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Oral history interview with Ed Bereal, 2016
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Ed Bereal on 2016 February 13. The interview took place at Warren Blakely's home in Los Angeles, California, and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Ed Bereal 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 Ed Bereal at his friend's home. That friend's name is Warren Blakely, in Baldwin Hills, and that's in California near Los Angeles, on February 13th, 2016 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one. And we're here at Mr. Blakely's house, because Ed Bereal and Warren Blakely grew up together—

ED BEREAL: Absolutely.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —in Riverside. They've known each other since the age of four. I'm just going to put this here. Can you—here. You sit down. You sit down there. I'm going to wrap this around you, and we'll do it like that.

MR. BEREAL: That works.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let me see. The age of four, growing up in Riverside. I can't even imagine what Riverside, California was like. What year were you born?

MR. BEREAL: 1937.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 1937. What day?

MR. BEREAL: July 4th.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You were born—literally born on the fourth of July? That's so funny given how political your work turned out.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. [Laughs.] It wasn't planned. It just happened, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Huh. So, in 1934—

MR. BEREAL: 1937.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —1937. Excuse me. What was it like growing up in Riverside, California?

MR. BEREAL: It might have been—and again, children always—they don't know they're poor. They don't know that maybe they're deprived, unless it's a survival thing. I'm giving that kind of an opener to say, I thought it was perfect. Riverside was a very interesting place, and most of the people from there will tell you, it was kind of outside of—it felt like it was—and certainly as we got older, it felt like it was outside of the rest of the country, and we didn't have to deal with as much of what the country was going through at the time. All my childhood was kind of wrapped around—certainly initially—the Second World War, and I was really into *Life* magazine and all those pictures of war, because I didn't really understand it. Not fully, and the reality of it, but I sure liked all the machines it showed, and I really liked the Germans a lot.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what were your parents—well, first—what are the names of your parents?

MR. BEREAL: I'm Edmond Jr. My father was Edmond—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: E-D-M-U-N-D?

MR. BEREAL: —yeah. He spells it with an 'o' sometimes, so so do I. O-N-D.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: O-N-D? E-D-M-O-N-D?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Edmond.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. It can go several ways. Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Edmond Bereal.

MR. BEREAL: And because he was senior, I did whatever he did, right? With the name.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, so he was Edmond Bereal Senior, and you're Edmond Bereal Junior.

MR. BEREAL: Junior.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: He comes from Texas, and a large family.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What part of Texas?

MR. BEREAL: In and around Waco.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Oh—[laughs]—right?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. And was it you that mentioned Waco the other day?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I didn't, but—

MR. BEREAL: Oh, okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —it's always fun to talk about Waco.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, and his father was kind of—I was affected a great deal by both grandfathers, and his father was like this magic guy. He had seven sons. He taught each one how to play a stringed instrument, and they made money traveling around as a washboard family band.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Amazing.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. It was far out. But he could do everything. He was a tremendous—he was like—my life and the period was—I was getting the latter part of frontiers people, okay? And he was really that. He could do almost anything. He could cook. He was a carpenter. He'd plumb houses. He'd, you know, could do anything to keep his house and his family going and alive.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, how did your father get from Waco to Riverside?

MR. BEREAL: Well, they, at one point—I think it was in the—it was certainly before I was born—probably the latter part of the '20s. Maybe the early part of the '30s. They decided to come to California.

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

MR. BEREAL: And the whole family got up and moved, and there are great stories about the family by the way, because they were a very powerful bunch of folks. And they were not entirely all black, with—a heavy streak of Mexican. My last name is really Villarreal. V-I-L-L-A-R-R-E-A-L.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: And that blood—and a lot of Indian, and that blood in there was a hell of a mixture, and we got, again, family stories that talk about that. But, anyway, they came to California, and because they were a family band, they caught the eye and ear of some people in radio. And they were doing radio shots and things and doing entertaining a little bit, and then they were doing whatever else they needed to supplement their income.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that's how your father got out here?

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, what was your mother's name?

MR. BEREAL: My mother's name was Allen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was her first name?

MR. BEREAL: Juanita Allen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Juanita Allen.

MR. BEREAL: Right. My father came from grassroots people. My mother came from kind of middle class, black, upward mobile folks. And that union was very interesting.

[They laugh.]

They met on a soundstage in Hollywood.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my goodness.

MR. BEREAL: She was singing—my whole family—both sides—is all about music. She was singing in a set for soundtracks—

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

MR. BEREAL: —for slave movies.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my goodness.

MR. BEREAL: You know, Steven Foster songs. "Old Black Joe." All that shit, you know. So they hooked up, and you know, I was the firstborn, and everybody moved to Riverside. At least they did.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: From Hollywood?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that was a long way from the entertainment industry. What did they do when they got to Riverside?

MR. BEREAL: Well, my father did—because of my mother's father—got him a job in a great, big place, a historic place called the Mission Inn.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I know.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: And he worked there in—like a janitor, a maintenance person in the Mission Inn, was the first thing. The first job he got through his father-in-law, my grandfather, and on my mother's side.

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

MR. BEREAL: Grandfather on my mother's side was a very well-read, very intelligent thinker. Far ahead of his time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hmm. That was Juanita's father?

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was his name?

MR. BEREAL: John Allen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: J.W., we called him. I think it was Windsor, was his middle name.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And he was also black?

MR. BEREAL: Yes, but he was like, and even looked like—he was like a Paul Robeson, and he kind of looked that way, and he was talking and reading a lot about things that most people at that time didn't even—hadn't even heard of.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when you were growing up, you had access to this grandfather in particular, because you were in Riverside, and he was as well?

MR. BEREAL: Right. But he—I wasn't attracted to him as much, because he was—as a child, he was so smart, and he was a little—and he wasn't distant—I just didn't gravitate to him.

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

MR. BEREAL: I didn't realize who he was until too late, and he had passed. But when I really wanted access to him, but it was too late.

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

MR. BEREAL: My other grandfather—he was around for a while, and because he was a hunter, a heavy drinker—he didn't get drunk, he just drank—and musician, every Sunday we'd drive from Riverside to L.A. to his home. The other brothers—my father's brothers—would all come in. Each one would grab an instrument, and they would have these Tex-Mex jam sessions.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How amazing.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, and then they kept the door open, and because my grandfather was a great cook—he'd cook these huge dinners—and people in the neighborhood would just, they'd hear the music, and they'd come stand in the front yard. And he'd say, "Well, come on in, and grab a bite to eat." You know, and they'd be playing, and people would eat, and it would just go on and on, and then other musicians maybe from the neighborhood would hear it. They'd grab their little guitars, banjos, and whatever. They'd come over, and it would turn into this whole thing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you grew up in this environment of entertainers?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Even though your father wasn't really doing it anymore. He would still do it when he went back to visit his father?

MR. BEREAL: Right. Now, but he continued it because he—in and around San Bernardino, Riverside, Fontana, and then there was another place up in—he'd go as far as Beaumont, Banning, Idyllwild—oh! San Bernardino Mountains—he would go with various groups. He even played with Brubeck. Dave Brubeck.

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

MR. BEREAL: And because of his—the period that they hit Los Angeles in, there was a renaissance along Central Avenue in Los Angeles. Do you know anything about that?

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

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Where musicians around the country—black musicians—would come, and they would all kind of meet on Central Avenue at the various clubs and everybody—well, he was a part of that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, he was?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So even though he was working this job at the Mission Inn, he carried on his music career?

MR. BEREAL: Absolutely. And then a lot of them would come to our house.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: So I would be at the house, when Count Basie would come in, or Billy Eckstine would come in, or, you know, somebody that was—Jack McVeigh. Various people that would—Curtis Counce. Oh, I can't remember them all off the top, but—and then, they'd have Saturday and Sunday jams at our house, too.

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

MR. BEREAL: So—and I think, from what I gathered from my father and mother, I think Count Basie kind of had a real—he really liked my mom a lot.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: He was cool. My father was dangerous, and he wouldn't abuse anything, but he kind of had a heartthrob thing for her, and so he'd come, but they'd all sit and talk. And then my mom had gone to—mom and dad had gone someplace where Count was playing, and he gave them a whole big time, and it was really great. Very important person who you don't hear about a lot was a guy by the name of Meade Lux Lewis. Do you know that name?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No. L-E-W?

MR. BEREAL: I think it's L-E-A-D-E. It might be.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, M-E-A-D.

MR. BEREAL: Oh, I'm sorry. M-E-A-D-E.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yep.

MR. BEREAL: I think.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. And then Lux Lewis? LE?

MR. BEREAL: Lux. L-U-X Lewis.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. L-U?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And Lewis. L-U.

MR. BEREAL: You can check him out, because he's—in music circles.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: He was like—I was knocked out by him, because there was a song called "Mr. Five By Five." Five feet tall and five feet wide.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: And that's who Meade Lux Lewis was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Great.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. But the remarkable thing, I can remember being a kid sitting right by the piano. He was a piano player, and he was acknowledged as the father of boogie woogie.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. Wow.

MR. BEREAL: And what was so incredible were his hands.

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

MR. BEREAL: Because he didn't have very long fingers, but he had wide palms, and he could reach like almost two octaves on the piano. But he could play faster than anybody else in the world. Anyway, he'd come, and anytime he'd come in, everybody would turn up. My father played the bass at that point in time, and my mother played the piano. Only she came out of a classical background.

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

MR. BEREAL: So she was a contralto, and she sang, you know, she was into Handel and Bach and that kind of thing. And also musicals and black spirituals. So the house was music.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you have any siblings?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. I got a brother and a sister.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what are their names?

MR. BEREAL: Allan.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Allan?

MR. BEREAL: A-L-L-A-N.

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

MR. BEREAL: Allan Frederick.

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

MR. BEREAL: And Cecile Juanita.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right. And you're the eldest?

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you're growing up in this house. Did you have a house in Riverside, or an apartment?

MR. BEREAL: No. House. We lived—my father was a breadwinner. And from his father, we had rules in our house that particularly come from the Bereal side of the family. They were very strict. There were certain things you didn't do, and there were certain things you did do. A man is responsible for his family. And to make sure that everybody's fed, clothed, and housed. And so—and that goes back generations. I come from very proud people. Especially being in Texas and the racism and all of that. My folks were pretty—they were very exceptional, because they believed in certain things. I mean, you could get killed in my family if you got in a real fight with a sibling. That didn't happen.

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

MR. BEREAL: My father almost took me out because I disrespected my mother once. I did it in an anger situation, and all of a sudden, my heart jumped, because that is a law, and you couldn't—my old man would kill me, you know? So, it was those kinds of things, but what I'm saying is—taking care of family. You work every day. You make sure everybody is cool. So we always had a house.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hmm. [Affirmative.] So, you grew up in a neighborhood in a house, and were there any other blacks or African Americans in that neighborhood, or was it all white?

MR. BEREAL: No. What was really interesting—and that's why Riverside was very kind of exceptional—boy, I love this, because there are some things I'm going to tell you that are really, really kind of a part of my life that maybe someone should document.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We're documenting them now.

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Yes. I know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: Riverside was a triad. It was three races. White, black, brown. And because of the segregation—but it was soft segregation. Hard if you crossed the line, but there weren't people there always reinforcing certain things. But blacks and browns were forced together in a barrio ghetto. So my next door neighbor on one side would be Mexican, and my friend Warren lived across the street, with his family. Huge family. Riverside, on the black side, was founded by six families. And one of those six families was mine, my mother's. Okay? But because we were so close, black and brown, there were some real interesting exchanges that would go on, but it was a very, very close and a very sympathetic relationship between browns and blacks. Whites were on the outside, and I didn't see white people in Riverside until I went to high school.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: No. Junior high school. I'm sorry. Junior high school, because it was segregated, so we all went to the same school—blacks and browns. Whites went on the other side of town, but we only had one high school, so everybody ended up going there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where did you go to elementary school? Do you remember?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Irving. Irving School. I thought there was another name. Anyways, Irving School.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, where did you go to high school?

MR. BEREAL: I went to junior high school at University Heights Junior High School.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: University High?

MR. BEREAL: Heights.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: University Heights.

MR. BEREAL: Junior High School, and then I went to Polytechnical High School. Riverside Polytechnical High School.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry. One more time.

MR. BEREAL: Riverside Polytechnical High School.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's where everybody came together.

MR. BEREAL: Everybody. Yeah. We had four junior high schools, and two of those were kind of in the ghetto, and the other two were on the other side of town.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, by the time you get to Riverside Polytechnic High School, it's—'47, plus—

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —so it'd be about 1950, '51, correct?

MR. BEREAL: About right there, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So it's after the war?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What change did you see in that area after the war? People always talk about how Los Angeles essentially became Los Angeles in many ways after the war, with so many people moving here for the aerospace industry.

MR. BEREAL: Riverside, as I said—and I'll probably come back to this theme—Riverside was not typical of any place. Riverside was not affected so much by the end of the war. We didn't really notice it. Riverside was affected by the fact that March Air Force Base was starting to grow during the war, and so we had people coming from around the country. We never saw anybody from New York or from Chicago, or any place like that. We saw people, maybe from Arizona.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: You know, or certainly from Texas. It was all that lower—and we'd maybe get somebody in from Louisiana, but with the Air Force base, particularly with black Air Force guys, they'd come to town, and these guys were like spacemen to us. I'm dressing pretty much the way I dressed as a kid, and everybody else like me. White shirt and a pair of bib overalls, because you never knew what you had to do.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: You know? These guys showed up in Ivy League suits, little skinny-brim hats, button-down collars, and Italian shoes. Man, we looked at those guys and went, goddamn, who is that? You know? And it was a whole 'nother cultural thing that really made a big difference in Riverside. Riverside is almost noted for—and, in fact, I'm not the first one to say it—if it hadn't been for March Air Force Base, Riverside would have gotten really inbred. Everybody was everybody's cousin.

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

MR. BEREAL: Okay? It was kind of insular, you know. But it kind of—they saved a lot of us from giving birth to a lot of flathead kids.

[They laugh.]

Because it was heavy. I mean, you couldn't—a lot of the airmen had to find out, if you like hit on some girl, and she wasn't happy with it and you got a little out of hand, everybody standing around was a cousin, or a brother, or a sister, or something, you know. You could not get out of that bloodline. It was starting to get very, very dangerous, right?

[They laugh.]

So yeah, the big thing with the war was, I think, the incoming soldiers, and we had a couple of other installation—military installations.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And people also, after—the thing about the Second World War, is that people stayed in Los Angeles—

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —you know, once they got out here.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They thought, "Well. Why not?"

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, the weather is kind of cool.

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

MR. BEREAL: Riverside was—I don't know what the population was, but it wasn't nearly what the orange tree population was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: It was—that's the way we in high school made a little extra money working in the—I guess, Sunkist Orange owned Riverside.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it was still very agricultural.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, yeah. Big time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Lot of groves and citrus.

MR. BEREAL: Right. Right. Absolutely.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And just beautiful, I'm sure.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You must remember it. It probably looked like those labels, those old labels that you see on fruit boxes.

MR. BEREAL: Absolutely, yeah. Yes. That's exactly what it looked like. Yes. Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So here you are, growing up, and at what point do you have any aptitude in visual art?

MR. BEREAL: Always.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Always?

MR. BEREAL: Always. I dropped out of my momma and reached over for a pencil.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: It's true!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You dropped out of your momma, and reached over for a pencil? [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: My father had some unusual pencil, it was really fat. And it had an Indian head on it.

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

MR. BEREAL: And he said, "I'll give you this pencil one of these days, you do your work, and you can have this pencil." That's all I thought about was that pencil, but I could draw ever since I was born, you know. Yeah. And I always knew I was going to be an artist.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hmm. [Affirmative.] So did you find any classes to take in any of these schools?

MR. BEREAL: Yep. I always had art classes. At junior high school, high school, and then I decided in high school to go to art school.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, did you have any art teachers who were influential in those schools?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what were their names?

MR. BEREAL: I think there was an old guy by the name of Mr. Larson.

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

MR. BEREAL: I think I'm correct. I can remember what he looked like. He was an alcoholic.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: But he taught me a lot about watercolor, which is one of the hardest mediums in the world, by the way, to do it right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And was that in high school or in junior high?

MR. BEREAL: That was—actually, I think that was junior college. I took a couple years of junior college to get a portfolio together.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. Where did you go?

MR. BEREAL: Riverside City College.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. It was right—the reason it's funny to remember is because they almost shared the same campus. They had the high school on top of the hill and the junior college on top of the hill, and we used the same practice football fields and so forth, so it was very interlaced, but I got out of high school, and I—with some friends—and I decided we were going to go to Art Center.

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

MR. BEREAL: And that's when the magic started, you know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were at Riverside City College for—what years do you think you were there?

MR. BEREAL: Well, I graduated the high school in '56.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And so it would have had to have been '57, '58, because I was in art school in the latter part of '58.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so you've gotten your courses together at Riverside City College, and then you took your portfolio to Art Center?

MR. BEREAL: Well, this is where, as I said, the magic starts.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: I was—you know—we had a limited amount of information available to us.

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

MR. BEREAL: But that's the name we heard all the time.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

MR. BEREAL: Art Center School. So we sent for information catalogue on them.

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

MR. BEREAL: I got it, and we looked at all the illustrations, because I was going to be an illustrator. And going, wow, man! This is far out. This is what we want to do. And I had two friends there who wanted to go to art school too, so we were getting our portfolios together at the same time. Two white kids and me, and so as we got them together, we were looking at our portfolios, and I was looking at theirs, and they didn't look so cool. So I said, "Wait a minute. I've got a couple of extra drawings and shit. You know, here. Put this in there and make them look better." And they did. Okay. So we, you know, I got kind of—I thought I was kind of picking them up a little bit. I knew mine was killer, right? So we all submitted our portfolios. They both got accepted, and I didn't. And it broke my heart in a way, because I'm going, "What happened? What was that?" You know, I mean, is my idea of what's good art so skewed that I don't know? You know, and it really was very heavy for me until I realized one thing. And I was very, very naïve in this way. You had to send a photograph with your portfolio, and they shut me down.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: Best thing in the world.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was the best thing?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, god. It was like—if there are gods that could, you know, contribute to your life and help you out, little helpers that get you through shit, they were working that day. I'm brokenhearted, and I'm an arrogant little sucker, because I want what I want. And I wanted to be in the Art Center Schools. And I have to take second best? Are you kidding? Anyway, so I submit to Chouinard Art Institute. The greatest school of its time at the time. And I'm sure you know about it.

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

MR. BEREAL: So I went, walked into Chouinard and walked right in to the illustration classes and all that. At the time—Virginia Dwan. Do you know that name?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sure. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Virginia Dwan had, I guess, some tax money that would help. She was throwing money at Chouinard. Okay. She decided to do a little vanity gallery called Dwan Gallery. And I didn't know all this until later, but she would be bringing Klein.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yves Klein, yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, Yves Klein. Niki de Saint Phalle. Philip Guston. All these people were coming to—I didn't know who the hell they were, at the time anyway. I'm in my illustration classes, and I'm showing off, you now. "Oh, well, wait. Whoa. That's an Ed Bereal right there. Nice."

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: You know? And I was very rebellious when—always, anyway—but, the illustration teacher said, "You know, it'll take at least two days to do a good illustration." I went, "No, it doesn't." I can do that. And I just—I would put my board—you know, sitting on a bench and the board, and you'd just be drawing, you know, and I'd go in front, because I liked to be close. And I'm sitting there with the model up close, but I know everybody behind me can see what I'm doing, so I knock out a killer drawing, and I get up and go and have some coffee, and let them look at what it's supposed to look like.

[They laugh.]

I was such a little asshole—anyway!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who was your teacher there?

MR. BEREAL: Those guys, I don't remember. All I do remember, and I can remember, Bill Moore.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, yeah.

MR. BEREAL: You know about him?

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

MR. BEREAL: You know about him burning—what's-his-name's—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ed Ruscha?

MR. BEREAL: —Ed Ruscha's stuff off the wall?

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

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. And he had a little toadie, I might remember his name in a minute. Anyway, I remember that. Really nice, later on, I got to know Emerson Woelffer really well. And somebody who really contributed to me a lot, Richards Ruben. But I was kicking ass in the illustration area, and I made the fatal, fatal mistake of having to walk down the hallway, and I walked past Bob Irwin's painting class.

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

MR. BEREAL: Now, we're talking about '58, '59, '60, and Abstract Expressionism had jumped all over everybody. Right? And I walked by that door, and I went, "What's that? What are they doing? What's that all about?" And he was talking and saying some stuff, and I'm going, "Whoa. That's interesting." And so I started going—well, all I can do is tell you that my illustration classes—metaphor—my illustration classes felt like I was driving a 1949 Ford.

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

MR. BEREAL: When I went by Bob's classes, he was doing an Indianapolis race car.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's really nice. Indianapolis race car.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He'd love that too.

MR. BEREAL: Well, we just had a beautiful meeting at my opening the other night.

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

MR. BEREAL: We've been talking to each other ever since that class. We've been talking to each other for over 50 years.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You and Robert Irwin?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or Bob Irwin?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: So, I started going in there, and down the road was Richards Ruben's class, and I'm going, "These guys are talking stuff that is completely outside any kind of reality." I called myself a little hustler. I knew how to work the game.

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

MR. BEREAL: Right. And I knew I always could kind of flash to stuff and pick up stuff very quickly and use it to my advantage and so forth. These guys are talking about stuff that was outside my realm of—not understanding, but exposure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, also, you hadn't really known much about fine art?

MR. BEREAL: No, no.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You knew about illustration but not about art history, correct?

MR. BEREAL: No. No.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: None. None. You know, the deepest thing that I saw was Norman Rockwell.

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

MR. BEREAL: You know. And I'm looking over and there's Joe Goode, Ed Ruscha, Llyn Foulkes, and what was the boy's name? Oh, shit. He's dead now. German name. Anyway, we all came—oh, Ron Miyashiro, for sure.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Kienholz? You don't mean Kienholz?

MR. BEREAL: No, no.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ron Miyashiro.

MR. BEREAL: Ron Miyashiro was there. And several other guys had basically done the same thing. You know, Joe, Pat Blackwell. Have you heard that from somebody?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sure. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: And Ed Ruscha. And what's-his-name, who was a photographer? That took a lot of flicks of me and everybody?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Jerry McMillan?

MR. BEREAL: Jerry McMillan. They were all coming out of Oklahoma. And Ed had more of a middle-class background, but the other two were really just like really lower-class white guys. And then Ron was—he was—his family was really highly respected, but Ron was a little street urchin.

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

MR. BEREAL: Ron ran, and he had a little—several brushes with the law, you know. He was the sweetest, softest guy, but he hung out with some pretty heavy dudes. In fact, at Chouinard I thought I was—because I came from a very similar background—the minute I saw Ron Miyashiro—in my head I go, okay, I'm trying to straighten my life up. I'm going to have to fight this guy. I know I'm going to have to fight him. Good thing I didn't.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Fight him?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Why did you want to fight him?

MR. BEREAL: I didn't.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: I didn't.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: But, you know, it's like a couple of dogs in a room.

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

MR. BEREAL: You go, "Uh, oh. He's going to push me," or something, because I could see the street in him.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: Well, he's the sweetest, softest—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: —and he is so good at karate, it would've been a big mistake on my part.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: Really big. Ron is—he's as sweet as he could be. I'm getting ready to go back to New York to see him, because he's very, very physically ill. Anyway, anyway, we're all kind of hanging together. We're learning together. We came from nothing, and starting to pick up something. Bob is orchestrating, and he's dropping

stuff on us. We're starting to see stuff, getting a little bit of education, a little bit of historical information. I'm picking up as much technical stuff as I can, and I will steal your best shit if I can get my hands on it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: I would always—I'd go into a drawing class or a painting class. I'd check out the one who could do the best. Everybody's got their little one-trick-pony, right?

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

MR. BEREAL: I would learn your little one-trick-pony better than you could do it. Okay? And I figured if I had everybody's best little deal, then I would be a bad son of a bitch. I'd really be the guy. So, I'm doing that. Ed is drifting toward design a little bit more, advertising, and that realm. Joe is hanging with Fine Arts. We're getting into Emerson Woelffer. He's getting into us. And Ruben. And McMillan was, I think, he was kind of a painter I think. Certainly he was a photographer, but that was happening. There was a lot of people working it, okay? So what happened? Oh! Virginia, because she was bringing these people out, would have them come over to talk to us at Chouinard, which was absolutely incredible.

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

MR. BEREAL: I mean, being able to deal with—I think it was Guston and Larry Rivers, and it was—who else was there? There was quite a few folks from New York there, and we were listening to it and checking it all out, and we would see their stuff. And there was some dialogue going on at the time, that I know that affected me a great deal, which was, because of Abstract Expressionism, we don't paint pictures. We paint paintings.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You paint paintings, not pictures?

MR. BEREAL: Not pictures.

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

MR. BEREAL: We don't paint pictures of things. We painted paintings that were things. And I'm going, "Wow. That's really interesting." That caught my ear, going, "I'm going to create a thing."

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Would you speak up a little bit for the mic?

MR. BEREAL: Okay.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You know, also, I want to pause, because the interesting thing here is, as looking at your work, you could draw realistically.

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: With great finesse.

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So for you to even think about going in an abstract way, that must have been a challenge for you.

MR. BEREAL: It was not so much. Because, except for recognizable imagery, the issues were exactly the same. Space, composition, color. Getting the color to do what you wanted it to do, as opposed to making it look like what you wanted it to look like, in terms of recognizable imagery. That was—the subject matter did not bother me that much, and it actually started paying off, because at this point—hopefully, we'll talk about the new work—but being able to bring together the ability to tighten down and somewhat represent if you want to, but at the same time have the freedom to allow the paint to be what it can be and do, not hindered by having to look like something that maybe is not what you're interested in, is kind of a—it gave me a lot of freedom and a lot of possibility, because I didn't see those two areas fighting at all.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Interesting.

MR. BEREAL: I was exclusively, though, kind of an Abstract Expressionist, but I got into thing making. I was painting a painting, and it's very far out we're doing this, because Diane Factor just gave me one of my first things back. She returned something. They got rid of their old collection.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Monte Factor's daughter?

MR. BEREAL: Daughter, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: She saved a very important piece. The very first piece.

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

MR. BEREAL: I was in Richards Ruben's class, and we were talking about this same issue. And I was painting one day on this little painting. At that time, I was doing really small pieces. I was just enjoying getting the paint to do something. I wanted some magic happening with the paint, and while I'm painting, I'm thinking, you know, this is—I don't have the obligation to do representational work. I can let this be a thing, an object, an event, you know. And I'm painting on that surface, and I'm going, "Wait a minute. Hold on." Objects don't just have one surface. They probably are, in more than one way or another, three-dimensional. So I found myself starting to paint around the corner of that painting.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: Heavy move. Next painting, I'm going—but it's solely not that. So, I went, let me stretch another canvas. Only the stretcher bars are going to be six inches wide. So I got what was almost a box. I'm painting on the front and around the side, and there was a place called Standard Brands Paints. You could get a lot of paint. Have you ever heard that one before? Yeah. And you could get a lot of paint, and so I started building the paint up so that it was maybe an inch thick going around the corner up on top, and I'm going, "Wow." And Bob used to talk about arbitrariness, because when I first made the move, I went, "Painting on the surface is kind of arbitrary. I can paint on the side." Well, it went even further. I'm painting on a box. Why does it got to be a box? So I cut off the edges, the corners, and I started molding the stretcher bars so that you go from the front and just wind around to the side, so I started getting these little, funny, bag-like shapes.

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

MR. BEREAL: Okay? And I'm going, "Wow. I really like that." Okay. But at that point summer vacation came, and Richards said, "Bring in everything you do during the summer." You know. "Take a little break, but see what you can [bring -EB] in, after you've taken [a break -EB], digest it somewhat and we can talk about it. Come back in with what you've got." Well, I had—in Riverside, went home to Riverside—and you need to know about Buster Jones, which I will tell you about, because he was the other father I had, who really, really, really—he was a magic guy.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was he the father of your friend from the other night?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And were you there when he did his whole thing?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, this man named Buddy Jones did a thing about his father.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you said he was such an important figure.

MR. BEREAL: Oh, man. This man really was heavy. Anyway, I'd go home. And I work as a mechanic for Buster. And he paid me a little extra because he just wanted to make sure I made it good in art school.

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

MR. BEREAL: So, I'm living down the street from Buster—well, no. At that time, when I was in school, I lived down the street from him, up through high school. Then I went away. My folks moved, and so they had—the people across the street had a kind of a little patio with a top, and it was board built up to here and then screen wire all the way around, so it was kind of an inside-outside little place. They let me rent it, and I turned it into a place to sleep and work. Okay? I slept across the street from my mom and dad. I slept there, come over to my mom and dad's, eat, go down to Buster's, put in a day's work, come to my little place, and it was just a little corner of this place. I think the patio was probably about the size of this room from here to there, right? So, a little space. And I was working on these little things, these little—and they were stretcher bars still with canvas pulled over them, but they were taking on more of a bag-like shape. And because I was a mechanic, I went, "I could put some—I could put a steel plug at the top of that, or I could put a spigot, or some nuts and bolts." If you're familiar with the work, then you know where I'm going.

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

MR. BEREAL: And I did this little piece called *Summer Mechanic*.

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

MR. BEREAL: [Laughs.] At the end of the summer, I think I had *Summer Mechanic*—there might have been one other piece that I did, but I know I had that one—so I go back to Richards Ruben's class. He said—[laughs]—I love it. He said, "Okay, everybody on the wall. Everyone go put your stuff on the wall that you did over the summer." I put that little bag on the wall, and Richards walked up to that bag, and he went, "God damn. Whose is this?"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Really?

MR. BEREAL: Got him. Got him. He took me under his arm, and he—I'm living in Highland Park at the time—he went and got Laura Stearns. Have you heard that name?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Collector. He brought her to my house.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Really.

MR. BEREAL: My little studio. Yeah, it was within a week or two, and I might have had a couple of paintings. She bought that piece, and she gave me \$300. I mean, I was, whoa.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was that a lot of money for you?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, my god! Oh! If I didn't know I was going to be an artist—which I did—man! 300 bucks for my little piece of work. You know. Whoa.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this must be about 1961?

MR. BEREAL: *War Babies*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: '60—well, *War Babies* is '61.

MR. BEREAL: '61. Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: And, about that time, we're all closing out Chouinard for the most part, and I'm pretty well on my way. This whole thing of these little pieces, I'm experimenting with different shapes and so forth, and I'm starting to be able to feel pretty good to turn these things out. And Ron and Joe and Larry Bell—we forgot him earlier, Larry was there—we decided to have a show. And Henry Hopkins was around, and he had the Huysman. We had—as we were coming up, all of us—we were starting to get on almost—almost, not really, but almost—a peer level with some of our teachers.

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

MR. BEREAL: And they were introducing us to La Cienega Boulevard, and various other artists and galleries. Okay? And at one point I started working at Ferus doing paper walls and, you know, doing stuff.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then, you would have known Ed Kienholz, to do that?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, yeah. There were guys that I really had an affinity with. Ed, particularly his hustle qualities.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. He was a little bit of a—what do you—a rascal, would be the way to describe Ed.

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

MR. BEREAL: Ruben brought me into that—brought us into that, Joe came, Larry came. Bob, of course. Billy Al Bengston had done a little bit of teaching at Chouinard, and I think—he brought us—so we were all kind of moving. I stayed longer in Chouinard than the others, but we were all moving into more of a professional atmosphere and territory. And anyway, you know, that whole—

[Side conversation.]

MR. BEREAL: We were kind of, all of us, were kind of getting our feet wet as far as just kind of trying to see ourselves in that world and where were we going to land in all of it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, when *War Babies* comes out, that's quite a controversial exhibition.

MR. BEREAL: Oh, yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because *War Babies*—just for the record here, there's a poster of each of you with your sort of racial identity, as it were. I mean, you're holding a piece of watermelon, because you're black.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Joe Goode, I think he has something to do with mackerel, because he's Catholic.

MR. BEREAL: Fish.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right, fish. And Larry Bell, the bagel because he's Jewish. Ron Miyashiro—

MR. BEREAL: A bowl of rice.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —a bowl of rice, because he's Japanese.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this is like a wild idea.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Jerry McMillan takes the picture.

MR. BEREAL: Right. Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The feedback is huge.

MR. BEREAL: Well, the feedback—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: If I understand correctly.

MR. BEREAL: —oh, you understand correctly! The flag over the table—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's right.

MR. BEREAL: —and the particles of food and cigarette butts and things.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right. The American flag.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. It set the John Birch Society through the roof. They were really pissed off.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: We were not as good of targets as Henry was, and I found out that Henry had been harassed for the next ten years. They were—that poster went viral, but we didn't have—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Before its time.

MR. BEREAL: Before its time. And it became some kind of an—almost an institution in some ways. I don't even know whether people remember the work or not, but they sure remembered the poster. And about that was the point at which we kind of launched off, and we were pretty much all out of Chouinard. And we were starting to go our own way.

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

MR. BEREAL: I think it was—I'm trying to figure—because I took off to San Francisco.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, you had—didn't you show at a gallery here, before that? After Huysman, did you show at another gallery here?

MR. BEREAL: No. Virginia was—Virginia took me on as one of the stable there, with Ed, and whoever she would show occasionally from back East.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You mean Ed Kienholz?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Kienholz was there. And I also worked in that gallery to kind of sustain myself. But, I really didn't have to, because Virginia was paying me to stay home and paint paintings. Which, again, I'm shaking my head. I didn't even know what that was all about.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Virginia Dwan had you join the Dwan Gallery for the brief time it was in Los Angeles, and she gave you a stipend?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how much was that stipend?

MR. BEREAL: I remember it to be \$600 a month.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a lot of money.

MR. BEREAL: That was a hell of a lot of money.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then did she sell any of your work?

MR. BEREAL: I never gave her any.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How so?

MR. BEREAL: It had to do with my working style and where I was at. There's a piece called *American Beauty* that I did. This piece I worked on probably for three years. It was a very far out piece for its time. It was about three feet wide, which was, at that time, for me, very large. And probably four feet tall. And it was a dome shape with a plant coming out of it, which I casted out of this new material that was coming out, a new kind of polymer epoxy. And it was the beginning of the whole epoxy era.

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

MR. BEREAL: And this piece had a solid front and a solid back, except the front had a little window in it, and it was held together by translucent plastic, so that you couldn't tell, but you could see in it. And the plastic lit it up. Only you didn't know it was plastic, because the way I painted it, I put 30-some coats of lacquer paint on it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Whoa.

MR. BEREAL: So that it looked like a solid piece, only there you went to the window, and you could look in it. And I was doing some illusionary stuff inside it, in 1965.

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

MR. BEREAL: That piece was what I was working on when Virginia brought me into the gallery, and I was in the process of trying to finish that up when I got caught in the Watts Riots, and then my life took a huge flip a whole 'nother way.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the *American Beauty* piece—did it ever get finished?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where is that?

MR. BEREAL: It's right in that book. You want to see it?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, no. I mean, physically where is it? As a piece, did it go to a museum?

MR. BEREAL: No, it went to a private gallery. Gerald Buck.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, Gerald Buck has it?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. That's cool.

MR. BEREAL: Gerald Buck set my prices. He stole the piece, though. He got the piece because the Factors first got it, and they had it for almost 40 years.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] 40?

MR. BEREAL: Almost. Yeah, pretty much. Because they had it up until—they had it up until Monte died.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: They had a lot of my pieces. And they were really kind of one of my almost exclusive patrons. But that was a very important piece, and it was to set the stage for a lot of stuff that I'm actually doing now, but I got very much into perception and illusion.

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

MR. BEREAL: I'm remembering that there was a section of my life just after art school—that I went to San Francisco.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Before this Dwan period?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yeah. And it was—I was—one of the things I did—and probably dealing with Bob and Richards—was that I would go find somebody whose ideas or work I liked, and I asked, "Could I work for you or work with you or do something with you? Because I want to hear more of what you're talking about." There were—I was influenced a lot by four or five guys, a lot, as kind of mentors, but senior citizens that I hung out with. John Altoon. John Chamberlain, who I had to teach how to spray-paint and stuff. I was teaching technically. Peter Voulkos was very important. He's a very giving guy, and there's great stories about that whole period.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, you wouldn't have known Voulkos at Chouinard?

MR. BEREAL: No.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You knew him from San Francisco?

MR. BEREAL: No. Well, I got to know him—I arrived in San Francisco, because I was chasing this little girl.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We're going to get to that too.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Oh, boy. And that whole relationship produced a child, produced some art that all came together the other night in that opening.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At your opening at Harmony Murphy?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. And it came together in the most remarkable way.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, briefly—let's just pause for a moment, and let's ask what the mother of your daughter's name was?

MR. BEREAL: Barbara Temken.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Barbara Temken.

MR. BEREAL: Right. She was—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: T-I-M-K-I-N? K-E-N?

MR. BEREAL: Potemkin, I guess is where it comes from. At least, that's what she said.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Potemkin.

MR. BEREAL: She was a student at Chouinard.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And we decided to move in together. Or get together. And she went to San Francisco, and I

followed her. It just so happens I arrived in San Francisco at exactly the same time—this is a very important name that only a few people know—Mike Frimkess. Have you heard that one before?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The ceramic artist?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Mike Frimkess was the baddest son of a bitch in ceramics, and Pete Voulkos would tell you that.

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

MR. BEREAL: Mike was the magic dude, okay? And I didn't know him, but I got a chance—and Mike is really, really crazy. I think he is still living here in Venice.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He is. He is.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Mike could do stuff with ceramics that nobody believed. I saw him do it. If you know anything about ceramics, Mike could fire stoneware—usually, do you know anything about that?

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

MR. BEREAL: Well, it takes hour and hours and hours, days, to take it up to cone 10, and then you better bring it down slow. And you might be dealing with a week, or maybe more, getting that stuff down so that you can take it out without it cracking. Mike could do that—he designed a kiln. He could go up to cone 10 and down in six hours. He could do stuff like—he would throw a vase, on a wheel, six feet tall. I mean—so I arrived in San Francisco—Mike and I hooked up, because we had this whole thing. I could deal with his madness.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where was he teaching?

MR. BEREAL: He wasn't teaching.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, he wasn't teaching?

MR. BEREAL: Not at first. He introduced me to Ron Nagle. And we became very, very close. And then that brought me to Pete. So, that was our little clique, and we were kicking butt and taking names.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were in San Francisco, what year would this be?

MR. BEREAL: That would be—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that before the Watts Riots?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, yeah. Because I was back in L.A.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: So I was in San Francisco probably '61, '62, '63. And that's where some of these works were coming from there, that I'm known by. I was doing them there. You saw the show?

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

MR. BEREAL: That cross piece? That was done there. That was the last piece I tried to do there. That's a story that really took a very strange turn the other night, you know. So, that happened. Walter Hopps, before I moved to San Francisco, Walter had taken me to San Francisco. And introduced me to George Herms. And that was a very interesting meeting and influence—and I got a chance to see stuff—and that introduced me to Batman Gallery. And Jay DeFeo. And then I came back to L.A., packed up my stuff, and moved to San Francisco.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] To be with Barbara—but mostly to be with Barbara Timken.

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So did you live together?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yeah. We lived together, and we were very young, I mean, very naïve, and she had a lot of family problems. No, she had one family problem. Her momma. Very dominating, and it was really messing her up, she couldn't quite break away free. I say all that to say that when she got pregnant, it made all the difference in the world, and she was just a mess, because her mother was against our relationship, and—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And she was white?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Jewish.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A Jewish, white girl. So, it was still early in the integration process, right?

MR. BEREAL: And it was heavy for her.

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

MR. BEREAL: And so, I was working on that face that goes in that piece, and she was posing for it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's her face that's in the piece.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Not now.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, not now.

MR. BEREAL: No. Not now. I'm doing it and working on it, and we've got this heavy, emotional thing going. We don't know what we're going to do. She's very hung up about what's going to happen. She's pregnant. I mean, and she, you know, obviously is going to be seriously affected. I don't know what to do. And we both had talked about it, and neither one of us pleased with who our families were to bring this child up, so we had to give the baby up for adoption.

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

MR. BEREAL: Which was killing her. And while I'm trying to sculpt her and while she's trying to pose, this little tear came out of her eye.

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

MR. BEREAL: Whoa. So, I was—oh man, I can actually remember those feelings. The night the child was born, she never got a chance to see it. They just take it so that you don't have any attachment, and I destroyed the face that was supposed to go in that piece.

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

MR. BEREAL: We—very shortly after that, she left, back to North Hollywood where she originally lived. I kind of squirted around for a while and then came back to L.A. To—follow up on that before we pick up.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right.

MR. BEREAL: I'm in Santa Monica. I do not want to go to the store with Barbara. Now, there have been three women that have been important to me in my life. Barbara number one, Barbara Timken. Barbara number two, Barbara Lewis. Barbara number three, Barbara Sternberger, who I'm married to right now.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] The three Barbaras!

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. I was always afraid that I would talk in my sleep, and I didn't want to say the wrong name.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So we have Barbara Temken, Barbara Lewis, and Barbara Sternberger.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: I'm going down the escalator in—what, Santa Monica Place, is that what it's called? Yeah, with the green—with the ugly green tree—that's the ugliest green in the world—and I look over at the one, the escalator coming up, there's Barbara Temken.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year do you think this is?

MR. BEREAL: Probably '92. Something like that. '93.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, it's been decades since you've seen her?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: I saw her. She saw me. We ran to each other. As we got to the escalator, I guess I started going back up the down one. And I grabbed her, and I held her, and we hugged each other in a kind of a flood of tears. We said, "Let's find the baby. Let's find the girl."

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

MR. BEREAL: Because we had found out it was a girl, I think. Anyway, "Let's find out." She did probably most of the work, but we tracked and traced it, and there are ways that you can do that now, and we found that the baby had got adopted. It was perfect. She got adopted by a German mother and a black father.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my gosh.

MR. BEREAL: And it was a great childhood, and she was doted over, and really cool. So we approached the mother—the father had died recently, and we approached the mother and would say, you know, "Is it okay if we enter your life?"

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

MR. BEREAL: And she said, "Yeah. No problem. Come on." And so we got to know Tanya. But she tended toward her birth mother, and she was very standoffish with me. I would call, and I would try to set up a little, "Hi, how are you." And she'd go, "Well, hi there. How are you?" "Good." And I'd say, "Well, you know, good to talk to you." She'd say, "Yes, good to talk to you. Bye." And she was always nice, but I was being let know that—she was letting me know that she did not necessarily want to get real familiar with me, so I kind of went, "Okay. All right." Because she had apparently been incredibly in love with her father.

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

MR. BEREAL: Her stepfather. Or her stepfather.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Her adopted father?

MR. BEREAL: Her adopted father. So, you know, okay, I just had a—I would send a card or a little something on her birthday or whatever. Oh, maybe it was last year. Or, yeah, last year. She called me up. And that was very, very strange. And she was asking, "What is your family—health-wise, what's the family history? Is there any cancer in the family?"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Speak closer to the microphone. I know it's hard for you.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, no. It's okay. "Is there any cancer in the family?" And I said, "No. There's diabetes and insanity."

[They laugh.]

You know, I mean, we're good. We're big on insanity, and she said—and I said, "What's up?" And she said, "Well, I have a little lump, and my doctor wants some information about the family history and so forth." So we talked for a little bit, and I said, "Listen. One of my best friends is a leading breast cancer specialist. He might be one of four people in this country and maybe in the world—" This guy was really good. Do you happen to know Cary Kaufman?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's his name?

MR. BEREAL: Cary Kaufman.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Cary Kaufman?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't.

MR. BEREAL: Kaufman. He's incredible. His life is breast cancer.

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

MR. BEREAL: So I happen to know this guy. He's a good friend, which is a whole other story, because he moved to Bellingham, Washington the same time we did, and because Bellingham, Washington is not the great urban center of the world, we gravitated to each other, because we got that urban kind of background. Anyway. So, I

went, "I'll call him." No, I said, "Here. This is his number. I want you to call him. At least consult with him, and you and your doctor consult with Cary." She says, "Okay. Thank you." I get on the phone real quick, and I call Cary.

I say, "Cary—" And he knows the situation. "This is my little daughter that I had to give up for adoption. She don't like me. And what I want you to do—I mean, she's got this cancer thing. Deal with it, but clean me up."

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

MR. BEREAL: "Make me look really cool."

[They laugh.]

MR. BEREAL: "Really cool." So, he said, "Solid. I got you." So there's a point at which she calls me back, and she tells me that she called Dr. Kaufman, and he told her a lot of stuff that her doctor hadn't really told her, and when her doctor heard that Cary Kaufman was on the case, all of a sudden, he turned into another guy. You know, "I'm going to give you some more tests. Oh, well, Cary Kaufman, well, you know, we'll have to really, I'm sure we'll have to—" Anyway, it all came out pretty cool, including my relationship!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, nice.

MR. BEREAL: Okay?

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

MR. BEREAL: Now, check this out. The opening is Thursday. I'm there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Your art opening?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: In walks Barbara Temken.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Barbara Temken comes back—comes to your art opening?

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How fun!

MR. BEREAL: And Barbara Sternberger is there.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Your wife?

MR. BEREAL: Yes, and I've always been in great—I always have great relationships with ex-lovers and women, I love women a lot on just an intellectual—I like the way women function, so, it's a really good relationship, so we hug each other, and I say, "Hey, baby, how are you doing? Glad you could see it." And I walked her over to that piece, and I said, "Do you recognize this?" Because it's Barbara Sternberger's face in that piece.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. The mask was replaced by Barbara Sternberger's face.

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Yes. Because, Gerald Buck asked me, "I want a piece from that period." And I said, "I don't have a piece from that period." And I said, "There's only a piece that's full of emotional baggage for me, and I never really finished it. I got all the parts, but I never—" He said, "I'll buy it unseen." And me being always in a little bit of financial thing go, "Okay." I set aside the work I was dealing with. This is 2011. And I started working on Barbara's face to put in that piece.

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

MR. BEREAL: So, I was telling Barbara Timken, "Look. You were in that. Do you remember?" She says, "I kind of remember, a little bit." I said, "You were supposed to be in there." And then I turn around, and there's Barbara Sternberger. My wife came over, and I said, "Hey Barbara, you should meet Barbara." I've talked about both of them to them, but they've never met. So they meet, and it's a very lovely coming together, right? So my wife walks away, and I'm there with Barbara Timken, and Leslie and Cary Kaufman come over. And she doesn't know anything. I said, "Cary, come here." I said, "This is—I want you to meet—this is Barbara Timken." And he says, "Hi. This is Leslie Jacobsen." "Hi, how are you doing." I said, "Barbara, this is—" First I say, "Cary." And I say, "This is Cary Kaufman." And she says, "Yeah. Okay. I got it." I said, "This is Dr. Cary Kaufman." And you watch

her go—and she realizes this is the doctor who consulted on her daughter.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, wonderful.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wonderful.

MR. BEREAL: Right. And she just grabs him. You know. Just grabs him.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because now Tanya's okay, I take it?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what is Tanya's last name?

MR. BEREAL: Kalmar. K-A-L-M-A-R. That's her married name.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And is she your only daughter?

MR. BEREAL: No. No. No. I've got daughters as far as the eye can see.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many daughters do you have?

MR. BEREAL: I have three by blood and one by kind of adoption. I never formally adopted her, but she was Barbara two's daughter. I raised her.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the three daughters are—who's the mother of the three daughters?

MR. BEREAL: The mother of the two daughters is a woman that I came out of high school with, and we had Jae-me and Piet.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. I've met—Piet was there the other night.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, she was named after Mondrian.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] That's Piet without the T?

MR. BEREAL: Piet.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, it is Piet. P-I-E-T?

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP : Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Barbara's sister's name is Pia.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see. I got them confused, okay. So you have Piet and Jae-me, are the two daughters by the woman out of high school. What is her name?

MR. BEREAL: Mary Pautsch. German.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mary, and then how do you spell that?

MR. BEREAL: P-A-U-S-C-H, I think.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. And, but you never married?

MR. BEREAL: P-A-U. Yeah. Yes. We married.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So your first wife was Mary Pautsch?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, now, let's pause for a second. When did you marry her? She must be your first wife?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. I was 19.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 19. Gosh.

MR. BEREAL: 18, 19.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so she was with you through this whole Chouinard process.

MR. BEREAL: Part of it, yeah. And we were having—and I was trying to tell her, "We can't have no babies because we ain't got no money. I'm just barely being able to maintain myself in art school." I was living at my grandparent's house, the one I was telling you about. I was living with them in L.A.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

MR. BEREAL: But Mary just kept—when she was pregnant with Piet, I was saying, "Look, we can't do this." She said, "Well, I'm going to do it anyway." And I said, "Don't. You're going to force me away, because I've got to do my art. I can't afford them." Anyway, she came from a pretty well-to-do family, and she could split, and I knew she'd be okay, because her mother wanted her with her anyways, so that was cool. Later, though, as the girls grew up, Mary and her mother moved to a place just outside of Riverside with a bunch of rednecks, and they're starting to hurt my children in school. Just psychologically. That Piet, they were putting in a special school for the retarded, and Jamie was—she's very fair, and she was trying to pass for white. And it was—I mean, they were tearing my kids up. My wife Mary was born deaf.

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

MR. BEREAL: So, there was an added burden on her trying to keep up with this whole conceptual world of conversation and what's happening with the kids and all that. My oldest daughter Jamie is starting to have to be the mother to make up for the fact that her mother can't hear. She could sign and had that, but it was still, for kids in an environment like that—it's difficult. So, I got a call from the teacher, Jamie's teacher. A black woman teaching in this very, very redneck area, and she said, "You need to come and check out what's going on with your kids." Now, I'm—wow, this is a heavy period. I'm a full-time artist. I have got my schedule: I get up in the morning, I go outside, stretch, come back in. I start working. I work for ten to twelve hours. It gets late. I have a little bite to eat, and then I go to Barney's Beanery.

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

MR. BEREAL: Hang with the guys, talk, laugh, drink. Come home. Go to sleep. Get up at 10. Do it all—that's all I ever do. I lost all social skills. I just—that's all I did. Well, I'm finding out that my children are in bad shape. And I—and this—what I tell you right now is just a little bit before I had to take them in. And I began to raise my girls by myself.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What year was this then?

MR. BEREAL: I'm going to tell you.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: One night, I'm on my way home from Barney's. And I'm a little soused, as I usually am. I really drive slow when I'm drunk. Well, I get close to my house, and I'm smelling smoke, and cars are going all over the place. Kids are running and screaming, holding clothes, and running. I'm going, "What the hell is that?" So I just kind of drive through the melee and get to my little studio space, and I go in, and I go to sleep. It was the first night of the Watts Riots.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The first night of the Watts Riots? You're coming back from Barney's the first night of the riots?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow. Gosh. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: All right.

MR. BEREAL: And I'm going, "Whoa". I get up in the morning, and I go, "What was that?" You know? And so I'm kind of—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And just as a point of reference, where were you living then?

MR. BEREAL: I was living near the corner of Crenshaw and Venice.

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

MR. BEREAL: Venice. And there used to be a Zeidler and Zeidler clothing store at that corner. And Zeidler and Zeidler—I don't know whether anybody told you this or not, but Lenny Bruce used to do their advertising.

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's funny.

MR. BEREAL: Anyway, the riots were on, and they just—Zeidler had all these gates around—these iron gates. Man, a group of kids came and lifted those gates up, got them some clothes, and that shopping center ended up being a center for police activity. Soon to be National Guard activity. Okay?

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

MR. BEREAL: This is critical for me, anyway. So one, I guess, the Guard had gotten called in, and I was still going to Barney's in the evenings, and I'd come home and go to sleep and get up, and this one morning, I opened my front door on Venice Boulevard, and parked across the road so cars had to slow down—and it was like a checkpoint. It just so happened this Jeep was pointed at my house. And on that Jeep was mounted a 50-caliber machine gun. And as I came through the door, that gun was pointing right at my chest. It was, you know, fifty feet away. And there was what I call a Neanderthal, a National Guardsman, sitting behind it, so when I opened the door, he kind of went like that, and I'm going "Oh, shit. This is not cool." Because he could blow me away with immunity, man, "Black guy tried to jump me. All I could do was shoot him." And in that moment I realized that all the articles that had been written about me, all the PR and what's-his-name from *Los Angeles Times* who used to love my shit—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Henry Seldis.

MR. BEREAL: No. No.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: William Wilson.

MR. BEREAL: William Wilson.

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

MR. BEREAL: And I said, "If William was standing in front of me trying to block that bullet. If Irving Blum was standing in front of it. If Walter was there—good, old, beautiful Walter, all that shit between me and that gun, I'd still be dead."

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

MR. BEREAL: Which made me go, I have invested in a world that doesn't let me know what's going on. I don't like not knowing what's happening, because I kind of always did have an anal thermometer on the streets. I always liked to know what's going on, and a lot of my friends, and a lot of the winos, and the hustlers and so forth were all guys I was really pretty close to, and I always know the temperature. I had gotten sucked up in the art world, and my ties had gotten very loose and thin, and I'm going, "I'm not supposed to walk out of my door and be surprised." So I quit Dwan Gallery, and I actually eventually closed my studio. And I had gotten another place at that time, and it was then that I got the call from the teacher that—fortunately, that they told me my girls, you've got to do something. And my wife was—ex-wife was really cool—she said, "I don't know that I'm equipped to handle the girls. Do you want to take them?" I said, "Yeah. I'll take them." I brought them all into the studio. I had a fairly large studio, and I had artificially divided it inside anyway. So the girls all had their rooms.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how old were they approximately? In '65?

MR. BEREAL: They were—wow. They were about seven and five.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a lot of work for a working artist.

MR. BEREAL: Well, I found that out.

[They laugh.]

Actually, I always call that a graduate school.

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

MR. BEREAL: I had to learn how to raise little girls, and it was very quickly, much quicker than I realized it, it was okay, we've got to get underwear. We have to get little bras. Little trainers. And I had to, you know, the night I brought them in, I got them all put to bed, I went, wow, okay, it looks like it'll work. "Now, what am I going to go do tonight?" Go down to Barney's and go fuck around, and shit? And I went, "I'm not doing nothing tonight."

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

MR. BEREAL: I'm not even who I was yesterday. I've got to raise these girls. I can't do it. So, the riots and the life with the girls—I ended up starting to write, because I needed to figure out what was going on. With my roots, with my culture, with who I was in the United States of America. So I was writing and reading and writing and reading, and I was—at that time, there was a lot of groups out there—black groups that were starting to spring up including the Black Panthers. Do you know anything about COINTELPRO?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: About what?

MR. BEREAL: COINTELPRO?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't think I know that. Tell me about that.

MR. BEREAL: Counterinsurgency program launched by the government to investigate black groups across the country. There were paramilitary groups like the Panthers, or the US Organization. There was a couple of—something with New Africa back in Philadelphia where they dropped the bomb on them—do you know about that? There was another group down in—there was Detroit. There was Houston, Texas. There certainly was San Francisco. And there was also Cesar Chavez, and what I'm starting to talk about, which was what my writing started to turn into, was theater.

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

MR. BEREAL: I was—the writing started becoming a play. And the play was a way to break down the levels of activity and the stratified—or at least I saw it as that—the stratified system that I was perceiving, the police being the one most close to me. And then you got into business. And the management of public opinion. And business government. All the media. All those things. Well, I started to give them physical—I started to represent them physically by building a—do you know about this—by building a stage set?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No. Tell me about that.

MR. BEREAL: I built a stage set, which was probably about a half inch in scale, so a person would be maybe that tall.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That would be about 12 inches tall.

MR. BEREAL: More like about 10.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. About 10 inches tall.

MR. BEREAL: And my big characters were business, government, public opinion.

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

MR. BEREAL: And media that moves throughout. I won't describe it, because you can see it at the Smithsonian.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: They have it. They have it. So I was building this thing, and I was trying to understand my circumstances, and I was trying to teach myself—I was trying to give myself a political education. Well, what happened—I was teaching. I had—Bob had gotten me a job at the University of Cal, Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Bob Irwin?

MR. BEREAL: Bob Irwin. And I must have started there in '68.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right when it was just starting? Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: Right. He was just getting in there. Bob Irwin—just for the record—has always been on the edges,

the margins of Ed Bereal, kind of making sure you got over here, over there. He was sneaky. Or little shit that would happen right there. I think Bob Irwin was behind that show?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At Harmony Murphy?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, because he's part of—there is a connection.

MR. BEREAL: Yes. A very strong connection. Find that shit out. Anyway!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He's a backer.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: But he's always been kind of real shadowy. Well, you know, I'm not going to say it. We said things to each other the other night. Very affectionate things, which kind of messed him up, I mean, he was—very heartfelt stuff. Anyway, I was teaching there, I was teaching also at the University of California, Riverside. That was, again, post-riots. Black students council, all those kinds of things were popping up in various universities. And my kids wanted to talk about, or find some means by which they could address their questions, just like I was with my own—as far as how does this society work, how does racism play a part in all of it. So, I said, "Well, why don't you act it out?"

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

MR. BEREAL: You know? Start writing your own plays, or start coming up with some little theater that helps you dimensionalize some of your questions. Anyway. So, they started doing that, and I got involved and kind of helped them. And I was using some of my—although I'm not a theater person, I certainly had—I had seen a lot of performances. Claes Oldenburg had done a big one out here. Andy Warhol's people had done some stuff out here.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you knew about performance art?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you know about Allen Kaprow?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, yeah. In fact, I knew Allen Kaprow.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you knew about the evolution of performance art in contemporary art?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

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

MR. BEREAL: And the fact that we could not, in formal theater, but in another kind of theater—and I was being influenced by the San Francisco Mime Troupe and Teatro de Campesino, Cesar Chavez's people. Have you seen John Weisman's book?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, I haven't.

MR. BEREAL: There's a copy of it on the desk at Harmony's. It's called *Guerrilla Theater*.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: I'm on the cover.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: But the kids started doing this theater, and I started bringing in performance-like influences. And they realized they didn't have to be great actors and actresses, but they should really work the stuff out conceptually. And black children have this knack, that was maybe a version of rap where they can put words together around images, and they could create metaphors. They're very good at doing, like, little metaphors, and it started getting to be a kind of a theater that kind of had a little beat and had a little rhythm, and it was something that culturally was very, very available to them.

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

MR. BEREAL: We started really jamming, and there began to be some problems, and this is at the University of Cal, Riverside. There was starting to be some problems in the black student union. And the administration at Riverside brought in this black guy to run, to help advise these kids. Only they wanted to control him and have him control the kids.

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

MR. BEREAL: And I'm peeking this stuff, and I'm going, "Hey, kids. I don't know about this guy." I helped overthrow his power in the—[laughs]—black student union, and the administration kicked me out, you know. In a very nice, wonderful way, they said, "Get the fuck out of here."

[They laugh.]

But the kids went, "We want to keep the theater going."

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

MR. BEREAL: I said, "Well, I'm going to be in L.A." Some of the kids couldn't do that. Others kind of went with me, and that's when the Bodacious Buggerrilla was born. Do you know about that?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I do. But I didn't know it came out of this background, so tell me about where the name came from, which I think is a hilarious name.

MR. BEREAL: [Laughs.] It said, we wanted to be—and by this time, there were a few students from UCR, but I was picking up people from the neighborhood. Mothers—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what neighborhood is this? Are you still in Crenshaw?

MR. BEREAL: No, I'm at 4716 Washington Boulevard.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, where's—?

MR. BEREAL: That's right next to a big theater called the Ebony Showcase. And a couple black actors who used to be in the *The Amos 'n' Andy Show* started this theater. I had a storefront. And I started making my storefront the headquarters for the Bodacious.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year do you think this is?

MR. BEREAL: Bodacious came into being, I believe, around '69. '68, '69. And the name happened because I was very close to Rolf Nelson.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. The art dealer?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Rolf was a real maverick even among the art dealers in L.A. He was really a very interesting guy. And he could deal with—the rest of the art community, and the reason that I left it, is because they couldn't deal with the life I was starting to put together, you know. It was very much kind of elitist. I was always welcome. They were always good to me, and people pushed my career like crazy, but my political bents, they couldn't hang with that, okay. Rolf could, so Rolf and I came up with the name. Because we wanted an entity, a group, that was loud, surreal, well-informed, black, militant, so we were trying to get a name that would do that. So guerrilla was part of it, the G-U-E-R. But we wanted to give it a black twist, so, Buggerrilla. Okay?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Like boogie?

MR. BEREAL: Yes, exactly. And Bodacious was—oh, man, there's the word. We were just outrageous, bodacious. We wanted to be that.

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

MR. BEREAL: Hunter, this was probably six or seven years of the most creative period of my life.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, one thing we didn't go into but we have to, is to pause for just a second. At some point in here, you go to the Watts Writers Workshop.

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you work with the famous Budd Schulberg, right?

MR. BEREAL: Budd Schulberg. Not a lot, because there were others around me who did it a lot more.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: But I did kind of slip through there, and god, I was caught up both in raising my kids and developing Bodacious, so I was not there as much as I would like to have been, but I did come through.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it wasn't—so you wouldn't consider that a huge influence in the way you developed?

MR. BEREAL: No, but it was an influence. And we were just looking for possibilities. And what was happening was, the interactions of various people and how they were affected by this period, was really a lot of sparks, a lot of things were going on, and Schulberg was maybe, at putting a frame around it that said, "This is—what you're doing and what you're thinking about is legitimate."

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

MR. BEREAL: You know. "There's certainly a discipline here. And you should look at those kinds—that kind of—look at the discipline. You're not just wild and crazy," or as we used to call them, we had people who were very militant, and we called them motor mouths. Because it was like they had a motor in their mouth. And the whole thing is "Kill the pig," you know, the police.

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

MR. BEREAL: Well, you know, Schulberg and other cooler heads are going, "Hey man, whoa. Wait a minute. We're very naïve here, and blah, blah, blah." So there was that influence. We were hearing about the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Teatro de Campesino with Cesar. In New York, it was—what was the name of that? There was a big theater in New York. Black theater.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It is a time of political theater. A very—

MR. BEREAL: Absolutely.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —well, obviously, it's a very political time. Now we're like into the late '60s or early '70s. We've got Vietnam.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We've got, you know, race relations, and it's probably the most politicized time in America.

MR. BEREAL: It was, and a lot of people were speaking through theater and music, because we got hung up with various musicians, particularly in Los Angeles. There was a group called Horace led by a guy by the name of Horace Tapscott.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what kind of music did he do?

MR. BEREAL: Have you ever heard of Sun Ra?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Okay, he was the West Coast version of Sun Ra. He was out there, okay?

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

MR. BEREAL: And we would do—we would do these performances mostly in parks, at festivals, and so forth, and we were always on the same bill with Horace Tapscott.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. Cool. Now, when you talk about your troupe, just to back up a little bit, are your daughters involved in this troupe?

MR. BEREAL: Not yet.

MR. BEREAL: Okay, but because—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did their ability to be involved in, like, music and rhyming and stuff—did that somehow contribute to your own decision to go into this line of theater?

MR. BEREAL: No, I think it was an extension, or the play I was trying to write morphed into Bodacious.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And the way we would work—and we just kept producing. We'd produce these absolutely incredible pieces.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But when you say "we," who are you talking about?

MR. BEREAL: We're talking about a group of—and it varied from time to time—but it was mostly about 12 people. What I did was, I tried to put together a group that would stay together, so I would put together brothers and sisters. And they would be both in the group. Husbands and wives. It was all young people. Once in a while, there'd be a loner guy, but the women were the ones that held Bodacious together. And I had a cousin in there. She had a husband. I had really close friends, which were a brother, sister, and there were other people that started gravitating to the group as we did these performances, so we ended up with this very, very sharp—they came in as novices, right?

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

MR. BEREAL: But the culture contributed. What we would do was say, "Okay. What do you want to do—something. What issue do you want to attack?" And we had this game called, "What Would Happen If." What would happen if there was—and we thought in almost comic book terms—what would happen if a janitor was really like a stealth revolutionary? And he was scratching his head. He was doing the Uncle Tom. We had a piece called Uncle Tom. What would happen if he's just shuffling and mopping and sweeping, except he's checking out, you know, what the police are doing over here or what this particular group is doing over there. And he alerts people and lets them know that, "Be careful, this is going to happen, and that's going to happen, and you kids that are collecting them guns, you better be careful, because they're watching." And he was like this guy.

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

MR. BEREAL: Well, we would take a character, and everybody's imagination would—we had imagination that was like an atomic bomb, because someone would say, "What happens if he's shuffling kind of—no, no, no, do this—" And before you know it, they are creating this thing. And we would come up with this piece, and people would say, "I'll play this cat, okay, because I came up with that idea, and Barbara, you could be—" And Barbara was Barbara number two.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Barbara Lewis. [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: Yes, she was in there. And we had two sisters who were in there, and they looked like fashion models. They were both six foot one. And they would play these parts. And so we would end up with this thing that would come together, and everything we did was spontaneous and improv. We took jazz as a model. So that we would have—and I'll talk in musical terms—we would have a melody, and we knew what the melody was, and then we would start to riff or start to improvise on the melody, because we always knew how this was going to end up. All right? And we would do these things, and we were always reproducing our culture, and a lot of stuff that we knew about the culture, and audiences went crazy, you know. I mean, we had—we did it at the Getty. I don't know whether you were there or know anything about it.

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

MR. BEREAL: We had this character called Killer Joe. Killer Joe was a pimp, okay? Now, in the ghetto, everybody knows that character. It's like Santa Claus—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: —only the rip-off kind. And Killer Joe is—he's got this golden mouth where he can kind of, "Hey, little girl. You're kind of nice, aren't you?" And he, like, you know—but he has no depth. So he's got a Cadillac that's not paid for. He's got diamond rings that are stolen. He's got an incredible suit that is ripped off. But he's out there on the corner acting like he's really something. Well, when we brought that character—we would do stuff on church steps, laundromats, night clubs. We did a lot of stuff in prisons, by the way. And when this character—there would be people who had seen it before. We'd be at a festival with 2,000 people, and somebody in the back would say, "Killer Joe! Do Killer Joe!"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: And this guy who played him would come out with his head all kicked out, he'd say, "Hey, hey, hey. What's happening with everybody today? Hey, am I fine, or what?" And he'd do the whole thing And they would just absolutely love it. What happened in that piece was we pulled Killer Joe apart.

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

MR. BEREAL: Okay? Now, he's out there, and he's doing stuff that every woman in that audience absolutely knows and has been exposed to. This guy is full of shit. Thoroughly, okay? Well, Joe was out on the block, and we're doing this on a stage, and most of the time we like to work on the same level as the people.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Joe was out there, and he's talking cool, and here comes a homeboy, okay? One of his little partners, but he's very rough, and very loud. "Hey, Joe, is that you, man? You're looking good!" And the guy said, "Whoa." Joe said, "Whoa. You're too loud, man. Softer, softer." The guys says, "Joe, you know. You're really—" "Hey, softer, man. Be cool." And he said, "Man, your clothes—" And Joe goes, "Whoa. Do not touch the good stuff." You know?

So they're having this little back and forth, and Joe is telling him how much money he almost had, and this whole thing. Here comes—and I think he's in white face—here comes the collector, the collection service. And he says, "Are you Joseph Washington?" He says, "Who wants to know?" He says, "You kind of owe us some money on some rings, don't you?" And he says, "Hey, man. What's wrong with you? Come see me at my office." Right? And Joe's office is a street corner. So the guy says, "Oh, no, no, no." And he starts taking his rings, and he says, "Hey, man. You can't do that." And he says, "Oh, yes, I can." He gets ready to walk off the stage—the collector—and he goes, "Whoa. Wait a minute. Hold on. Didn't you borrow some money from us for a suit?"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: And Joe said, "Hey, I told you." And long story short, he repossesses the suit. Now, there is the slickest, coolest dude in the world standing up in front of all of these people in these color-coordinated shorts. Right? And socks and garters. Okay? Well, for a black community to see this character being brought down, and the bullshit that he represents, they just went fucking crazy.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's fantastic. So when you're doing these characters, you're obviously very passionate about this. Don't you miss the making of the objects or miss the painting that you were so passionate about prior to 1965?

MR. BEREAL: The creative experience was absolutely wonderful.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And I was building—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it filled you up?

MR. BEREAL: A lot. A lot. And I was getting a political education.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right?

MR. BEREAL: And also I was building a lot of—I was building big pieces of art that could fold out and become a part of a stage set, or the inside of a jail, or I had built this big, huge, square. It was like eight feet by eight feet by eight feet, and it was chrome pipe. And I had a way to very quickly put up some stuff that would make black curtains that would go maybe twenty-five feet. Only they fold up, and you could put them in a box, and you could move to the next site. Well, this box was backed by this black curtain.

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

MR. BEREAL: And if we did the lights right, because it was off the floor this high, it looked like this chrome box was floating in mid-air, and we were—this was—at the time, it was very heavy. It was called "Nigger in a Box," and it was the inside of a guy's head, and we could see what he was thinking while he was dealing with things outside. So, we showed both sides of an incident, and there would be actors inside this box. This one person would be standing there with a light on him, and you could really see him, but there would be maybe four or five people in that box with him that made like a Shakespearean chorus, and they were the audience in his head. And we were talking to our audience, telling them that they have an audience in their heads that applauds when they do right and boos them and puts them down when they do wrong, and that audience makes you do a lot of things you don't want to do, and if someone can control the audience in your head, they can control you.

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

MR. BEREAL: So the political thing got very deep at one point. This was near the—as Bodacious was getting very sophisticated and very good at what they did, what would happen inside the box was, I had a trap door that

would open and close, so that actors would appear suddenly and disappear. And that was my object-making skills being put to work.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right. So you were continuing to use your artistic skills and develop this whole theatrical aspect of what you were doing.

MR. BEREAL: Right. Right. Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this goes on heavily through the '70s?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Now in—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And at this point—pause for a moment, to talk about Barbara Lewis.

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Barbara Lewis is your—let's see, Mary's the first wife?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, but I don't even count her because it was high school.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] But she is literally your first wife?

MR. BEREAL: Right. Barbara Lewis and I came together at—really we came together at the advent of Bodacious.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that's like after, like '66-ish.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. No. That was probably '68.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: '68. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And she was a powerful woman. Brilliant woman.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did she do?

MR. BEREAL: She was the mother in many ways. The senior citizen. It wasn't because of her age. It was because of her maturity, and Barbara Lewis didn't play. Barbara Lewis did not play. They called her, when she was in high school, they called her Poison Ivy.

[They laugh.]

Little stuff that happened between women. She didn't like women. She didn't trust women. She was raised in a beauty shop. Her mother was a beautician, and she heard all the catty, and all that stuff. When Barbara Lewis was in—she was beautiful. She was small. Beautiful. A lot of Indian in her. Arizona.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Again, white, a white girl?

MR. BEREAL: No. No, no, no. Black.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She was black. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Black Indian.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But Mary was white?

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: When Barbara would be in school, and some little girl would say to her, some big girl would say to her, "You think you're cute, huh?" And Barbara would say, "Yeah." *Bam!* [They laugh.] She was beautiful, very soft, and loving, but you did not fuck with her, okay? Well, she was kind of the heart of Bodacious. That would be a better way to say it. She had the feeling that the—no-nonsense? She'd be funny and humorous and so forth, but she was always looking. Always checking. There's something in black women after all the raping that had gone on, that there's a sentinel in there.

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

MR. BEREAL: And it was very present in her, and the younger women in Bodacious would learn a lot from her.

You know. And so, she had a little girl, Tracy. And so when we came together—we never officially got married, but we lived together for 14 years, all through Bodacious, and then through Bodacious as it morphed into Bodacious TV Works.

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

MR. BEREAL: One night, we are in—and my storefront, as I said, was kind of headquarters for Bodacious—one night, it's about 11, 12 o'clock. We're unloading, we had a van, and that's where we had all our stuff, and we're unloading, you know, we're parked right in front of the place. The sidewalks are wide. So we're taking all these boxes, moving in, so this wino comes stumbling down the street. "Hey, what's happening?" I said, "Hey, man. How're you doing?" He says, "Hey, man. What you doing? What is it you guys do?" I said, "Well, we do theater. Political theater." "Oh, yeah, you do theater? Wow, man, and how do you do that?" "We just act, and we just talk about things that people want to talk about, you know." And so this wino says, "Oh, I see. Well, how do you feel about the dictatorship of the proletariat?"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: I said, "What?" [Laughs.] "You know, the dictator—" I said, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know nothing." You know? And then we start getting calls from the FBI.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Really? So what was that, like a setup?

MR. BEREAL: He was the first inquiry into us that I was conscious of.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, so he was like a plant.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. He was the guy who was supposed to be sneaking in. A very bad choice. You don't do that. We're sitting in the ghetto, man, and people are calling each other seven thousand motherfuckers, and somebody says, "The dictatorship of the proletariat," you gotta go, "Excuse me?" [They laugh.] Anyway, so that's when we knew—uh, oh. Now, I'm going to tell you some stuff.

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

MR. BEREAL: And I'm going to do it because of historical reasons. Okay. Bodacious was a theater group who—we had a lot of political conversations and planning and so forth—who thought we were going to go into the revolution pretty much any time. We thought that. And we thought we better be prepared. Bodacious founded a farm out in San Bernardino where we were raising our own food. We were making alliances with other groups. And then on Sunday we did something called "church." We went to church. We bought a bunch of guns, and everything was legal. There was nothing illegal about it, except buying a gun while black.

[They laugh.]

And what we were doing was we were training. Learning how to use them. The women and our children, and that's when your question about our children getting involved. They were learning how to protect themselves. You know, self-preservation. And we set up a little shop for making our own ammunition. And our children all knew how to make ammunition. Our alliances were with groups that were very much paramilitary. And I think the FBI, the authorities, started feeling like, and they knew stuff that we didn't—

[END OF DISC ONE.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Ed Bereal at his friend Warren Blakely's house in Baldwin Hills, which is in Los Angeles, California, on February 13th, 2016 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and this is card number two, disc two. So, Ed, here we are with the FBI coming after you.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do tell what happens as the FBI is on your trail.

MR. BEREAL: Well, they are starting to question. They are asking people to come in and talk.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is about the early '70s?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yeah. Early to mid. We're getting toward the mid '70s.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: And they want to talk. They want to ask a lot of questions. They're asking questions about our relationship to other groups, because I think they were afraid of this network that was trying to come together, and they were more aware of it than we were. We were very close then, because we were doing theater, we were very close to several groups, and the Black Panther Party was very heavy in California and Los Angeles, and, you know, there was the shootings on the UCLA campus, all that. And the Panthers would come to our little performances, and they would critique us, and they'd come backstage. They would want to sit down, or they'd come to some of our rehearsals, and they would sit down and go, "Hey, you guys took a very funny position in relation to this, or you should have been a lot stronger in relation to that, or you were really counterrevolutionary when blah, blah, blah." And so, in many ways, we listened, and went, okay, that's cool, but maybe that over there wasn't too cool. We don't think you're correct there.

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

MR. BEREAL: So we were very close to the various groups, both cultural and paramilitary and artistic. There was the Watts Prophets. There was certainly, as I said, Horace Tapscott. There were various poets that were around, and we were close to and were listening to, and we shared stages with, during that period of time. Well, we started noticing that scholarships were being questioned in some of the kids that were in the group, and going to UCLA or going to SC, and there seemed to be a hidden hand back there, kind of, you know, shutting some stuff down. Opportunities for the kids. There were some interviews on the job, people who had jobs where the FBI was coming in. They don't say you're a criminal. They just—the act of investigation, asking questions, made it very hard for people. So because of that, Bodacious began to, or made a decision to, fold it up.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Throughout this Bodacious period—eight years or so—how are you supporting yourselves?

MR. BEREAL: I was teaching.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, you were teaching?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is for a while at UC Riverside, UC Irvine?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Mostly UC Irvine. I did a stint later at Santa Monica College, but it was mostly Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Now, what kind of—that was a very liberal campus at the time. You know, Chris Burden famously finishes his degree there by locking himself in the locker.

MR. BEREAL: Right. And he rode a bicycle for—I don't know—for maybe three days. He opened the front door of the gallery and the back door of the gallery, and he just rode this—and it had a sidewalk, perfect—and he just rode through the gallery for like twenty-four hours straight. Stopped and did it again. He was doing all kind of stuff like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so you're teaching performance?

MR. BEREAL: No. I was living this very schizophrenic life. I was teaching Drawing/Painting. And a little video production. Which was nice because Bodacious Buggerrilla morphed into Bodacious TV Works.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right. And, of course, video is just coming up in a big way at this point.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so you probably had access to video equipment from the school?

MR. BEREAL: Well, a little bit, but I also had been doing a little grant writing. And I got a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for Bodacious. And that together with some private contributions and some very skillful—and I put a lot of money in Bodacious personally—and we were able to build our own television studio.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Where was that?

MR. BEREAL: That was—it started at 4716 Washington Boulevard.

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

MR. BEREAL: And then it went real big on Second Street, just down the street from where the gallery is.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Down the street from Harmony Murphy?

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How fun that you've come back to this opening at Harmony Murphy—

MR. BEREAL: That's been happening.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that's so close.

MR. BEREAL: The whole thing with the Barbaras in there, it was a folding back, and I have recently a lot of folding back—starts to be perceived anyway.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So the Bodacious TV Works is on Second Street—

[Side conversation.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, here you are—could you—so the Second Street television studio, do you remember the address of that, or what the cross street was?

MR. BEREAL: Yes, Vignes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Second and Vignes, okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Vignes crosses Second and becomes the driveway that goes right in front of my place.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: I've got a picture of that door, but I don't remember the number.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you actually had a TV studio set up in there?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, in that building.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now how did you get all that—got all that equipment through grant writing?

MR. BEREAL: Yes, and some private contributions, and me contributing to it. So we had a three-color camera studio. It was very cute, and then we had, we could do our own editing and—what's the—special effects generating. And all that stuff. We had it put together, so we ended up going from the streets and theater to the classroom. We were doing video training and so forth in the public schools. Roosevelt High particularly. In East L.A.

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

MR. BEREAL: At that point—I think it happened at that point—one of my students was from Japan, at Irvine. He was a little street urchin. He was very slick, very slick, very sharp, and a bit of a rascal living right on that edge, okay? He was—I helped get him through Irvine, because Irvine was throwing blocks at him and so forth. He's very smart, but he was, like I said, he was a little bit of a gangster. Anyway, I got him through. I got him through graduate school, and he wasn't speaking too good of English when he came in, but he was very sharp. He picked it up. He got going. He became a producer for NHK. Do you know NHK?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes. Nippon—something like that?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, Nippon. It's Japanese television. Man, it's huge. Well, he conned himself into a producer role, and then he turned around, came back, helped them set up a little outpost in Los Angeles because he knew how to speak English, he had a certain kind of power, and he turned around and hired me as a camera person. We put together this little cadre that would go to various places. And do this quick shoot. A lot of the stuff would go to NHK. Some would go to some think tanks, depending on where we were, and I began to find myself traveling around the world with this camera on my shoulder, shooting these various, weird places. Right?

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

MR. BEREAL: I ended up spending a summer in Siberia on a joint venture between the then-Soviet Union and the United States government in the form of NASA.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: They were drilling down in the permafrost 300 feet, bringing up these cores of ice, which they would melt, and they would have three-million-year-old life that they were looking at. They were trying to develop the technology to go to Mars and bring up three-billion-year-old life, and they wanted to bring it back

here and check it out.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So this is like—suddenly, you are no longer just confined to the art world. You're traveling, you have a whole another world view, correct?

MR. BEREAL: Right. But it was connected to my past by that camera, and looking through that lens and composing and zooming in, zooming out, using this—certain visual skills to help my viewer who's looking through the viewfinder with me, and start to tell a story. Understand what's going on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But I want to go back a minute—to go back to Bodacious Television Works. What did you do—I saw clips from this at your show at Harmony Murphy Gallery, but would you explain for this purpose what Bodacious TV Works was meant to do.

MR. BEREAL: Bodacious TV Works, we were trying to do, through video, we had a design for a truck that had a screen inside, and you could project from the back, and we wanted to do the same thing that we used to do live on the streets. We wanted to do, again, a political criticism. But we'd do it in a studio, and then we could project it so that we physically didn't have to be out there, and the FBI would have had a much more difficult time keeping us from doing what we were doing.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now the one I saw was a game show. Tell me about that.

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Okay. That's the last effort of Bodacious.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Okay? One of my students became a producer at KPBS in San Diego, and she was one of the people who was at the UC Riverside campus, and she knew about what we were doing, and she knew Bodacious, because she was a member of Bodacious, but she couldn't continue when I lost my job and took it to L.A.

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

MR. BEREAL: But now she was a producer in good standing with KPBS. She came to me and said, "Look. I got a slot. Does Bodacious want to do anything?" Well, we were officially pretty much scattered. We were not a formal group, but I had had an idea that it would be really cool—I was looking at television and so forth—and I thought, wouldn't it be great if we could do a television—fake game show, where we all acted like contestants. We had singers. We had the whole thing, and the game show was trying to answer questions about political information, social political information, stuff that had to do with movement, media, whatever. All of our questions and answers would be things that the mass media did not want to talk about.

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

MR. BEREAL: So that if a politician had had some dirty dealings over here, or if a bill was destined to affect, unfortunately, the black community over there—only they didn't know anything about it—we would make it a question in the whole game show format. So, and we called that piece "Pull Your Coat."

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, "Pull Your Coat." That's why it's called that. Okay. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: Now, you probably don't know what "pull your coat" means.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't.

MR. BEREAL: Right. It's a ghetto term.

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

MR. BEREAL: And pull your coat means doing this: "That man over there you've got your eyes on? Don't do it. He's a nasty man." You just got your coat pulled.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So pulling the edge of your coat and whispering a little something to you?

MR. BEREAL: It's information being given to you on the sly.

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

MR. BEREAL: Now, what a great name for a game show that's telling you about government misrepresentation, corruption, whatever. Okay. So, on no money—this was done on no money—we put together a stage set that looked like a game show, as you probably saw.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I thought it looked pretty good.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. But you didn't see it. Because they had messed up the TV set. And that's all in color. It's beautiful.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Anyway, I got—these were all Bodacious people. I went out and got them, brought them back together, even though everybody had gotten older. And the master of ceremony, Papa Proof, the Jaws of Truth. [They laugh.] He played Grandpa on Sesame Street. He went from Bodacious to Sesame Street. Anyway, we've got all these people, and they, because we had no bucks, we shot a—I guess it was a 27-minute game show with back and forth, back and forth timing, the whole thing, in one take. They were that good. They were so good. And they could come off each other. It was like jazz musicians passing a melody around.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's improv.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, and they could do it. They were unbelievable.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many did you do?

MR. BEREAL: We only did one.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The one game show?

MR. BEREAL: It was a pilot piece. When the parent company—they showed it—well, you know where I'm going—when the parent company took a look at "Pull Your Coat," even though everybody loved it, and I had daughters who played in the—they sang, they were Pull Your Coat Singers, and the whole thing. If you get a chance, watch it, because what happened at Harmony's—I was surprised—people absolutely adored it, man. They were having a great time watching it. This is 1986.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. Oh my gosh.

MR. BEREAL: Okay. All right? But KPBS, apparently, management—at one point, they don't even know how it was shot, and it must have aired maybe five times over a period of ten days. Something like that. At one point, management said, "Oh no. You didn't. No, no. That's dead. No more of that." Just on purely political grounds, no, because it was a hot, little show. It's a great idea that still would be good today. Anyway, so that was "Pull Your Coat," and that was the last thing that Bodacious had done.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what did they do before that? What had Bodacious TV Works done before that?

MR. BEREAL: Mostly dealing with kids and school.

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

MR. BEREAL: And we were mostly training, other than me representing the group, and then we were doing a lot of photojournalism. I told you about Siberia. Malaysia?

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

MR. BEREAL: Doing some stuff there, and there was another group called Pontifex Media Center, and that was people who were—there was somebody in the Middle East with a lot of money who wanted to go into places, hot spots, and find out what was really going on. So I spent time in Kosovo, okay? North Africa. The Middle East. Malaysia. I spent time in the IRA prisons in Ireland.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, when you say, I—when you say—who is sending you to do this?

MR. BEREAL: It was either—NHK or Pontifex Media Center.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you were working for those two?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, they were like clients of Bodacious TV Works.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see. Now are you still teaching though this?

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gosh.

MR. BEREAL: I would take a—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean, at UCI?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. I would take leave of absences. They were very cool, so I could take off, and I would schedule things that—I'd take off for a week or something like that, be there, shoot up a bunch of stuff, get back. Or I would have leave time, so particularly, I could work out from maybe a year of a break, and then I would be doing a whole bunch of stuff in and around the world. Yeah.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, are you still living with Barbara Lewis?

MR. BEREAL: No. Oh, during that time? No.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How many years did you—14 years, well you said 14 years.

MR. BEREAL: Well, Barbara and I had broke up in I think '80. '80,'81, but as I said, in most all cases, I've always remained good friends with the women I've been with. So Barbara and I got together, put Bodacious together for "Pull Your Coat."

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, I see.

MR. BEREAL: And she set up, to get—she helped. She's got a musical background. She helped write the music, do the costumes, choreograph the Pull Your Coat Singers, two of whom were my daughters. She did everything, I did everything else, and there were some people who—from the university—who—Ron, who was here. He was a teaching assistant of mine at Irvine, and he helped put it all together. He was one of the puppeteers, one of those—I don't know whether you noticed or not, but one of the contestants was a puppet.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, yes, yes. Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Well, he had—did the hand and so forth. He was Richard Nixon in some place over here, so everybody was doing everything. But we pulled it off, and it was a minor miracle, because like I said, we had no resources, just talent. And we made it happen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And it was hard to do. TV was so much more limited then. Now, people wouldn't understand, but in those days, to get on TV was an enormous thing—

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —for people to do, for an artist to accomplish.

MR. BEREAL: It was far out. It was very far out.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Bodacious broke up officially—but Bodacious TV Works goes on, you're at UCI—

MR. BEREAL: Bodacious itself came apart, for the most part, around '75, '76.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And got back together in '85, '86 for the show?

MR. BEREAL: Right. But had been—the TV Works was continuing. Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes. And then after—and then what happens? [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: Then, in—I found—well, I was in Siberia. I got very close to one of the Russian scientists, and we went out and started—he knew where there were a lot of mammoth bodies.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

MR. BEREAL: And we were planning to bring in a couple of mammoths intact. Knew where they were, and at that time—we're getting around '90. '93, '92, '93—I had retired. Taken retirement from Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

MR. BEREAL: But after retirement—I took an early retirement—after retirement, I still taught a few classes at Irvine, but Barbara and I—Barbara three—and I are going, you know, "What do we want to do?" I have got retirement. I have set it up pretty well.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now how did you meet Barbara Sternberger?

MR. BEREAL: She was a student at Irvine.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: You know. And dirty professors start grabbing on little girls in nice institutions like that, and before you know it, if they're really not too dirty, they get married,

[They laugh.]

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was she your student?

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, she was.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. And when did you get together?

MR. BEREAL: We got together in 1982.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Been together ever since.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow. That's a lot. That's a long one.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Yeah. It's a good one. She's a good woman. A really good woman. She civilized me a lot.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: A lot.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She civilized you. So here you are, you're retired in '92, you've been together with Barbara Sternberger for 10 years—

MR. BEREAL: And we decide after the retirement, we talk, and we said, okay. A friend of ours had a place in the south of France, and we were going to go over and purchase a place in the south of France. I went over and looked it over. It was a nice little farm thing. We had always wanted a farm and so forth, so we start to begin negotiations with the owner, and to set—you know, to get this place going. Well, the French government said, "Okay. You can do that except there's a little transaction fee that you have to pay." "Okay. Cool. Here you go." Take care of that. And the owners were British, and they were going, "Okay. We'll do it. All right. Now, we've got to do some paperwork." And the French government said, "Well, you can do that, but there is a transfer fee that you have to pay to get the paperwork so that you can buy the place." "Okay. Here's the transfer fee." And then six months goes by, and they go, "There is a filing fee—"

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: "—that you—", you know, so—I mean, it's working, but it's very slow, and they're eating us up, right? But it's not that bad. There were 22 acres just off of Capri and right by the Spanish border, and it's really nice, and it was \$82,000, you know? We could do that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: So we're hanging with them, but we're sitting around, so I said, "Listen, sweetie, I think—why don't I send a resume out, and let's see if we can hook something. Maybe make a few bucks while we're sitting around." So I sent my resume around, and a couple of people had—a couple of universities were really interested, but I had been told that the University of Western Washington should be someplace I should look into. So—and they said, "Why don't you come up? Look us over. Let's get to know each other and see if you want to work here." I go up. I look around. It is beautiful. Have you ever been up in that part of the—?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, I have not.

MR. BEREAL: Oh, Jesus. There is no accident that we had a huge Native American population up there, because you cannot starve. There's fish—I mean, salmon in the streams, deer all over the place. You walk down a road—even today with the development—you can eat blackberries for days. You know. I mean, it's just everything. And so I said, "Okay, sweetie. Let's take—I'll take the job." You know, and it was like \$40,000 less than I had been making, but the cost of living was pretty low, so I said, "Let's do it. It's just temporary." So we went up. Moved our stuff. And it got so nice up there that we went, "We oughta just stay." So, we had bought this farm, which—we bought it for the barn. My wife is a—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you backed out of the deal in France?

MR. BEREAL: Eventually we did, you know, it just wasn't working. We were starting to get settled, it was really nice, and my wife was a painter, and she was doing really, really well in the northwest, so we bought the barn, which was huge, and we could build two studios in it. We have a shop, we have offices where the—where all the business of doing art is done. And it's like a lot of space. We moved two studios, my shop, and everything up to Bellingham, Washington.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How big is the farm?

MR. BEREAL: The farm is five acres.

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

MR. BEREAL: Which is great. The barn is, like, 45 feet by 65 feet. Two floors, and we tricked out the spaces there really great, and then we started gathering together animals. It was almost like purging L.A. and starting to get close to earth ground animals. And so we had sheep and cows and chickens, donkeys. We had llamas, you know? I mean, everything. And we just went kind of nuts. And we started getting a reputation, so everybody was bringing us their animals in danger, right? We had pigs and everything, and at one point I'm going, we have gone crazy! So we had to kind of calm down, but right now, we just got horses, but it was a nice life. It was quiet, and I could work.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how long did you teach at West Washington?

MR. BEREAL: Up until 2008.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you kept teaching the whole time? Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yep. But what happened was, and we can stop here, probably. I mean, I could go on. I had decided to go back and start making art before I left L.A.

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

MR. BEREAL: So I'm kind of floundering around trying to figure out, well, where am I now? Because I'm definitely not the same person who was making assemblage art in, you know, the '60s and part of the '70s. I'm now totally another person whose consciousness is very different, but it's difficult because I'm going, "Well, where do I put that?" I mean, I'm not sure. Anyway, I was starting to think about things, and I was starting to kind of fiddle around with my hands, kind of, doing some of the stuff that I had left doing, and I wasn't really satisfied with doing that, so things started gelling, and I got into holograms. Okay, you know what holograms are?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: I started pulling together a few scientists and people who really knew how that worked, because I always wanted to do the miracle. I wanted to do a standalone, 360-degree viewable hologram. I wanted to put you on that sofa, just like you are, only everybody could put their hand right through you. You're just a fake image there. And I started to find out how I could do that. So it began to be something. I'm going, "Wow. That's great. I got no money." Buddy Jones had been a successful—in construction for government projects. He was doing an annual business of something like 15 to 20 million dollars.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

MR. BEREAL: That man.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And he's your old—this is the—for the record, this is the son of the mechanic who you grew up with. Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Right. Buster Jones.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or who you worked for.

MR. BEREAL: Right. And you ought to see the family, because Buddy has nine brothers and five sisters.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my gosh.

MR. BEREAL: Buster was very prolific, right? And you know what, those brothers, if they walked into this room, you wouldn't be able to tell which one is which, and they look like Buster. And in the ghetto when a child looks like a parent, the saying is, someone would say to Buster—they'd look at the kids and look at Buster, and look at

the kids and look at Buster, and they'd say, "Buster, you peed all over that child, didn't you?"

[They laugh.]

Metaphor. Anyway, Buddy came to me and said, "Look, man, I know about what you're doing with the holograms." And he always says, "You just want to make some—a free—" I forget how he says it. Anyway, "You want to see a standalone, fake person, right?" So he said, "Okay. I'll help you." So we built the beginnings of a holographic studio, because we were going to start doing the research for making this happen.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Okay?

MR. BEREAL: This sounds really weird, doesn't it? [Laughs.] I mean, all these places. Anyway, we were getting into it. We got the building built on my property, and we got it built properly, because you gotta have a really thick floor, because you're dealing with lasers, and they're so sensitive. I have a road that goes past my house, which is probably 300 feet away, 400 feet away, and if a motorcycle goes down that road, the laser would do that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Vibrating. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: So this thing, you can't tell, but it's like a foot of cement block just to make everything stable. Well, we're just getting into it. He and I went to Germany together with another German fellow who is into holograms. We're starting to put this group of people together. We went to a holographic conference in Germany and started rubbing shoulders with all these guys who were into that. Came back, and the United States government had stiffed Buddy for 12 million dollars.

[They laugh.]

He had done the job, and Buddy's pretty cool. He had done the job, paid everyone off, and he said, "Okay. I need my money." And they went, "Well, we feel that something was peculiar, and your books weren't right. And we're not going to pay you. Take us to court."

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No kidding.

MR. BEREAL: So he's out there 12 million dollars.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gosh.

MR. BEREAL: So he looks at it and goes, "Well, maybe this is not the time in my life. Maybe I have got to change my stuff." He had enough for himself, but—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He can't support a hologram studio.

MR. BEREAL: Exactly.

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

MR. BEREAL: So, I'm heartbroken. I'm going, "Damn. I really want to do that." Because basically I had this image of being able to do a Roy Lichtenstein brushstroke in midair. Oh boy. Right? I sulked around for a while and didn't know what to do until I came up with an alternative. A poor man's magical image place. That's where we'll stop, because we would have to really open up a whole another can of worms.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, just give me a brief encapsulation of it.

MR. BEREAL: Okay. Right now, I am working on being able to give you, actually, the Joker in the back room.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In your current exhibition, there's a picture of the Joker. Yeah.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Right, and it's a bunch of perforated metal with holes in it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yep.

MR. BEREAL: And what you can do is you can put several layers of perforated metal, and depending on color, light, and background, you can be able to see all four levels at once. If, in that space, you put an image like the Joker—and I didn't do it in there, it's not there—but if you use what's called a halftone—do you know what that is?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yep.

MR. BEREAL: Okay? If you put a halftone image in that environment, you've got dots and you've got holes, and if you can play with the color, you can put an image in there, and you can do a flat image and make it look three-dimensional, and you can look right at it and see it, but you don't know where it is.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you've invented your own version of that kind of mystical illusion—

MR. BEREAL: Kind of, yeah. Not quite the same, but there's an illusionary game that you can play and manipulate, so that you can play really interesting games with someone's eyes. Now I've been consulting with neurosurgeons to find out how the eye works and the brain works, and how you take in information. And they recommended that I start reading a lot of books on magic, because magicians are really neuroscientists.

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

MR. BEREAL: They know how you work. They know how batting your eye, or light, or repetition, how it can fool you into thinking—they can misdirect you. All that kind of stuff I've been kind of learning about, so that I'm probably going to be researching for a while before actual finished art comes out, but that's the realm I'm in right now.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's so interesting. And I wanted to ask you, also, just for a few—I know we have to wrap up.

MR. BEREAL: No, I can go on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A little bit, but what I want to talk about before we lose the plot a little—you're up in Washington. You sort of left the L.A. community, and consequently, your place here gets a little bit fuzzy. Suddenly, we have the *Pacific Standard Time* exhibition.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Right, right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The Getty, 2011. There's an exhibition called *Now Dig This*.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Before that, in anticipation to a certain extent, there's a show called *L.A. Object*.

MR. BEREAL: Right.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, suddenly there's a focus on African-American art, contemporary art, that is really exciting and new, something that hasn't happened for a long time. You find yourself, again, in the spotlight.

MR. BEREAL: In some ways. The African-American community and, what's her name—Jones. LeRoi Jones.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Kellie Jones.

MR. BEREAL: Kellie Jones was Barack Obama's daughter. Did you know that? Not Obama. I'm sorry. Oh. Wait!

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was really excited!

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, right! No, no, no. LeRoi Jones was his former name. Amiri Baraka.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. Amiri Baraka.

MR. BEREAL: Amiri Baraka.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Kellie Jones is Amiri Baraka's daughter.

MR. BEREAL: Daughter.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I did not know that. Okay.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah. Right. She sent researchers out, and they were climbing all over my studio, blah, blah, blah. But, the narrative for black artists in southern California from Betye Saar, Mel Edwards, [John] Outterbridge, Noah [Purifoy], all that—they always have eliminated Ed Bereal. The artists knew who I was, but they had eliminated me because I came along and—not as much from the ghetto and trying to fight your way into the major leagues. Bob and those people took me out of art school and put me in the major leagues. I never had to fight my way in. I was there. I was born there. Right? So that, I was on another track. So that—when they talk about, well, first there was Mel, and then—no, first there was White. Richard White? No, who was his name? Last

name White.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Charlie White.

MR. BEREAL: Was—Charlie White. Charles White. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Otis.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The illustrator. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. BEREAL: Charles White, Mel Edwards, later on, quite a bit later on, Betye. But John Outterbridge was very early on. Noah was very early on, and it followed that line. Only I'm not in there, and I'm exhibiting *War Babies* in '61.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you were in the *PST* show?

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Oh, yeah, no, I was there. But, I—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At the Getty, I should say.

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To clarify, you were in the Getty's own exhibition.

MR. BEREAL: Yes. Right. And I would have been in *Now Dig This*, but Kellie was rewriting the history of the way it happened out here, and she was saying, "Well, Betye Saar was leading the whole thing." Betye Saar came up way late. She was a housewife in the Hollywood Hills. And Mel was there very early, but Mel never got picked up at all. So I began to see how she was writing the history of black artists out here, and I wrote her a letter—rather, it got to be kind of famous—I wrote her a letter and I said, "Look. You're not writing the history of this art as I lived it and as I watched others live it. You're bringing in East Coast and your whole idea of the West Coast, and you're writing some other, you know, editorial." And so I said, I can't be a part of that. And now she has already picked up that piece I was telling you about called *American Beauty*. You need to look it up. And she's going to have it in *Now Dig This*. I said, "No. You're going to have to give that back to the Factors. I am not going to make that legitimate, and I am not going to support a history that I know is full of shit."

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

MR. BEREAL: So I wasn't officially—I am represented in *Now Dig This* in the catalogue, but I never was in the show.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's a very interesting perspective to have, and I haven't heard that perspective, and so that's a very interesting perspective.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, she was just inventing a kind of hierarchy. She was inventing things that were—had nothing whatsoever to do with the reality as I knew it. And I was living it. I knew what she was talking about. I was trying to give—Ron Miyashiro came out of that whole thing. He wasn't even included. I know he's not black, but he was very intimate in people of color being out here. But Ron, you know, with *War Babies*, Ron was there. He was really an important figure. He didn't even just appear in what she was talking about, in terms of how black artists and artists of colors were dealing in it during this whole period that the Getty was focusing on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And do you feel that because you went from assemblage to performance that—how has your history been treated as a result of the fact that you're not making—for a long time, you weren't making objects for sale?

MR. BEREAL: I think we live in a very compartmentalized society—compartmentalized art world is no less compartmentalized—and so, doing political theater was some alien thing to do from the point of view of the artist and the art world as I knew it there.

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

MR. BEREAL: But one of the reasons I left the art world was, when the riots hit this place, and you know, Los Angeles was on fire, I went up into Lyn Kienholz's house, and looked at L.A. and the smoke. First of all, the air was covered with smoke, but there was like 19, 20, 25 fires going on.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my god.

MR. BEREAL: And it looked like the city was going to come down, and the Mexican-American community, those dudes were really serious. And they were about to join the blacks in the streets, and they very well could have brought the city down. Well, the art world, as I knew it, took no notice. Nothing showed up in the work. Nothing

showed up in the articles. Nothing showed up in the conversation. They were just going along like this person with their head in a bubble.

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

MR. BEREAL: And that's number one. Number two, I found that expression and life on the streets was far more interesting and exciting than what was going on inside of studios and inside of galleries and museums. Far more interesting. There was history going on out here, and there was a visual perceptual history being created. And I'm going, "That's silly over here, I want to go do this." And so, what was really interesting was, all the people that Kellie had been talking about, none of them were in the streets. They weren't a part of Budd Schulberg's thing. They weren't a part of anything that was having to do with social political activity, as a result of a social political phenomenon.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, surely John Outterbridge.

MR. BEREAL: Oh, now that's different. John was very close—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because he's Watts Art Center.

MR. BEREAL: Art Center, yes. John, yes, and Noah, ideologically anyway, but the rest of them—they weren't there. And I don't want to put anybody down for that, but there were some of us who were at the heart of it. Some of us who could have got shot. It wasn't—art, at that time, was not a plaything. You know, it was a weapon, and some of us were trying to use it as such, particularly to educate. One of the problems that I'm having with Harmony a little bit is the fact that I'm not interested in Wall Street fundamentalism. I'm not interested in this current thing that galleries are doing. I'm not interested in Walmart lighting. I don't want to do supermarket lights. And we had a big deal over here. I'm not interested in corporate iconography, so that if I put these things on the wall, and I make a statement, like—which would ordinarily be this is the label, that's the title—I want to do it in graffiti, and everybody freaks out. Because, first of all, we in New York don't label anymore. We have a book over here that you go to. Well, I do cartoons. That's what you were looking at at the end of the night, and cartoons have captions.

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

MR. BEREAL: And I gotta do it, anyway—a whole, huge kind of disagreement, which we're trying to work through, is because I'm not interested in what I told you I'm not interested in. And you gotta understand, you can't make me love Wall Street. You can't make me love white privilege. You can't make me do any of that kind of stuff, because I don't do it. I've got a long history of political activity on the other side of the fence, and that's the way I play it.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In fact, after this, you're going back down to Harmony Murphy Gallery to do—

MR. BEREAL: —and I'm going to graffiti on the wall.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] So you won the argument?

MR. BEREAL: Oh, yes. Oh yeah, I did. I won several arguments down there. That's why it looks like that.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that's a good place to stop, because I know you have to go down to Harmony Murphy where you're having a show—

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —for the record, and you're going to put graffiti on the walls.

MR. BEREAL: Yes.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Behind your work.

MR. BEREAL: Well, and you guys saw an incomplete show. The show's not—

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: There you go. That's a perfect place for us to conclude.

MR. BEREAL: I didn't get a chance to put the captions on those things, so a lot of people were walking around going, "Well, what does that mean?" And I gotta go down, so that you can walk in and you see that big picture with the soldier and the little kind of pickaninny Iraqi guy whose legs are chained together, do you remember what I'm talking about?

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yep, absolutely.

MR. BEREAL: And that's in that kind of cross thing. The name of that piece, alluding to Iraq and Afghanistan, it's called *Location, Location, Location*. Obviously, they're fighting always about oil. You know, or there's that other—the big Miss America who was pounding the nail into the guy's head.

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

MR. BEREAL: You've got to have the title. It's titled after a Noam Chomsky book. And you probably know the book. *Manufacturing Consent (Upside Down and Backwards)*.

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

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This man here, the poet, the man who owns this house talked to me about when we talk a lot about how Americans think. Really think. Americans don't know anything about America. Not the real one. Not the real America.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

MR. BEREAL: And we talk about that kind of thinking as upside down and backwards. You're encouraged to think that way. You've been marketed to ever since you dropped out of your mother. And there have been implants that you're not conscious of taking in. Values, opinions, points of view that have been put on you, and unless you are conscious of how to pull however you're thinking, "Why am I making decisions like this?" You don't know that your head is on upside down and backwards.

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

MR. BEREAL: My point being is, those labels have got to be there, so that the conversation that I'm trying to have with an audience is clear. You know.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you won the argument.

MR. BEREAL: Yeah, so far. So far. She's not a good loser, but we're hoping.

MS. DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's a pleasure, Edmond. Let me say thank you, and we can do more later if you want.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]