud, kind of brutal music. But I—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now at any—are you wearing the punk rock garb, or are you wearing costumes? What are you dressed as? How are you dressed?

MARNIE WEBER: In those days, we dressed formally. The boys wore Brooks Brothers, and the girls wore nice dresses, because we were trying to react against the way people were dressing as punks.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So, almost like a new wave?

MARNIE WEBER: So, formally. Yeah, it was early. It was before the skinny ties. But we wanted to look formal and business-like. [Laughs.] Which was ironic.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: I mean, the whole name, even the Party Boys was supposed to be an ironic name. There was—we were inspired by Theoretical Girls. Since there were two girls in the band, we called ourselves Party Boys. And I remember, you even called us for an interview one day, after a particularly bad night we had, where we were—[laughs]—rambunctious at an awards presentation dinner.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. We had a reputation for being drunk and obnoxious.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did I ask you? [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: "Why did you disrupt the awards ceremony?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: And I don't think anybody really knew why.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you remember what the awards ceremony was?

MARNIE WEBER: It was like a fake Academy Awards, where people were giving awards to artists downtown. [The Young Turks Awards -MW] Everyone was dressed in formal clothes. It was supposed—meant to be fun .

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

MARNIE WEBER: I'm sure that we were jealous we didn't get an award.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: So, it was, you know, very high school stuff. So, I think that's what—I think it was a Young Turks award, in fact. Yeah, I think it was Young Turks awards.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ah, that makes—maybe it—that rings a bell.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, so that makes sense. And we were probably jealous we didn't get an award.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you should have gotten an award.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So here you are in London, and it's, you know—obviously it is a brutal time.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how long did you survive this lifestyle in London?

MARNIE WEBER: Six weeks.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Six weeks? [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, only six weeks.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In the winter. Right.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, in the winter. Very cold, very cold, and at one point—we were very poor. I was just racking up credit card debt. At one point, I was trying to warm myself by a fire, my coat caught on fire.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: So I didn't even have a coat. I was just wearing these sweaters, until my—so then I just cut my coat off and hand-stitched it up. And we were just going—getting thrown out of flat after flat. Whoever would take pity on us.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now to what extent are drugs and alcohol a part of this story?

MARNIE WEBER: Pretty, pretty, pretty extensive. I mean, we never did any, like, heroin. That was a pact. There was a "no heroin, no tattoos" pact, thank god.

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: So that was a savings, I think.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's funny.

MARNIE WEBER: But there was definitely a lot of drinking.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And are you and Donald getting along?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah. At that time, we got along really well, and, you know—it was all—it was really mostly because it was based around the band relationship.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And so, we came back to Los Angeles after, you know, running out of money, with our tail between our legs, and playing clubs downtown again. We went back to Jacarandas, started playing there again. We started playing in Hollywood at Cathay de Grande, making kind of a name for ourselves. We would invite bands to play down at Jacarandas, notably Minutemen. Some of the other earlier bands we—Psi Com, which ended up going—becoming Jane's Addiction. Anti-Club—we were playing at Anti-Club a lot. Our manager ran the Anti-Club, Jack Marquette.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I remember the Anti-Club.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, that's his.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I probably saw you there.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, I'm sure.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I certainly saw you at Al's.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, oh, absolutely. In fact, Al's—we talked Marc Kreisel into letting us play there. He hadn't thought of live music.

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

MARNIE WEBER: So we said, "Well, if you let us build a stage." So, the guys built a stage. We were the first band to play there, with Fender Buddies opening, and New Marines. So that became another happening place.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Fender Buddies and New Marines?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I think they were on that bill the first night. The stage ended up being the same stage for years and years. They never rebuilt the stage.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this is—what I remember from that time is—and Mike Kelley asks this of you in his interview, as well—this is also a time of performance art—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —really being an incredibly active part of a downtown art scene.

MARNIE WEBER: Absolutely, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So did you see this early performance art?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. Stephen Seemayer, we went and we would go to—whenever Chris Burden would do a public performance, we would go see his—in fact, we even had an art show and invited—Chris was my teacher at UCLA, and I invited him to be part of the art show. So he came downtown and set off some bottle rockets out into the parking lot from our second-story—we all lived, continued to live together for another three years downtown, as a band, we got a small, old hotel. So we had this—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you in Al's hotel?

MARNIE WEBER: No, we were never there. We lived in a little hotel that was just two stories. It was on Spring Street, between Eighth and Ninth, and it was just the band in this building, nobody else.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this hotel was called what?

MARNIE WEBER: We called it the American Art Hotel, but it didn't have a name.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But isn't that also the name of the hotel that Al's was in?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, which was another weird coincidence.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] So two American Hotels?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, it became the American Hotel, yeah. Because we started—like, we called it the American Art Hotel, and we had—we even have a picture of the—we wrote, in big letters, "American Art" on the side of the hotel. So then, the American Hotel—well, we called the American Hotel "AmHo", and—

[They laugh.]

MARNIE WEBER: —then we had Jim Croak sculptures on our roof, so when you would drive by our building, you would see these giant Jim Croak sculptures on the roof. And we put, you know, we would play music on the roof, and a lot of different parties. So anyway, we had this big art show. Chris came down and he shot off some bottle rockets into the parking lot. Steve Seemayer was doing performance. There was, you know, Jon Peterson was building those bum shelters for—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I think also, you—it comes up—we've kind of lost the thread a bit—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

[Crosstalk.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that during all this, you're actually going to UCLA.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah. That was the tough part, was driving my Dodge Dart from downtown out to UCLA, you know, four or five days a week. Luckily, in those days it only took 40 minutes. And then, coming home, just trying to do my homework hearing, you know, the music playing, the band practicing, and the parties going on. And then, just—I remember thinking to myself, "Oh, I can't wait to graduate so I can, you know, be up there playing music." And just—but, you know, sticking to the grindstone.

My teachers there were Alexis Smith—huge influence on me. That's why I went into making collages.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And we should talk about that for just a moment.

MARNIE WEBER: Right. Chris Burden, George Herms. Trying to think if there was any other major influence teachers. I think those were the three.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was Herms teaching there then?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, he was my teacher. And Chris Burden was teaching a performance class.

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

MARNIE WEBER: And so, I was lucky enough to get him. So, I did a lot of performances for his performance class. I did some installations for Alexis Smith's. I did a character-based installation for Alexis's class, in the American Hotel. I created a character who was a nurse living downtown. And all the collages were about that character.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this would be the American Art Hotel.

MARNIE WEBER: No, this would be American Hotel.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. That was the American Hotel. Marc let me have a room upstairs, because it was more high profile.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so this is where you did the installations. At Marc—we'll call it "Kreisel's American Hotel", or your American Art Hotel.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, and then I did do an installation in my American Art Hotel as well. Painted the room red. I did a bunch of collages and character there. I did a hotel installation at the Stillwell Hotel downtown. That was another character, Ben. I did a hotel installation in Hollywood at a Hollywood hotel, where I was a maid. I think I was very much inspired by Richard Newton's hotel work. He was doing hotel-based characters living in—character-based performances in hotels downtown at the time, also.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did you happen to know him?

MARNIE WEBER: Through—he lived next door with his wife, Michèle Lamy.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Lived next door at where?

MARNIE WEBER: On Spring Street.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, so we got to know him. And their daughter Scarlett was a baby at the time. In fact, Gillean worked for Michèle and Richard at that time. I later went on to work for Michèle and Richard when they moved to Traction Avenue. And, in fact—it's not—we're losing the narrative thread in a way.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's okay.

MARNIE WEBER: When I was working for Richard, he asked me to be in one of his films, which was a Godard recreation, because Michèle Lamy studied with Godard. And so, he was doing *Masculin Féminin*, so we recreated *Masculin Féminin*, and I was one of the actresses in that. So that—watching Richard make movies is what inspired me to go into movies—making movies.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Because I had never known anybody who could make a movie. And I found it really exciting, that here was this artist with, I think, his 16 mm camera, just getting his friends to be in a movie. And I remember saying to him, "I would really like to make a movie one day." But in my mind, thinking that it was like something huge that I'd have to overcome to get to that point.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and in those days, you did.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, it's true.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now it's so easy.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, it was money.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the years that you're downtown doing this—what years exactly are you—are we encompassing now?

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're back from London in '80.

MARNIE WEBER: London in 1980, and we were back—and so we lived downtown again for four more years. 1980 to 1983.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Well, that's three years, actually.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You and Donald?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and the whole band, living together. And then we got married, and we moved out to a little house in Highland Park.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Alright, well, before we go there, let's talk some more about this formative year here. At UCLA, you obviously decided to become an artist.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Although you're playing in the band, you're also pursuing visual art.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're performing installations.

MARNIE WEBER: And I remember, specifically, Alexis Smith came into class the first day of class, and she said something to the effect, "Look at all of you. 30 of you, and only one of you will become a professional artist." And I said to myself, "That's going to be me."

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

MARNIE WEBER: [Laughs.] And I sort of felt that to be a challenge. And she was right, I think. But she could have been a little wrong, maybe there was a couple of us, actually, who became artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who else was in your class?

MARNIE WEBER: Barbara McCarren, and she became a professional artist. Bruce Licher wasn't in my class, but he became a friend, and he went on to do Independent Project Records, a very famous downtown label. A music label.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Record label. I could name other people, but I'm trying to remember the ones that became artists. Well.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was sort of true.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You became the best known of the artists, you know? [...-MW] And you felt that competitive urge.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I do think I had a competitive urge. I think that came from my dad—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that the first time you'd felt that?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, definitely. Well, of course, when I was in the band, we were very competitive. The band was very competitive. We always wanted to be, you know, doing the most outsider stuff.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think I'm just going to change discs here.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because I don't want to run out of space. So this is the end of disc one, and we'll take a break.

MARNIE WEBER: How's your water?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm okay on that front.

MARNIE WEBER: I'm just going to run to the bathroom.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sure.

[END OF DISC ONE.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Marnie Weber at the artist's studio in Eagle Rock, California on February 10th, 19—excuse me, February 10th, 2016. We've obviously been living in the past—for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. So, I'm sure we'll have to take another break in a moment, but let's just go back to—momentarily, to the glory days of downtown L.A. and you finishing your degree at UCLA and studying with Alexis Smith, who you consider a great influence. What about Alexis Smith was influential or helpful to you as a young artist, a young art student?

MARNIE WEBER: I had never met a woman who was making work, showing, living on her own, and was a respected artist. You know, I had read—I had studied woman artists in the, you know, in history books, but I

never actually met one. So she was my first. So, that in itself was inspiring. And then, her approach to collage making was very inspiring, because I hadn't—I had been, you know, painting and drawing. And there was just something about the way she put things together, to create something brand new, that really inspired me.

So I—and also, she was very encouraging of my character-based collages. I've made collages, you know, about a nurse and maid—a nurse living downtown, who falls into the porn industry. I made collages about a Greek maid living in a hotel. So, she really encouraged me to work on my narratives, work on my characters, and also, everything was—seemed very—she just seemed very open, and open to if you had some drive and enthusiasm about what you were doing, that you could do whatever you wanted.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, this is a transitional moment in the way contemporary art evolves as well, this incorporation of narrative.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which is obviously not a new idea within art history, but is something that comes into art, contemporary art, in a very big way in the early '80s. Were you aware of that?

MARNIE WEBER: I think in the time, no, I wasn't aware of it. I don't think there was even much conversation about it. I think it was just one of those synchronicity things that was starting to happen, and then it took a little while for people to start talking about it afterwards. And the—because at the same time, for instance, Chris was teaching—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Chris Burden?

MARNIE WEBER: Chris Burden was teaching minimalist performance. And I was doing character-based performance. And so, you know, I think he was amused at what I was doing, but he didn't—for instance, I got to a B-plus, because it wasn't really—I, I didn't quite get the point of the class, in that I was not doing, you know, stripped-down minimalist. I was doing—bringing in tape recorders and props and sets. And it wasn't really what he was teaching. So, there was that dichotomy of what was going on. There was really—like a very strong minimalist period going on. And then there was also, you know, Jack Smith and people doing theatrical performance. So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and it's transitional. I mean, it really is—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —when I think of the performance people that come out at that moment, and Chris Burden did have strong opinions about not wanting performance—not believing that performance art should veer into the theatrical.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, absolutely.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And yet, you—what you said before about Richard Newton a little bit, even Rachel Rosenthal, who comes up as an older woman who has a theatrical background and a force at the time comes out of that. Alexis Smith's own performances—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —you know, there certainly is a lot of movement in that direction. Paul McCarthy—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —and of course, your friend, Mike Kelley.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You know, these performances have more—seem to me to have more narrative —

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —permission. They have more narrative thrust than previously.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. And they had costuming and props. And it was—everything was equally important.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, what happens at that moment that gives you the confidence to be able to do that, as opposed to just doing, I would call it, mostly action-based performance?

MARNIE WEBER: I think hiding behind the character gives you more confidence. I think that's why I was doing it, was to hide behind a character.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when you do the nurse performance, is that the first one?

MARNIE WEBER: No, I think the first one was the maid.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The maid?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And do you remember what that's called?

MARNIE WEBER: It was the maid's name. I think it was Celeste, and that was the hotel in Hollywood. That was at a hotel in Hollywood. And I had brought—I didn't get permission from the hotel, so I brought all these theatrical —, in suitcases. You'd open them up and there'd be dioramas in the suitcases. So I rented two rooms. They were all—all the suitcases. And then I decorated the room, you know, the best I could, guerilla-style. And then I was in the next room as the maid, serving drinks and in character.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then what would happen?

MARNIE WEBER: And then people would go in the room next door. My diary would be there. I had—I wrote a whole diary based on this character, and her—you know, where she came from, and her ex—and things she had seen in the hotel. And so, that was the first.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what hotel is that?

MARNIE WEBER: I wish I would—I wish I could remember. I have it written down somewhere.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did people come?

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, yeah. The downtown art crowd came. Why can't I remember the name of the—?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you still in school?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I was still in school.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this was a non-school-related performance that you did?

MARNIE WEBER: Right. Yeah, that's funny, because I was a bit different than most people in school. I was doing a lot of—I didn't think of what I was doing in school and out of school as having much of a barrier, because I was inviting most of the—the students wouldn't even show up. It was mostly people from downtown. So—and then, when I would do things in hotels, and also when the band would play, it almost felt like whatever I did while I was in school was really not meant for school. So—but I got, you know, I got the grades from doing it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you get good grades in school?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah, once I decided I should get good grades.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are your parents—how are your parents feeling about this?

MARNIE WEBER: At that time, they were very proud of me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, they were?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, because they felt I finally got my life together. And I was making art. And so, that's—as long as I'm making art, that's okay. They were even okay with the band. They weren't—you know, they didn't think that it was going to be my whole life, but they were even okay with the band. They would come see the band play. We were on television once, this theater program. Peter Ivers did *New Wave Theatre* on television. My parents were living in Hawaii at the time. My dad stayed up late and took pictures of the band on TV with his camera. So, they were very proud. And yeah, as soon my dad retired—I forgot to mention, they moved to Hawaii. So—and that's kind of what propelled me into the whole downtown scene, because I needed to get a group of people to live with and to be part of as a family.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is—was the issue of having a family or a group of people important to you?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, very much so. Not necessarily consciously, but I was—I've never been much of a loner.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, your parents go to Hawaii. And they're okay with you being back in UCLA making art, and being in a band. And because your father wanted to be an artist—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —he supports your desire to be an artist?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and in fact, I remember when I got my first studio downtown, it was a little room above the Produce Market. They came to visit. And my dad brought me a rope ladder in case the building caught on fire. And I thought, that is so sweet. You know, what a great idea. I would have never thought of that. And they were very—you know, very encouraging. You know, and—downtown in 1979 was a crazy place. It was pretty—it was no-man's-land. I mean, there was—you couldn't really—you would walk, it would be desolate at night. There was just—it was empty. And we'd walk through the Produce Market, because that was a safer way to get to where band practice was. The guys lived down at one end and me and Kitty lived at the other end. And so, I'd walk through the Produce Market at night.

But there was, you know, there was murders. There was—you know, the cops weren't even used to seeing people—you know, hip young people downtown at all. They would pull us over and say, what are you doing down here? You should get out of here. And we'd say, we have studios down here. And they would be like, well, you're on your own then. You know, so it was kind of scary.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you go into Hollywood to see other punk bands at the time perform, or other new wave bands?

MARNIE WEBER: Sometimes, yeah. And then, when we got friends with the people at Cathay de Grande, and we would perform there a lot, that was a big punk place.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where was that again?

MARNIE WEBER: Somewhere in Hollywood. I wish I could remember. Las Palmas, it was on Las Palmas. And then, we also played at Anti-Club, which was on Melrose in Hollywood. And we played—no, actually the band didn't play Club Lingerie. I did when I went solo. Maybe now is a good time to talk about going solo.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is the Anti-Club John Pochna ? Was that—was he involved in that?

MARNIE WEBER: No, that was Jack Marquette.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's—Jack Marquette.

MARNIE WEBER: And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: And now that his partner—who passed away, Jim Van Tyne was his partner—Jim Van Tyne. Oh, boy, we'd—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anyway, let's go back to you and Alexis Smith and Chris Burden—

MARNIE WEBER: —right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —and UCLA.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're involved in your first piece as this—you're a nurse, and—I mean, you're a maid in the hotel. And then, after that, how do your performances evolve? What happens after that?

MARNIE WEBER: And then, chronologically, I can't really quite remember, there was the nurse and the American Hotel. And in George Herms's sculpture class, I did a piece where I was inspired by Americans who watch television. And I wrapped myself in a bunch of Saran Wrap with objects under, like Americana objects, underneath the Saran Wrap, all over my body. And I just sat in the gallery watching television all day, or for the duration of the show. I think it was a several-day show.

So that was—and then another piece I did for sculpture, because whenever I'd get a class, I'd always do something that wasn't really based on the class. So then, I did another performance where I had these slaves

drag my Dodge Dart through the campus up into—all the way—slaves dressed in costume, up to the sculpture area at the museum. And I had Ravel's "Bolero" playing really loudly. And I had this sculpture of this woman that I had spent a fair amount of time, figurative, kind of Greek, kind of like a destroyed Greek sculpture, tied to the top of the car. And I was in—wearing a toga driving it. And there was dry ice coming out of it everywhere. It was very spectacular, very Liberace, but that's because I was really into the theatrical rock. So there was—yeah, so there was always a sense of fun in those performances.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so, you're getting good grades, and you're getting encouragement from your teachers?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then you graduate what year?

MARNIE WEBER: 1981.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. And so, then—actually, after I graduated, I went through a period of being lost. I was still living downtown, still playing in the band.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you got a BFA at UCLA?

MARNIE WEBER: Actually, technically, it's a BA.

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

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you're downtown. Now you've got your degree.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And now, it's a trend, the big—the key—will you or will you not really be an artist?

MARNIE WEBER: Right. And I was—and I got a job painting fabric, hand-painted fabrics for couches downtown. There was a big craze in the '80s of hand-painted fabrics. People wear them for clothes. They had couches. So I had this really—it was a difficult job. It was a full-time job, 40 hours a week, 40-yard tables. We would stand—mostly artists worked there. One of us on either side, mixing the colors, matching the paints, painting to make them look like the sample flowers. The women painted flowers. The guys painted stripes, mostly, because they could stretch across the table with their long arms. And we would just, all day, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., just paint back and forth, back and forth, just covered in paint, mixing paint. And I was there four years. It was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow.

MARNIE WEBER: —really a long time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you remember the name of the company?

MARNIE WEBER: California Drop Cloth. I was there three years, and then I switched over to Design House, downtown, which painted—same deal, but it was fabric for women's clothes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: These were for backdrops?

MARNIE WEBER: No, these were—it was canvas for couches. They made couches out of them—hand-painted, and curtains, too. There was a few artists I worked with, Anthony Ausgang, John Tottenham, the poet.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: John who?

MARNIE WEBER: John Tottenham, the poet. He's a well-known Los Angeles poet. I'm trying to think if there was any other artists. Well, everyone was artists. Oh, Rafael Serrano. Yeah, so there was—it was a—I mean, it was fun. It was hard work, but it was fun. So—and then at night, I would come home and play with the band. And so, then it—I kind of lost my art work during that period, because of having to work so hard. I think that was really a lot of the issue. And then at night, practicing. So it really wasn't a lot of time.

I remember my dad said to me, do you want to go to grad school? And I stupidly said no, because all of my heroes really didn't have grad degrees, and just—it didn't seem like something that was necessary. Of course, it

was a regret later. And then we—then I got married. We moved to Highland Park, had a couple dogs. And then 1987—oh, in 1983, was it—no. In 1987, the band broke up.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And why is that?

MARNIE WEBER: I think it—oh, we had a tour to Germany planned. And a couple people in the band didn't want—couldn't go or, you know, it didn't seem like a priority, and—or just for personal reasons, couldn't go. And it seemed to me like it was one of those points where you either had to do it or you didn't do it, because we had gone—we had been together seven years, put out three albums. We had toured New York, London. You know, we—it was either make it or break it or give up. And so, we all chose give up, because it just wasn't working out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it wasn't acrimonious?

MARNIE WEBER: No. I mean, we're all friends now, but at the time, it wasn't. And then, plus—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it was acrimonious?

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, oh, yeah, it was, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was? So who was—who chose to do the breakup?

MARNIE WEBER: I think we even—we had a meeting, and we all just agreed it was time. The sad part was we had our third and final record coming out that year. And it was the best record ever. So that was a real bummer.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was the name of that record?

MARNIE WEBER: *Daddyland*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: D-A-D-D-Y?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, D-A-D-D-Y.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And who released that record?

MARNIE WEBER: That was Nate Starkman and Son, which was a spring-off of—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Nate Stark?

MARNIE WEBER: Nate Starkman and Son, which was a record label that was a spring-off from Independent Project Records. And the name Nate Starkman and Son was painted on the side of the building downtown. So that's how the title came about. And that was a real pity, that that would have—it was our best record.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you do the covers for your records?

MARNIE WEBER: No. The first cover was a design that was—we went downtown to a salon and had a family portrait taken. And then Bruce Licher did all the covers. He did a letterpress. Each cover was a different color. Bruce inspired me to do record albums—unique record albums where each album would be different from the rest. That was a run of, I think, a thousand, and each one had a different color. Some colors were muddy. Some were beautiful.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that was—there would be—it was almost—

MARNIE WEBER: It is limited to—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —limited edition works of art?

MARNIE WEBER: —yeah, yeah. Right, exactly. And so then, the next one was more of a commercial release, on Iridescence label. And Bob Hope, an artist downtown at the time, Bob Hope Zoell—he went by a couple different names—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: —Bob Hope Zoell, now he's Bob Zoell, he did the album—second album. And then we took a picture of ourselves with a bunch of truck drivers from downstairs for the back cover. And then, the third album, Jim Duck, the guitar player, who's also an artist, he did a painting for the third album.

So then, the band broke up. I was even more at a loss what to do. So—and then, Donald and I got divorced, I think, because the band was keeping us together in many ways. It was our, you know, our baby. So then I

moved back downtown and he stayed at the house. And I thought, well, I'm going to go back to do performance art. So, I started my career as a performance artist. And that was 1987. And I did a musical—well, the first musical show I had—it was at a gallery called Rebel Art Gallery. It was in Hollywood, and I—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Rebel, like—

MARNIE WEBER: —Rebel, R-E-B-E-L, Rebel Art Gallery. And I had women painted red, and they were, like, characters. And they were in each corner of the gallery, chained to the corners. And they sang, played guitar. I was down below in white, not in character, just as myself, all—I wrote all the songs. I had all backing tapes. Had a professional PA system, and it was a 45-minute show. And it was very theatrical. And I thought it was really nice. I felt kind of awkward and uncomfortable on stage. And so, that's when I decided to do them character-based. And so, I came up with different characters.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it's funny about that, because here, you've been on stage with the Party Boys—

MARNIE WEBER: I know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —as a bass player—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —for—

MARNIE WEBER: Seven years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —a long time then?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and I didn't think it would be a problem. And then, when suddenly everyone was staring at me, it was a problem.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because you're by yourself?

MARNIE WEBER: By myself, yeah. Yeah, and I thought, even though there would be other things to look at, just having people stare at me was enough to make me run for cover—so. And I think I did a different—I think at that point, then I was a geisha. I was a bunny, old lady, outer space alien, all kinds of things. I did an old lady a lot. That was real—a lot of old ladies. I would have my walker ahead of my guitar, plugged in on a really long cord. And then when I'd enter the club, I would—each step of the walker, the guitar would go *boom, boom*. And then I would come across, you know, as a—and I would get younger looking, back as a pop star, and then rip off my rubber face and be present age, and had backing tapes.

Sometimes I would have other musicians. And I did some—sometimes I did more installation-based work, like I did another one in an art gallery in Venice, where I got a bunch of parachute harnesses and all the musicians were hung from the ceiling with parachutes. And then I would show my collages on the wall. And all of this would be one night, big theatrical performance, collages on the wall. And then, I would take it down the next day.

And I did this so many times. I did this at the old Sue Spaid gallery. I did a—and I was putting out records. My own music. And I would do a hundred copies of each, with a different collage on the back. So I was doing this high-intensive collage work, where—three records, 300 covers, each different—I was doing box sets, the collages. In fact, one—the collage that ended up on the Sonic Youth cover was one of those little collages from a box set. It was a collage of myself as a little girl, modeling blankets in Japan with the giant hamster coming in on a hand. And I'm wearing hamster ears.

So that was from that period of collage making, because I really wanted—from Bruce Licher and Independent Project Records, I really wanted to make each record a work of art. And they're, you know—and I would—then I would mount them all on the wall for one night, under Plexi, and sell them for \$100 each. And it would pay for the project. It would seem like a really great way of creating special pieces.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, how many years did you do these—this kind of one-night-only performance installation stuff?

MARNIE WEBER: Until 1993, from '87 to '93.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a long time.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, it was a long time. And sometimes I would do a performance at LACE. I would have—I would rent a large truck and I would have two truckloads. I would have to make two loads. I had so many props

and sets and stuff. And I would have other characters. I did a circus where I had all these psycho—I did a psychosexual circus, where I had all these props and these crazy demented characters and costumes. And then I started having films as background projection.

So, the first film I ever made was designed as a background projection, and it was a black and white—me as Coquette, Circus Girl. Her story is, she comes to Los Angeles wanting to join the circus, but she ends up in porn movies as—and so, the—it's a black and white movie. I shot it at the—in the basement of Otis. Me frolicking with this giant stuffed pony. And I actually rode—I opened up the pony, and it—I wore it in performances. I would ride out impaled through this giant stuffed pony. So that was 1993, I believe. In the meantime, I got a job—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that was at Otis?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, that's when I got my job as a gallery coordinator at Otis. Otis was near MacArthur Park. My boss was Anne Ayres. She was the director.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't remember you there then. Did—I must have known you?

MARNIE WEBER: I was there for five years, I believe. Yeah, I remember you.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So we were there at the same time?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: My memory is just—

MARNIE WEBER: I know, isn't it funny?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —so selective about that.

MARNIE WEBER: Well, I remember, you were more friends with Anne. I mean, you and Anne would have lunch and what-not, you know, and stuff. I remember you coming to pick up Anne. Anne Ayres, coincidentally—or actually, maybe it's not a coincidence, because I got the job—was a student of my father's, art history. He was on her—when she was getting her PhD at USC, he was on her committee. And she said to me, "I've always admired your father." In fact, I remember meeting Anne when I was a teenager. We were down at Newport Harbor Museum seeing this show, the Chris—I think it was a Chris Burden show. And then Anne came in, and she was so happy to see my dad. And I remember the occasion.

So then, later on, when I was interviewing for the job—because my friend Jacqui Den Hartog was leaving the position, and she recommended me. Anne said, "I've always—I always admired your father. He was so supportive of me when I was going through a difficult time, and helped me get my PhD."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what year is this?

MARNIE WEBER: So, I got the job at Otis in 1987, I believe. It was right—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You said 1988 here, I'm sorry.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, no, you said that's—

MARNIE WEBER: '80—could have been '88, actually.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that was performance—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —was your performance here, '87 to '93?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, so I think I got the job in '88. And then I stayed there till—I met Jim in '93. So I stayed there till '93. I think it was like five years. Yeah, it was five years. And I was gallery coordinator. I did everything. I put up—I mean, I didn't curate, but I put up all the shows. I did the lighting. I did, you know, the installation. I did the shipping, the insurance, everything that went into running the whole gallery. Anne did the curating and the press and grants.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She was a great curator then.

MARNIE WEBER: Fantastic.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I—

MARNIE WEBER: I learned so much from her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —in retrospect, even more so. Look at—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —people use her catalogs all the time, she really was special.

MARNIE WEBER: And watching her install every show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And she did this. She did a lot of oral histories. Actually, she did some important oral histories for the Archives of American Art.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, I didn't know that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She did Rosamund Felsen's. And they're great.

MARNIE WEBER: Wow.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She's very detailed, and—

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, amazing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —so just so—

MARNIE WEBER: I was so lucky to work with her. I learned so much. That was my grad school in a way.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And so, here you now have yet another full-time job.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the performances continue, though.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You continue doing the performances?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. On the weekends, and also, working—I—when we'd have some down time at the gallery, I would be putting together the special edition record album covers in my office.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now how—are any of these performances manifesting sculptures yet? Or are you just doing the collage work that comes out of the sculpture—out of the performances?

MARNIE WEBER: No, I'm—just the collage work, and the collage work was related to the records. They weren't even individual collages. And I wasn't doing sculpture. And I wasn't having any art shows. I was just doing performances and these records. And I was making these films that were projections.

And I remember, there was one turning point. We had a party here, Jim and I had a party. And somebody at the party was talking—I overheard somebody at the party talking about Mike Kelley. And they said, well, at least Mike was smart enough to get out of performance when he did. And it was so upsetting to me, it just rang in my ears, and I was, like, how could anybody say that? Then the next day, it was still bothering me.

And so, then I thought to myself, well, maybe I really need to examine this as a situation, because it shouldn't be bothering me so much. And so then, that was when I thought, okay, I'm going to make a movie that is just a movie that's going to be shown in a gallery and has no relationship to performance. And so, I made *Quest for Happy*, which is a Super 8 film of this kind of weird Eskimo—like, woman character, that lives in the snow. And she wears a furry Christmas wreath around her face. And she's supposed to be living in this igloo. And she watches on TV that a bluebird gets buried in the snow. And so, she's like, "Oh, my God, I got to go out there into this blizzard, find the bluebird, and save it."

So she grabs all of her little animal friends on snow sleds and drags them through the snow. So, I went—Jim was the camera operator. We went up to the mountains and shot the film on Super 8. And then the film came back and it was all black. So then we went back. I got another camera. Went back up to the mountains, shot it again. It turned out great. And I showed it—I can't remember the name of the gallery now. It was—it was a show called *Happiness*, that Phyllis Green curated.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: And it was at Joni—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Joni—

MARNIE WEBER: Joni Newsom—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Joni's Gordon's Newspace?

MARNIE WEBER: Joni Gordon's Newspace. And that was the first time I was ever in a show—group show. And it—and the encouragement I got from people made me go on to make more movies. And then, I made a movie in Death Valley. And I made a series of these early movies, and made a—one at Salton Sea, *Destiny and Blow Up Friends*. And it was always just—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wait, the one that was at Salton Sea is—

MARNIE WEBER: *Destiny and Blow Up Friends*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —*Destiny and Blow Up Friends*.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't have that here.

MARNIE WEBER: And that was the—and it was always a crew of two, myself and Jim. And he was the camera operator.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, before we move on to that, we have a little—so, we've left Donald. You're on your own. You're doing the performances. Do you have a relationship with anyone after Donald and before Jim?

MARNIE WEBER: No, I lived downtown for five years on my own.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But no boyfriend?

MARNIE WEBER: Well, okay, yeah, I had a boyfriend for, I think, a period of time. Not—I probably—he was not an artist, so—he was younger. But that—you know, it wasn't like somebody I was going to marry—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, how did you meet Jim Shaw—for the record, how did you meet Jim Shaw?

MARNIE WEBER: Through Jacci Den Hartog. She had a dream that we would be together.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: More dreams.

MARNIE WEBER: A literal dream. And so she said, you got to meet this artist Jim Shaw. I think you would really hit it off. And I had seen Jim—pictures of Jim in *Destroy All Monsters* when he had the beard. And I was, like, isn't he an old hippie guy? And she said, no. And I said, I saw this picture of him with a beard? Nobody had beards, and—you know, it was in the early '90s. And she said, no, he doesn't have a beard.

And so, I—and so then she introduced him to me at an opening. And he looked completely different from the hippie picture I had seen.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this would be 1993?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah, '93, or '92 actually. We married fairly quickly after that. We married in '93. So I must have met him in '92. And we started dating. And then we married nine months later. And I went—I was still—I was live—I had been living downtown. And then I moved back into the little house that I still co-owned with my ex-husband, because he moved to New Zealand. And I wanted to take care of the dogs, because we had dogs still. And then Jim and I got married. And we still weren't living together, because he was living on Michel—he had all his stuff on Micheltorena. And I had the two dogs.

So then, I thought to myself, we had been married for maybe six to eight months without actually moving all of our stuff in together. And I thought to myself, well, maybe Jim would be more enthusiastic about moving if I could find a place near Mike. I was over there on Avenue 64. So I went over to Mike's house, and I just started driving around, looking for signs. And I drove up this hill and I saw a sign on this house. And we called. And after much work and negotiating, we got the house. Jim fixed the upstairs for his studio. And it was nice because Mike was down the hill. And we would go and have barbecues and dinners and play music and it was really a fun

community at that time. Diana Thater lived next door, and Kelly Mason, and there was a lot of other people around. Anita—Mike was with Anita Pace at the time. So it was a real community.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how long did that go on?

MARNIE WEBER: It went on for years, until Mike got his house in South Pasadena. He seemed more of a hermit in those—after that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when did he get his house in South Pasadena?

MARNIE WEBER: That's a good question. I feel like it was—maybe it was after—I'm not sure. Okay, I know, because it was when Colette—after Colette got born—was born. She was born in '99. And then he broke up with her. So it was 2—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Colette was born in '99?

MARNIE WEBER: —yeah, 1999.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were, like, married for six years when she was born?

MARNIE WEBER: Right. We tried a long time. [And Mike, and then I think—and then Mike and Anita broke up. – MW] So it was probably 2000 or so, 2001, 2002. And we had a kid, so we weren't going out as much.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this is really a fertile time, really, I think, in L.A.'s art history, that 1990s period.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a really—that's—those are some great years.

MARNIE WEBER: Really great years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Of course, the '80s were great years, too.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the '90s were great in a different way.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, there—everything blew up. I mean, because I remember in the '80s, in late—and in the late '70s, you knew all the artists. You knew the galleries. You knew the gallery owners. And then by the '90s, there was so many people, you couldn't know everybody anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And people were really getting attention, specifically Mike.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah. In fact—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Jim.

MARNIE WEBER: —I knew Mike before. But I knew—met Mike before Jim.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So how did you meet Mike Kelley?

MARNIE WEBER: Through Otis, because I was friends—I was getting to know Rosamund, because Rosamund Felsen was friends with Anne. And so, I went to Mike's first show at Rosamund Felsen with the stuffed animals. And I knew Ralph Rugoff and Jeffrey Vallance. So I would go to all the openings, but weirdly enough, Jim was in the world of—he wasn't in the art world. He was in the—he was doing special effects and animation. So he wasn't around those days. That's why I hadn't met him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's what he was doing for a job?

MARNIE WEBER: For a job, yeah. And I think he was friends with Mike, and maybe he went to some of the openings, but it was—but I don't remember him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And—

MARNIE WEBER: He must have probably been working really long hours, is what I'm thinking.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then—yes, that show at Rosamund Felsen, is that the *Pathetic* show?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, the *Just Pathetic* show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *Just Pathetic* show.

MARNIE WEBER: But that—well, I was thinking more of the solo show that—the big eye opener for me was the solo show with Mike's stuffed animals, which—what was the title of that? We had the—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid?*

MARNIE WEBER: [... No. Mike Kelley's solo show in 1987, *Half A Man*, at Rosamund Felsen Gallery -MW] So that was a pivotal show for me. But Chris—you know, of course, the Chris Burden show with the *Big Wheel* was there at the time. I mean, every show, that was the thing. You would go to every show Rosamund had, because they were all fantastic. And they were all mind-blowing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the '90s really—yes, suddenly there's a huge interest in L.A. art in the '90s that had not previously existed, and in Europe. And you start seeing people come up. And your—you've committed yourself now to film. Just a moment here to ask you, is there a moment where you shift from film to video?

MARNIE WEBER: I think it was mostly because we were going to Death Valley to shoot this one movie about—that where I play a flower. And I get—and I find all of these animals that are made out of sawhorses with these sawhorse women, weird hybrids. And they make me my—make me their leader. And I think with—Jim and I talked about it. And we thought, "Oh, maybe it would be easier to use video in Death Valley than film." But then I ended up going back to film, because I liked the way film looked better.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: But it's usually—if it was a difficult shoot, I would go with the video. And if it involved a lot of other people, I would go with video, because you know, you don't get second chances. If it was just myself I would do the Super 8.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So here we are, you know, you're married to Jim. He's working as special effects when you're married?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, he was doing storyboards.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's pause a second and say, you finally meet Jim. Is it love at first sight, despite Jacci Den Hartog's dream?

MARNIE WEBER: I think I was more cautious, having been married before. So I was thinking more with my brain at that point. And so, I was making sure it was going to be a good fit. So—but he seemed very warm and friendly. That's why I liked him, which is funny, because that's not one—he has a warmth to him, but not necessarily a friendliness to him, but I felt his—I felt he was a warm person. So, I think that is how I was able to let my guard down. I felt—and he gave me a big bear hug after our first date. And that made me feel very trusting of him because, you know, he's a very loyal person.

And so, it was funny how I picked up, with one hug, I felt all of these characteristics of his personality. So that, I think, made me feel comfortable to let my guard down enough to fall in love again.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, also, and interestingly, you didn't have—you have such similar—seem to have similar interests. You know, in terms of music.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Both being interested in music, both being in bands, both being interested in dream imagery.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Both—

MARNIE WEBER: Character-based work.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —character-based work.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And performance.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It just seems as though, you know, you can hardly find two artists with such similar interests.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. And then also, I had seen his show at Dennis Anderson, *My Mirage*, before I knew him. So when I did meet him, I had a sense of what his work was like.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I didn't even remember Dennis Anderson. Is this a gallery?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, it was a gallery in Hollywood. It was like a little storefront. And Jim—and everybody at the time was like, oh, my God, you got to go see this—*My Mirage* show. And he had done all the, you know, pieces. It was so different from what people were showing in the '80s at the time. I think it was the late '80s. So I saw that show. So, I had some idea of what his work looked like. And so, but I think, for his friends when they heard we were dating, they were like, oh, my God of course, Marnie, that's perfect, you know. So it was, like, yeah, so it seemed perfect, yeah. So, and it was. It was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you're still together.

MARNIE WEBER: —yeah, I know. I mean, it's—there's been some hard times, of course, but I could go into that area. It was mostly when we had the big shop with all the employees. That was really difficult. That was borderline not being together.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I didn't even know what—so you get together and your career is—you are completely committed to showing—to working at Otis and having your—and making films—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —and showing them. And at this point, Jim is the camera operator on the early films—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —but you make all the sets?

MARNIE WEBER: I made all the sets, costumes, the whole story. I just—he basically just—I would tell him what to do. And then, most of it's always silent, so I'm always, you know, barking orders. And then I do all the music myself. That's an important thing, I've always done all my own soundtracks. So then I would do them. And there was—there weren't—there wasn't any dialogue, because I was really not—I was really against dialogue for many, many years in videos. So I would do—they were most, like, Charlie Chaplin-esque, very expressionistic, dark, but funny, you know. Usually involving me pulling things on strings, because I was always desperate for other characters, but I didn't want to actually have humans. So I would, you know, whatever I could do to get another character to reveal more of my character through these other things, or objects.

So then, I think the first movie we did where we actually had help was after Colette was born, and I had a babysitter [and assistant named Karin Gulbran, an artist -MW]. And she came up to the mountains. And she played a bunny in the movie, where it was called *The [Red] Nurse and the Snowman*, where I play a nurse. And I'm going through the snow finding injured creatures. And so, that was a crew of the three of us. And it made it easier. And then I went on to get more, you know, bigger and bigger, more elaborate movies.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, are you aware of the kind of stuff that Paul McCarthy's doing at that point, where he has the Heidi character and the Swiss chalet and the whole—

MARNIE WEBER: I saw the *Heidi*, yeah. I saw *Heidi*. And it was after I had done many movies. Mike showed us *Heidi*. And that was kind of mind-blowing to me, because, one, it was a collaboration, and then, two, was that they had found the Madonna mask. And I kept thinking—to me, it's just using a found Madonna mask, was really kind of liberating. I was like, wow, you could just find a mask and not have to spend five days working on it? So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's an interesting point. Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, so it was using a mask as a found mask. It was really blowing my mind.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So up till then, you thought you had to make all your own props?

MARNIE WEBER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ah.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: There's this work ethic where everything—well, actually, the blow-up animals I found. Those were found, but in terms of myself and my character, I had to make everything, so it never occurred to me you could just find a mask.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you shift out of that at that point?

MARNIE WEBER: I think so, yeah. Yeah. In fact, I think after that, my movies, I started finding masks and re-appropriating with the bodies, you know, and making, having somebody make a fur body, because I don't sew. I did a night shoot at—*The Forgotten*, where there was a bunch of night characters, a possum, all kinds of—and it was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I love *The Forgotten*.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's the white one.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, the white one. [All the characters were in white fur. -MW]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The white one.

MARNIE WEBER: I shot that at—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: White on white.

MARNIE WEBER: —Barry Sloane's and Michael Duncan's backyard.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: The beautiful backyard they had—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, no, I think that's one of actually—I think that's one of the rather—that's an extraordinary piece. I don't think it really—I mean, I like all your work, but obviously that one, I always just think because it's all white—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —there's something so, sort of—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —enticing about it.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Looking at it.

MARNIE WEBER: And meditative. It's super meditative. It's like all these white and silver animals at night, just sort of like what happens when you go to sleep out there in the backyard, or the forest. You know, and I always imagine what's not there. I think that if I were to choose one defining thing that drives everything I do, is imagining what's not there. It's just always my foundation.

So that works with, you know, the dreams, the hallucinations, the imagination, what's in the forest at night. Clowns are stand-in for people, because people, you know, come alive through these different alter egos. Yeah. The—and so, and it encompasses everything, to realism, mysticism, spirituality. So what's not there is—becomes the most important thing for me. What people don't say, you know, the way they—that's probably why I did so many silent movies. I never thought of that, you know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: One thing you said that I—struck me in my notes-taking earlier, is that you tried to create the feminine in the masculine. I'm not exactly—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that when you had a lot of the roles, instead of having—I mean, there's a lot of masculine, feminine duality within your work that I found to be very—that's like an ongoing—seems to be an ongoing theme. And the empowerment issue.

MARNIE WEBER: Well, like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that, you know, that you talk about, you know, you said there were no girls in rock and roll. There were no girls in the art world. And you say it in the interview with Mike Kelley, you talk about the representations of the masculine—I'm sorry, I got it backwards, the representations of the masculine in the feminine.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I thought that was really—kind of captured a lot about your work.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. And it's—okay, say, for instance, a film is like a dream in a Jungian sense, and I'm the lead character, all the masculine representations are alter egos of myself. So when I have the masculine, it's a monster, a clown—you know, a bear. It's a very common expression of my masculine side. I'm trying to think of other characters that I use that are masculine.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And why is that?

MARNIE WEBER: I think because it's a way of objectifying something inside of you, so you can control it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you can control which part of it? The lack of power?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah. So you control the lack of power in your everyday life—the potential lack of power—by creating something that you're in charge of. Like, you're the leader. I'm always in charge of the monsters. If you—you know, in all the movies, I'm always the boss. So it's a way of making myself the boss when I'm not the boss. It's interesting. I hadn't—yeah, it's funny. I hadn't really thought of it in that way.

So, and then—so we've—okay, let me think of where—what movie we're—through the monsters. So, a lot of those creatures are lost, existentially. They're more like a Theater of the Absurd, which was hugely inspiring to me when I wanted to be a writer. I envisioned myself writing Theater of the Absurd plays. So—which I ended up kind of doing in the films. And they're looking for a leader in *The Forgotten*. So, it's this—always this constant thing. Is the leader the one who's got the burden, or is the leader the one who becomes empowered because they're in charge? And so, it's always some kind of a conflict, you know. You—these animals are looking to me to be the leader, but it's a big burden really to, you know, have to help them along their way. So, I think the movie that then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But there's so much about redemption in your movies.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, almost all the movies have a redemptive quality to them.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Some kind—some redemptive message to them.

MARNIE WEBER: Right. And I think it is, if you take on the responsibility and the burden, you will eventually become free, because you can't have freedom without fighting for it, I guess, because you wouldn't know what freedom was.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you—in the '90s—I don't really—it seems as though Jim has a huge surge in his—a bit of a surge in his career, anyway, after the *Helter Skelter* show. So, *Helter Skelter* is 1993.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And my sense of it, without doing any homework here, is that his—there's a lot of attention to him, to Mike, to Paul McCarthy, these guys.

MARNIE WEBER: Huge, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: For you?

MARNIE WEBER: Not so much, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How do you feel about being with—being an artist in an artist relationship with one of you becoming—getting attention, and you not getting as much attention?

MARNIE WEBER: I—a part of it, I felt was my—was the fact that I was committed for so long to performance and film. And they were making objects that were for sale. And my punk rock rebellion was like, well, I don't need to make work for rich people. And so, I think that I wasn't really ready to play the game to make sellable work.

And where there's money, there's power. And so, it's more complicated than the masculine and feminine. It's also, you know, the money and the power. So, I think, had I embraced sculpture and collages that were just collages in themselves, at the time, things could have fallen differently, perhaps.

But there's—I was—I can say I'm not an envious person. I mean, I know it sounds fake, but actually, I was happy for everybody involved. I think if anything, it did make—spur me on to drive to make work that actually could sell eventually, and not—and to get over my, you know, knee-jerk attitude towards work that could sell.

So that, perhaps at—by example of that, because it would have been a different history had Mike continued in performance and film and not made any objects. It would have been a different—completely different history, you know, if Paul hadn't made objects. So I think that it was also where I was putting myself. And now, I think that people—, for instance, people are beginning to realize that I was part of the scene and I was an important part. And it—and I'm getting my due finally. So. But I can—but I can't say I was ever jealous or upset, or anything like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now you're—when you have—you and Jim have Colette in 1999.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where are your careers at that point? Are you still at Otis?

MARNIE WEBER: No, no, I left Otis after we bought this house.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: Because I felt I had been there five years, and I was getting—I was not the best candidate for working full-time any more. So I started doing freelance, installing the work at MOCA, installing the Kienholz show, which was like a miracle. I loved that. I was really happy and fortunate to be working on that crew. I worked for Cooke's Crating. Oh, no, that—Cooke's Crating was before Otis, actually. I forgot about that.

And then I painted houses. It was a little odd time, because Jim's career was really blowing up, and I was painting houses. It was strange, you know, but I wasn't going to just live off of, you know, his—what he was doing. So—and I—sometimes I would part—I would do part-time work at galleries, like at Blum and Poe or, you know, different odd jobs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But when you have Colette, how does it change things?

MARNIE WEBER: As soon as I had Colette at '99, in 1999—we had had a loss in '97 of a baby boy, a stillbirth. So that was a major change for both of us. Suddenly, we realized what was important in life. And I was really set to have another baby, come hell or high water. There was nothing that was going to stop me. So, that became a primary focus.

And then two years later, we had Colette. And she was very colicky and cried an awful lot. I think probably from my nerves, from my previous experience. And so, she was a difficult baby. She was probably not really happy until six months old. And so there was—it was pretty hard. Jim was showing at Rosamund Felsen's at the time. I remember he was working upstairs on the show. We were broke, of course. Because you know, just because you're well-known doesn't mean you're making money. And then Rosamund came over to visit Jim. And she just happened down the stairs. And I had collages up on the wall. And she said, wow, these are terrific.

She thought I was showing at ACME, because I had had a show of my collages, of my box set collages, at ACME. And then she found I wasn't showing at ACME. So then she offered me a show. So anyway, Colette's six months old and I have my first show at Rosamund's. And it was, you know—and after that, I felt like I had been through all the difficulty I'd ever needed really, and I was just ready to go.

And I was ready to speak for myself and hold a whole show. To me, it was a big deal having a gallery show for a whole month, just me, because it was different when you have a performance one night, or a movie or stuff, but this was a big deal for to me to have a—to command a whole month in a gallery. So that's—that changed everything. That show changed everything.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that is—

MARNIE WEBER: That probably was 2000, because Colette was born in '99.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you had—you were in *The Unlovables* at Rosamund in 1998?

MARNIE WEBER: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is *Sleepy Weepy Stories*.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, yeah, that was after Colette was born. Okay, so the—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *Sleepy Weepy Stories*?

MARNIE WEBER: —yeah, okay, *The Unlovables* was the first time I actually had a—actually, maybe I had one—did I have a show in New York? Did I have a show in New York prior to that?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You did, at Jessica Fredericks.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, yeah, that was my first month-long show, okay. So, I made a mistake. My first month-long show was at Jessica's.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Actually, I think it's—according to this, it goes like this : it goes, 1997, Jessica Fredericks. It's before Colette is born.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then you have *The Unlovables* at Rosamund Felsen in '98. And then you have *Unlovables* at Jessica Fredericks in—no, excuse me, *The Tender Desert* is Jessica Fredericks in '98.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the *Storybook Endings*. Oh, you're with Praz-Delavallade since 1999.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, a long time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a long time.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I was doing the porn-magazine-girl collages in those days.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's cool.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then 2000 is *Sleepy Weepy Stories*.

MARNIE WEBER: *Stories*. Yeah, I don't know why I thought was my turning point. I guess it was much earlier. Maybe it just seemed—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it's because—

MARNIE WEBER: —different because Colette was there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —memory is—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —flexible.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and it was also, I think, because I remember Colette—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you were obviously ready to go, because after having a—after the first Jessica Fredericks show, you have like one, two, three, four shows, five shows, or six shows in a row.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just a couple of years.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. So I had gotten over my fear of having shows.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And they're all collages?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, collages, and some sculptures and videos. Actually, the first Jessica Fredericks show, I had a video of myself as a bunny in it. And I had an installation—animals, that I had sculptural animals and a pile of dirt. And then, the video monitor was in the pile of dirt. And it was me having a—at my own funeral, surrounded by a bunch of animals.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gosh, I feel like I've seen that.

MARNIE WEBER: Probably. I don't show that film too much anymore. Yeah, and I had—I think it's—the film starts out with me running through the forest with a sleep mask on. And then I'm picking up some eyeballs, and very—they're kind of more poetic narrative. And then I end up at a—my own funeral, looking up, covered in dirt with all these animals around me, these stuffed—I made them out of piñatas.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And just—this is a good point to start asking, again, they're all—you talk about alter egos and symbols and so forth. And that is—the stuffed animals are so specific, though. They have such specific charm to them as objects, you know, as toys, children's toys.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that—how did you come to that, the use of stuffed animals?

MARNIE WEBER: Well, the first stuffed animal was that giant pony.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The giant pony in the—in the pseudo-porn film?

MARNIE WEBER: Right, yeah, because I—yeah, the—and I had to use giant animals because, you know, I didn't want to anybody to think of Mike. So I was just sticking to giant stuffed animals. And then I ended up making my own animals out of cardboard with papier-mâché. Sawhorses—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, let me just pause here for a second, because suddenly—

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We're recording again, and we're going to talk about the Spirit Girls and how that came about, because we've talked about the afterlife, we've talked about redemption, and we've talked about—the Spirit Girls is really the reforming of a band, or the forming of your own band?

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, the forming of my own band. It—I was just driving one day and I thought to myself, all these years, I went to see bands in the '70s. I never got to see any girl bands, theatrical rock, girl bands. And so, I thought, well, why not just make one? And I thought, well, they could have been alive in the '70s and they died, and they come back as spirits to be a band.

So that idea was born. And I thought I would stop—start with a rock opera. And I had the opportunity at Luckman Theater to—I was having a survey show at the Luckman Gallery. Julie Joyce was the curator. And then she said, "If you have an idea for the theater, you could do something in the theater." They have that big, beautiful theater there. So that was the first Spirit Girls performance. And I designed it more like a rock opera with different set pieces. There was stage sets. There was the girls wandering around with stuffed bears. There was people coming on stage moving trees, songs that were narrative-based, that had to do with what was happening on stage. The band came out and played, and each time—each song we played had some sort of visual, like film—a film—what year was that?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 2005.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, 2005.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So—

MARNIE WEBER: And I thought it was rather successful. I was very happy with it. And it was a great way of finally doing theatrical rock on stage. So I felt like I had really thought of something. And then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the exhibition that went with that was called *From the Dust Room*.

MARNIE WEBER: Right. And that's this catalogue. It had collages, sculptures.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that's really from—that's really your first survey exhibition?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, that was my survey exhibition.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So at that point, you have enough stuff to warrant a survey exhibition?

MARNIE WEBER: Right. Yeah, that's true, yeah. I had enough stuff. And that wasn't even—there wasn't even a room of projections, I don't believe. That was *The Dollhouse* series. There was the *Getty* series. There was earlier collages. There was some sound sculptures. I think a boat with sound, and I think maybe there was some videos on monitors, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the rock opera that the Spirit Girls perform at 2005, what is that opera? What songs do they perform?

MARNIE WEBER: It was called *Songs That Never Die*, was the name of the whole performance. And they performed—we performed the songs that were off our first CD. We started to—the CD hadn't come out, obviously. It was more songs that were being born for the CD at the time. "Comforting the Bears" was—where the girls came out with all the stuffed bears. There was "Milk Maid." I came out as a milk maid. There was the final piece, where we—the—all the girls go off in the boat, the Sea Spirit boat. It's a boat on wheels, like you know, a theater piece. And we—with a false bottom, and the girls stood in the boat, and we—with a big sail, and we pushed it across the stage singing and moving the boat slowly.

I think there was pre-recorded—no, I don't think any of the songs were pre-recorded, actually. I think they were all live, come to think of it. Yeah, they were all live. So yeah, so that was the end, where we all go off together in a boat.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the role of the boat, symbolic as it is everywhere, is very significant in your work.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. I use boats a lot.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is this the River Styx reference? Is this the boat going across the River Styx, which is what I always think of?

MARNIE WEBER: I'm not familiar with—is that Bible?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay, yeah, I don't know the Bible.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's going across the river—it's going—no, it's not the Bible. It's where you go across the River Styx to the other side.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To the Underworld.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, okay, so it's Greek mythology. Okay, yeah. Well, in this case, the girls were dead, so they were already gone, into yet another world. That's the thing. I think people, too, often think of worlds as linear. Like, you go from one world to the world where people are dead. Best case scenario. But to me, I think there's all these many different, different worlds. Maybe you die and you go into what people consider a heaven. And then from heaven, you could go into yet another world, so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you believe this as an operating way of thinking about art, or do you think—do you believe this in your own personal life?

MARNIE WEBER: Both. Yeah. I think that, definitely. I think it's like you have the ability, when you die, to put yourself in different movies. And you might want to collaborate and be in the movie with your parents you hadn't seen in a long time. So, the first movie you go into is, like, all your family members that you had—you miss, you know. Maybe some special animals.

So then—and maybe you spend some time there creating, like, this certain movie. And then you think, well, okay, I've taken care of that. I'd like to start this other movie. So then you move into this whole other realm. So, I kind of view the afterlife as movie making, too.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now when—this world view of yours, do you have any idea where that came from in your personal life, that you would believe that you could—that it wouldn't be a linear progression, you know, the straight Judaic-Christian—you're born, you die—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —you go to heaven or hell.

MARNIE WEBER: I think that came from my dad and all of the art history and the Asian art history and the, you know, the reincarnation. And even though perhaps they didn't necessarily believe in it themselves, I think that it was more just always there. Like, oh, you know, in that past life or that—or the crane is a symbol of this. Or, you know, there was always mythological references and discussions. And so, it wasn't—it was—and then having my Aunt Marny thrown in the mix, about all the past lives and following the guru, it just seemed to me like we were all living—and all the travels through Asia, like just living through worlds that weren't—like when you fly from one country to another, it's all one world, but it's all these different experiences. And so, I think it was just growing up that way. Just always thinking there's always another world, just, you know, a plane ride or a death away. So that's where it came from.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who were the members of the original Spirit Girls, or the girls in this particular performance?

MARNIE WEBER: [Myself, Dani Tull, Tanya Haden, Tamara Sussman, and Julia Warner. -MW]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Dani's a guy?

MARNIE WEBER: He's a guy, but he always plays—he was the lead guitar player in all the Spirit Girls for five years. We never did a show without Dani and the Spirit Girls. [So it was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you dressed him as a woman?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, always as a woman, because one, he's one of the few people who can play guitar of that era. I was really going for the theatrical rock sound from the '70s. And he's really an amazing guitar player. Plus, he can play out the ear, because I really wanted the music—we all—we use vintage synthesizers from the era. I really wanted it to sound like a band that was from the time period, but it was women, and it didn't exist. Tanya Haden, who still plays with the Spirit Girls, we played a show a year ago October. And she played cello.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, I'm sorry, but I thought the Spirit Girls had disbanded.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, we did. We got back together a year ago for this Jack Black Festival Supreme in October a year ago. It was not this last Festival. It was the Festival Supreme before. Apparently, we'll get back together for really special reasons. So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because she—because Tanya Haden's married to Jack Black?

MARNIE WEBER: To Jack Black, yeah. And Jack Black wanted monsters at the Festival. It was his first Festival Supreme he did at the Shrine. And he wanted to make—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is Festival Supreme?

MARNIE WEBER: It's a night—it's like Coachella, but it's comedy and music. And it's all done by Jack. And he makes it—you know, he produces it himself, with Golden Voice. And in this case, Steven Hull, the artist, was in charge of the artists. And so—but Jack and he wanted monsters. So they commissioned me to make these 20 monsters. And then Steven said, oh, Jack really wants the Spirit Girls to play. And I was like, oh, it's so hard. We have to learn all the songs again. We have to rehearse. And so, I said, okay, because it would be fun.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So—

MARNIE WEBER: So once I got Dani on board, I said okay, because I couldn't have done it without Dani.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it's Dani, Tanya, you and—

MARNIE WEBER: At that time, Tamara Sussman, she was my assistant at the time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: S-U double S?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, S-U double S. I had a different drummer—Julia—oh, what is her last name? Julia Warner was the drummer at the time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But who were the original?

MARNIE WEBER: In terms of the ideas, and the—in terms of song writing, I write all the songs. Dani helps with the melody and the guitar. Tamara, my assistant, we hashed out a lot of stuff together. She played bass. But

other than that, it's a lot of free-floating people.

But if I had to do just the Spirit Girls now—Debbie Spinelli, she's a fantastic drummer, she didn't play with us on the first show, but she played every other show since. So if I were to get together the Spirit Girls again for a really special reason, it would have to be Tanya, Dani, Debbie. And now Daniel Hawkins, he—I play noise music with him and Doug Harvey. He played with Spirit Girls last time, too. So, it's hard because you have to relearn all the songs. That's why I prefer to play noise music now, because we don't—we practice a lot, but we don't have to memorize.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So for the Spirit—it's a Spirit Girls reunion, though, but the first Spirit Girls performance—

MARNIE WEBER: It was 2005.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —was 2005. So, after that, in terms of your performances, how often did you—how many records did you release?

MARNIE WEBER: Just one. We just did that one. It was—I can't remember the name of it. I'll get it. ["Forever Free"- MW] Maybe it was just a self-titled *Spirit Girls*, come to think of it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *A Western Song*, though?

MARNIE WEBER: It wasn't the—that was a movie. That was—it was—yeah, the—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It didn't come out as a record?

MARNIE WEBER: —no, it didn't come out as a record.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so you—

MARNIE WEBER: So I did four Spirit Girls films, and one Spirit Girls record. And then, we did a bunch of performances. A lot of times, Chinatown, there was a gallery there, we played there a lot. We played a couple different galleries downtown. We played out at the desert—Andrea Zittel's High Desert Test Site, out in the—Pappy and Harriet's Bar. We never traveled, though. It was never the funding for that. Mostly galleries.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So then, but the Spirit Girls as a group were—it's as though all the things come together after 2005. You have the group, the girl rock band. You have your shows that are based on Spirit Girls as a narrative.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you also have the sculptures and the works of art that start to evolve out of these narratives.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, because the sculptures, to me, were like the girls' memories of their toys that became huge. So, they were like the memories of the girls. And then the collages were—I would dress myself, and whoever was around, up as Spirit Girls, and then put them in dioramas or landscapes of the Spirit Girls, to tell the stories.

Like one—sort of like a scene in a theatrical play, where there'd be some psychological tension, some sort of narrative, some sort of—something going on. The lead Spirit Girl in the *Western Song* movie, she leaves the band and heads out on her own and meets a bunch of clowns. And she channels spirits in a sideshow. And so, then I had all the clown energy, which fit in perfectly to the major narrative. So it was really perfect, because it encompassed everything. And then, I was able to use it—all of my interests in spirituality and mysticism, as well as music, as well as dream imagery, animals, clowns, spirits. It was just—you know, it was just, everything fit together. And it fit together for five years—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well—

MARNIE WEBER: —until 2010, I believe.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —well, and that's the piece that I remember. So I thought that was a fantastic performance that you did at the—it's 2010. *Eternity Forever*.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where you do this great performance without really having any—, not because

there are sculptural objects or collages involved, particularly, but because at Mountain View Cemetery and Mausoleum—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —which was just this incredible building, that I don't—I feel like virtually no one in the audience had been to—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —prior to your performance.

MARNIE WEBER: It is so beautiful.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Even though it's in L.A.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, my studio is not far from there. And so, I was working with Emi Fontana and West of Rome. And she said, where would you like to do a show? And I said, well, they've got this defunct gallery in the mausoleum. It's really beautiful. I'd love to have a show of collages. And she said, well, why not a performance right there in the mausoleum? And I said, you think they would allow that? Because this was not Hollywood Forever. This is a family-run old-time mausoleum, not hipster at all.

And so, she said, well, I'll ask them. And so, she went to a meeting with the family. And they said, sure, we just want people to come here and appreciate the building. [And so, we rented—it felt like old days of Party Boys. we rented a stage, rented a big projection. -MW] I made—had made a movie that was—had the Spirit Girls as spirits in the graveyard looking back, but I had a new character. And the new—I wanted to do it like a silent movie, because I wanted it to be historical of the period of the graveyard, which was built in the—the mausoleum was built in the '20s.

So, I thought of sort of a silent era film star, because there was a lot of silent film stars buried in Mountain View Cemetery. And so then I started doing research on the history of the cemetery. And I thought, well, there's so many fascinating dead people here. It would be great to have the guides walk people through the graveyard. So I got the grave—I got some actors and friends dressed up as gravediggers to lead the groups of the audience through the graveyard, telling some of the stories of who was buried there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That was very creepy, by the way.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh, good. I wonder who your guide was. Do you know?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know.

MARNIE WEBER: Oh.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But walking through the graveyard at night—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —under these circumstances.

MARNIE WEBER: And then I had monsters popping up just out behind the gravestones, and stuff. And so that was, one whole aspect of the evening. And then, Spirit Girls got together. And then we rode in a convertible Cadillac, which was, you know, reminded me of my youth, with the Party Boys, because we had a convertible Cadillac. And we arrived at the mausoleum. We'd get out of, in, you know, full regalia, Spirit Girls dresses, Spirit Girls masks, Spirit Girls hats, wigs, capes. We had match—you know, each one had a different colored cape, gloves, and wigs, because the Spirit Girls to me always seemed very repressed and, like—you know, there was that transition in the '70s where women were coming into women's liberation, and they're sort of a throwback for—'60—and the '60—this—the little bit of, you know, you'd have like my parents, who were raised by Victorian—in the Victorian era, practically, myself, a product of the '70s and the whole, you know, drug-crazed era. And then, but everyone would be all living together. So I kind of wanted to mix them all up in these Spirit Girls.

So that's why they come off as sort of demure, and—but then at the same time, they're rockers. So then, we go into the mausoleum. And everybody comes in. And we did the performances. You know, the Spirit Girls songs, projection. I showed the new—the recent film, *The Eternal Heart*, which tells a story of this silent era star who lives with her father, her overbearing father, and she has a nervous breakdown and summons all of these monsters from within her heart. And they gather around her bed and they save her. And then they parade off through the landscape.

And I didn't know it at the time, but like as films and dreams reveal later, they really correspond to aspects in your life. And I had, maybe a year-and-a-half previously, I had had a really bad blood infection. I was in intensive care with septicemia, and I almost died from bad sushi.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: And—I went septic, and my blood pressure just dropped down. And at one point, I was lying in the bed, and there was about 15 people working around me, trying to save me and to pump up my blood pressure and doing all—you know, I had—and I had a catheter of antibiotics into my heart, which was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Good lord.

MARNIE WEBER: —because they want to pump it fastest through the body, so you don't lose your limbs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God.

MARNIE WEBER: And the wonderful doctor, he is so good.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where were you?

MARNIE WEBER: At Huntington. And you know, he kept coming around and checking on me. And anyway, thank God they were able to kill off the bacteria and I was able to keep all my body parts, but I was in intensive care for five days. And then I had a—IV drip, for 10 more days. So then, when I was watching the movie, completely unbeknownst to me, I'm seeing, oh, my God, there's—it's the scene I was in at the hospital. All these characters around me, trying to save my life. And then in the movie, they carve this heart of blood on my chest.

And then I was like, oh, my God, that's what it was about. And so, my subconscious was trying to get it out, or come to terms with it. So that's why I think movie making's so fascinating, because it is just like your subconscious. It's the place where your subconscious can really roam freely and express what it needs to express.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But curiously, I mean, such—it's such a complicated medium in which to work.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I wouldn't necessarily think that. I could see someone saying that about writing —

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —where you just have a pen and a piece of paper, or music.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But film, don't you have to, sort of, really plot this all out fairly carefully before you start?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, so you wouldn't think there would be any surprises, you know. I plot everything out. You know, I do storyboards, I do planning, I do everything, but maybe when I'm in the moment of creation I don't think what it means, because if you do that, then you get so caught up. You get frozen. So I think figuring out afterwards is a better time for figuring out what it means.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, why did you disband the Spirit Girls at that point?

MARNIE WEBER: I think I just wanted something new to move on to. And I was getting to be so well known for the Spirit Girls, that that was really beginning to define me as an artist. And so, I wanted to do something differently. And it was also very difficult to get all the rehearsals together. And I always wanted to pay people for their time. And so, it was an expensive proposition when we played.

And so, I thought I want to just go back to making noise music as a collaboration with other people. I want to start making my own characters that can roam freely through the world. And that was when I wanted to start getting into witches.

And I don't think there was a movie—okay, yeah, so *Eternal Heart* then—could I just check my—I don't think there was a movie between *Eternal Heart* and the witches. No, that was—yeah, there was definitely, there was—there was, no, the—it went straight from the *Eternal Heart* into the witches.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, just to backtrack one little bit, I saw *Western Song* and the Spirit Girls at Rosamund Felsen. No, I didn't.

MARNIE WEBER: It had—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I saw Spirit Girls at Rosamund Felsen.

MARNIE WEBER: —right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, when I reviewed *Western Song*, it was at Patrick Painter.

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What led you to go from Rosamund Felsen to Patrick Painter, following many other artists who left Rosamund Felsen—

MARNIE WEBER: I know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —to go to Patrick Painter?

MARNIE WEBER: I think part of it is, I wanted to be with my friends in that group. Mike was still, and Jim were still at Patrick's. And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So they'd already gone over.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, they'd already gone over.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw—

MARNIE WEBER: So over there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —and Paul McCarthy had all gone to Patrick Painter?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and I believe—and also, John Miller. I'm trying to think if there was any women over there that I was following as well. I mean, Won Ju Lim, I liked her work. So when he was doing all the international art fairs, and at the time, art fairs were—well, they still are very important. And I thought, in order to get more well-known, I needed to do the international art fairs. And Rosamund wasn't doing them. So, you know, Patrick was doing all the big ones—Basel. And they were—this was 2000 up to 2010, it was—I think art fairs were becoming really, really popular and important, so to me, that seemed like the logical decision.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now do Patrick Painter buy—put you on a stipend, or buy your work?

MARNIE WEBER: No, no. He just stored it, yeah. No, he never—I don't think he ever—oh, he bought a piece from Rosamund when I was at Rosamund. He bought a bear and then gave it to Mike, but he never actually bought a piece or—you know, he stored it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did he do editions of your work?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, he did an edition of photos of *Western Song* stills.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because I—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, because I'm still on some sort of website for those stills, but I don't have any work with him anymore—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So here we are, just to clarify that, so you're—you start to be interested in the witches. And how does it manifest with the witches between 2010 and 2000 and—where we are now, 2016?

MARNIE WEBER: The monsters came out in the *Eternal Heart*. And then, I thought they needed a commander of sorts. And I thought a witch would be the perfect leader for the monsters, because I didn't think that I wanted to stick with that silent movie star forever, that was—that she just wasn't a character that I wanted to keep playing. It wasn't that interesting. So I thought—I want to be an old witch.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MARNIE WEBER: And explore the mother-daughter relationship. And Colette, at this time, was really becoming—was very serious about acting. And so, I did what was the introduction, called *Night of Forevermore*, where Colette plays the young witch and I'm the old witch. And I created a giant tableau vivant at Human Resources

for the one night of shooting. And I thought to myself, I want to make a feature film, but I don't have the money. And I'll create this 15-minute piece that's sort of like a *Wizard of Oz*, where she's the black and white part. And then you go into Oz. She's on the farm in black and white. And then you go into Oz, except I didn't want it to be black and white, because it was so colorful. So I thought, well, I'll go—when she goes to the farm, I'll make the farm black and white, and do it kind of a reverse *Wizard of Oz*.

I ended up—the whole movie's in color. But, the idea is still there. So the tableau vivant is, you meet all the characters. They're all paused, they're frozen. The windmill starts spinning. [Baby Muthra, the old witch starts riding off on the devil, and all—and then, the young witch is with her back to the camera, with a cape on. -MW] And then, all the monsters and characters you will see, when you get to the farm.

So then, that was three years ago. Time goes by. Still no funding. Still no grants. Applied for every grant in the book. And then Jim's mom passed away and left us some money. So I thought, well, okay, now I'm going to make the feature. So—and then Jack—I had made all the monsters for Jack Black. And I thought, well, okay, I've got the 20 monsters. I've got the introduction. Now I've got the money. I'm going to do it, because I wanted to do a ritual scene à la Tarkovsky or some of the European directors. *Holy Mountain*, Jodorowski. I thought, a woman needs to do a ritual scene in a movie.

So, I had the beginning of the movie. I had the ending of the movie, it's a ritual scene, which I knew I would shoot first. And I just had to fill in everything in between. And then I thought, this time, I want to use actual dialogue. I had never written a script before. I dragged my feet. I procrastinated. I thought of a million things I could do, a million costumes I made, a million props I made, sets I made, without actually writing the freaking script. So then—and I made this, you know, and I had scenes. And so then, Colette said—and Colette says to me, "How am I ever going to get into character without a script? You got to write a script." So I go, "Okay."

So then, I finally sit down to write the script. And I get called into jury duty. So then, it was this crazy thing, where I'm in the hallway, in jury duty. And of course, I get pulled onto a jury. I'm outside the courthouse writing the script. And—you know, just like the worst circumstances for writing your first script. So then—but I managed to pull it off, thank God. And we shot, March—it'll be a year ago January, up at Zorthian Ranch, we shot the ritual scene. All the—I got a—I have been teaching film at Otis. Oh, no, I was teaching performance at Otis. I was teaching film at CalArts. So I got any film students or art students who wanted to be part of the ritual scene.

There was 21 monsters. There was a huge crew, because I needed a big camera. And I knew we were going to shoot from above, , you know, Busby Berkeley-style. I had a friend who was a cinematographer. He hired the people. I had to just go full Hollywood with this ritual scene. And the cinematographer said, don't worry, we're not going to over—top-load the budget. Well, sure enough, we top-loaded the budget. And the ritual scene was, , so expensive.

So then, I had a lot less to work with after that. So I said, okay, we're just going to shoot on 16 mm. We can't afford all these guys, and the grips, and all that, and the truck, and so we said, okay, well, we'll get a video camera and 16 mm camera. And so, then—and then I said, okay, well, we'll—she'll find a Super 8 camera. We can throw in Super 8, too. So now it's got—and it's got a drone, a GoPro on a drone. So I was very happy, because I've got all these formats. And the script—it's a dark comedy. It's, you know, it's very funny and tragic.

And so, I wanted to explore my mother-daughter relationship. I wanted to explore, you know, Colette's mother-daughter relationship. I wanted to talk about witches throughout history, because I'm always very much interested in American history and the women's role in American history, because I had done all that study on spiritualism. And from, you know, the first turn of the century. And then I thought, well, now, the next logical step is to study witches, American witches. So I did a lot of research into American witches. And I realized that they were us, they were the artists, they were the, you know, the herbalists, the intellectuals. They were the ones who were being killed.

So then it became closer to home. And then there's the whole sexual assault against women that was a guise for witchdom. I didn't quite realize it, but a lot of the reason why women were pointed at as witches was so they could be sexually assaulted. You know, the more stuff that you read is more revealing. So I thought that was a very interesting thing. And then, but—and so, then for the mother to have a role of this huge coven, with all these monsters and all these existentially lost creatures, which goes back to my other existentially, you know, my Theater of the Absurd early days, when I was interested in writing those plays, they'd all be living up at this ranch, the Zorthian Ranch, and we'd shoot up there. Thank God they let me. They're very nice people up there.

And so, the characters just sort of were born from the tableau vivant. Colette plays the young witch. I play who—kind of like a characterization of my mother, witch like a caricature, really on my mother's very worst day, that's who I'm playing. Like, just on her most horrible, worst day.

And it's also good, because you've got the OCD situation with the hoarding going on up there, because there's a lot of hoarding goes on. And so, Baba, Baba Muthra, the main character, my character, is a hoarder. She's

alcoholic. She's crazy. Those weren't things my mother was, but she's OCD. She's very controlling. And she wants her daughter to take charge of the

farm. The daughter, of course, doesn't. So the mother has to trick her into doing this. So, it's a really interesting relationship, because the daughter becomes the responsible one. And in many ways, it kind of reflects our current relationship. Colette tends to be more conservative and tends to—and I tend to be more of the crazy one. And so, it's a kind of interesting reflection.

And so then, all of my films, you know, are about empowerment. And I thought, well, at least this time, I'm not empowered. I'm, just this old witch, who rides off on the stag. And she's crazy and alcoholic and, you know, I didn't get empowered this time. But then I realized the old witch dumps all of her crap onto the daughter. The daughter has to deal with all the crap. So maybe she's actually empowered by just leaving.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or the daughter gets empowered by the responsibility.

MARNIE WEBER: Right, yeah. So she takes on this whole burden. And then, she gets empowered by running away, basically. So, it was interesting. That was kind of a revealing moment. Because just when you think, you know, when I think I might have left a theme behind, I realize it's just come back full force, but on a much larger scale—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and another thing happens, just as you're doing all this. I mean, I don't—did Mike die two years ago?

MARNIE WEBER: It was four, actually.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: God, was it really four years ago?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Four years ago, Mike Kelley commits suicide.

MARNIE WEBER: January 30th.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: January 30th, 2012?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I think so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gosh. Kind of seems incredible.

MARNIE WEBER: I know. I know, time really went fast.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But, just about that, I mean, here you have all these films dealing with death, all these films dealing with, you know, other lives, and mourning and loss, and redemption, and all of this being a theme that goes on. And here you have to confront the real thing.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In a way.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I had been—I had confronted—well, I had lost both my parents at this point. And then, of course, we lost the baby. And then a multitude of animals, and then my best friend when I was a teenager. And then, a couple of the girls that I was friends with in high school passed way. So I had—you know, it's always been a big part of my life. All my aunts and uncles. So in a way, I was still a little—feeling a little like an orphan, but I had never known anybody to take their life. And that never even was in my realm of a possibility.

So that was a big eye opener to me. Now, of course, you know, all the warning signs. But unless you've actually known somebody who commits suicide, you just—it's not even on the horizon in your mind, so. That—and that was also hard, because he was Jim's best friend, in many cases, his only friend in some ways, his only friend. And, you know, he lived so close. And we were—and Jim took him to rehab to try to get him to straighten out. And so, it was a really—we felt such a part of it, you know. And then being there that day, when he—you know, we found him. And it was just—it was—it really felt like it was just a family member.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But didn't he include you in the decision making somehow?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, and then we were trustees, which was another surprise to us—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was a surprise?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, big surprise, big, big surprise. And I had some—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But did he—

MARNIE WEBER: We both—Jim had a giant show going on. And I had something, some giant show going on. So that was a surprise.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, that's crazy. I mean—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, but he told you beforehand that he had to do this? Am I right about that, or is that just art world gossip?

MARNIE WEBER: No, no, he never really told us that he was going to—he told Trulee [Hall]. But—and then Trulee told us. And so, we sort of took it seriously, but we didn't know if it was—if that was part of trying to get her back, or—so it wasn't really—it was very unclear. It wasn't like there was a lot of warning.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, it wasn't clear?

MARNIE WEBER: No, not to me, not to Jim. We—yeah, no, we would have been around, you know, around the clock. And then, the other thing is, everyone saw him out the day before, he was in good spirits. The classic suicide, you know, you think you better—you let the guard down. He loved the holidays. We thought, if he just made it through Christmas, he'd be okay. Made it through Christmas and New Year's. He had been—you know, stopped drinking off and on. So yeah, it was unexpected—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did that affect you two, who had known him for—well, you in particular, and how did it affect you emotionally?

MARNIE WEBER: Heartbroken and grief-stricken. And I had had plenty of experiences of grief. So, I know how to get through it. It's funny, because I—watching my mother, and all of her family, whenever there was a loss coming from a big family, there are things you do and you stop, and you plan and you—Jim and I play Scrabble whenever somebody dies. It's a weird thing. We don't watch TV. We play Scrabble. So we played Scrabble. And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Does it take your mind off it?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, yeah, it's a funny weird ritual when somebody dies, we play Scrabble. And so, yeah. So, you know, it's like—it gives your brain rituals to make it through the periods, and the time. At the time I was also doing my day—my diary project, where I did a collage a day. So, that was interesting. That was—because then I had to confront those particular days, you know, the day of death, and the week after, and then it's sort of like looking at the things visually every day.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What came out?

MARNIE WEBER: The day that I—that he was found, I came out with this weird collage, it just popped out. The spirit goes looking into a window, and the whole—the window's on fire. And then, that one was called *Turns Out That Was Goodbye*, because I hate that feeling when you don't know it's the last time you're seeing somebody. You know, it's just a terrible feeling. And you think, oh, you know, I didn't know that was the last time. So, I think I was kind of obsessing over the last time—so.

But, I don't know. And then at the thing, John Waters, he gave a beautiful talk at the memorial that was not supposed to be a memorial, because Mike didn't want a memorial. But—it was the wake, or party. And he said, and John Waters said, you have to let people do what they want to do. And you—you know, who are you to try to stop somebody? It was really an eye opener. It was such a—I had never heard that theory on suicide before. And so, it kind of was comforting. Actually, it was very comforting, in fact, to hear that, because you—with any death, there's always guilt involved, no matter—you know, it's a—you know, my 88-year-old mother, it doesn't matter. It's just part of it. Makes you feel like you're in control somehow.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, also, the guilt does.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. Absolutely. I think guilt makes you feel like you're in control of something.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so then, on top of this career that suddenly is going forth for you and for Jim in a big way, Jim is now at Blum and Poe, big gallery. You know, you're coming—your career's taking off as well. You now have to deal with being the trustees of the Mike Kelley estate.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which is kind of a huge responsibility, even if you were married to him. You know, it's a huge responsibility.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. And then, well, prior to that, he—we had that giant 5,000-square-foot studio with the 25 employees.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, I didn't know about that. So, tell me about that.

MARNIE WEBER: Okay. That was during—before the big crash in 2008. There was—there were people in the art world who were making a lot of work. All these art fairs. We both had to make a tremendous amount of work for a lot of art fairs. So, we had a huge—we thought, okay, well, we'll try the huge crew thing with the giant studio. So pretty much anybody who needed a job got a job. There was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many people worked with you?

MARNIE WEBER: —25. Not all full-time, but a lot of them were full-time, a lot of them are part-time. And it was just horrendous. It was horrible. It was—I mean, there was fun times, but it was really the worst professional situation I had ever been in, just, you know, the—all the workman's comp, the insurance. It just—the problems, the money. You know, it's weird, because when you start having a million employees, it's—you actually tend to start losing money. So—and then juggling all of these different projects. And Jim was just like a crazy person, like a zombie. And we have a—we were just, you know, I was like—I didn't—I wanted to marry an artist. I didn't want to marry a business, you know? I would have never married a businessman, or—you know. And he's, like, I wanted to be an artist, too.

So we finally were able to downsize. We called all the employees and we just let everybody go across the board. It was terrible. You know, tears, and—but it seemed to me like the most democratic way of doing it, because you—and so Jim started to grow a beard. He turned in—he said, I'm just going to be an artist, you know. No—and he turned in his key. He got a small storefront in Altadena. And that was the day before Mike died.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: Well—I know. So we—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: —we finally felt like we were free of this huge, you know, business. And then, so needless to say, the beard comes off. And Jim's like, well, maybe, you know, maybe in 10 years. So, everything kind of transitioned. And then, all about Mike for about a year. It was really, you know, it was a lot of decision making, and a lot of making sure that he was taken care of, you know, his legacy was taken care of, because it was—it's such an important legacy.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, did you have—remember the—what came up when I talked to you guys. Well, not—yeah, probably not that long after. You know, the big—or maybe it was actually—anyway, the issue of the family, that you know, Mike never left anything to his family.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wasn't that hard for you guys to be put in the middle of that?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. His—the hard part was, his family was so understanding. And they were like, okay, well, can we just have like the duck collection? It was heartbreaking, heartbreaking.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MARNIE WEBER: The carved duck collection. And the gun that belonged to the father. It was, in many ways, if they had, you know, been angry, you know, it—but they were just so—you know, George, his brother, was so sweet. And his wife, and, you know, it's always harder—it's always harder when you have—when—I mean, it's not—I don't know, harder is not the right word, but it made it harder because they were so nice. And I just felt so bad. And Jim was, like, can't I just give them some of my art? And—no, no, you can't—so.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You won't know the difference?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. Yeah, they won't know the difference.

[They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is—yeah, this is something Mike did. You've never seen it before, right?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. Yeah, so that felt really bad, but you know, and Mike was always too busy, and George said, well, we came out to California to see him, but he had that giant show. And he was too—and I just—it just—it was heartbreaking. It was just awful. And it really made me realize, you know, no matter, family is the most important. Maybe you don't have a lot in common, but they love you. It doesn't matter. So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But Mike couldn't feel that for some reason?

MARNIE WEBER: No, he couldn't feel that. And it was very sad. So yeah, that was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, it must have really disrupted your life for a while?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Both of you?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, but we had those—we still had shows and commitments. But it really was overwhelming.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you could show up for those?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, we had to continue on with our shows. But there was meetings, a lot of meetings. But then, I was able to get out of it, because it switched over to the foundation. So I'm no longer involved. Jim's still on the foundation, but I don't have to be involved anymore. And I think they are in a good place. I think that, you know, they are starting to give out grants. And so, I think it's in a good place.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, well, just the—but just the whole personal turmoil fascinates me.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you think—did your work—was your work in any way changed by that experience or affected by that experience?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I felt like I wanted to carry the torch. I think part of the reason making that feature film was because I was just, like, I'm going to just keep doing really weird crap and not, you know, and not giving in to making nice objects for people. So that's—because, especially, you see so much decorative work out there, that is not—because Mike was, you know, such a spearhead of conceptual work. Character-driven work. And you know, it was—we don't—you can't even—I can't even begin to say his—he was just one of those people that, you know, inspired me and everyone, because he was so uncompromising. So it made me just not want to give up, and not—so I think that's what made me make that movie originally.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, some of his filmic work, you know—is it called *Day is Done*?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, *Day is Done*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, crazy, crazy the amount of stuff that's going on in that—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that piece, with film and video. And I—and difficult.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And difficult. So, because there isn't, you know, I mean, of course, now people do buy film installations, museums and—

MARNIE WEBER: That's true.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —in a way that they—that's become more, you know, more feasible, anyway.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Would you expect your film to—is your film going to be a "one-of" kind of thing? Is it a unique piece? Will it be—

MARNIE WEBER: No, I'm going to—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —will it be shown like a regular film that has multiple iterations in multiple places?

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah, I would like to get some distribution. I—in the past, I've sold my films as editions, but this one won't be. This one is just—I'm going to go out there to everybody. So in terms of things I can sell, good question. But I know it's always this thing. Yeah, I can't really think of what I could sell from this whole witch era, because the costumes aren't necessarily that marketable either, but, you know, I can still make collages, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the market's changed a lot—

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —since you started, in terms of the market being able to absorb photographic film stills—

MARNIE WEBER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —taken from movies.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Prop, all of that's taken from movies.

MARNIE WEBER: [...- MW]And, actually, the film is now the springboard for my next show, which will be the final scene, she runs out of the frame and across into a beautiful pagan chapel. So I'm making a pagan chapel.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right.

MARNIE WEBER: Yeah. So I thought to me—myself, where would she go? And then, she would head to the light. And perhaps you would run into something out in nature, where the druids and the pagans were doing—having a ritual scene. So that's what I'm working on with the stained glass. So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And talk about that, because that's going to be at Sarah Gavlak Gallery.

MARNIE WEBER: In September, September 23rd, yeah. So I'm making weeping willows out of stained glass remnants. I wanted it to be character-driven pieces, again, where perhaps all the witches got together and made these trees out of crap that they found on the ranch, because the interesting thing about the Zorthian Ranch, when you look at the scenes from above with the drone, the stuff is organized into piles. There's piles of wood. There's piles of toilets. There's piles of metal. There's—so, I love the idea that you organize stuff in piles, and make something beautiful out of it. So, that is when I started finding all of these stained glass remnants. And I thought, well, you know, actually, a group of witches probably would make a bunch of weeping willows out of stained glass.

So, I want to continue on. And then perhaps Baba Muthra will be the character who makes the collages, you know. Because when you make collages that are character driven, you can change styles according to whoever you think you are when you're making them. There's not that many people who do that.

[END OF INTERVIEW]