



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

**Oral history interview with Brian Daniel  
Butler, 2018 June 4- August 6**

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**Transcript**

**Preface**

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Brian Butler on 2018 June 4-August 6. The interview took place at Butler's gallery, 1301PE, in Los Angeles, CA, and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Brian Butler 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. Please note the timecodes corresponding to the audio recording in this transcript are not exact.

## Interview

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Brian Butler on the fourth of June, 2018, at his gallery, 1301PE in the mid-Wilshire district for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc one.

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HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Brian, I think we have an active recording situation at last. Brian Butler, I'm sitting in your very nice, little, modern gallery space in the mid-Wilshire district where you've been for decades and decades, it seems to me, which is not really true but—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Very true.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's what?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Twenty years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It has been twenty years?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Extraordinary. It's almost a holdover of an earlier era because it has such a nice domestic space. And you've always done such great job of having it—you know, having it be an institution without having the institutional vibe around it. You have works of art on the walls by various—by your various artists. I'm looking at a Fiona Banner print, and I'm looking at different—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Paul Winstanley and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A Paul Winstanley painting behind me—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Jorge Mendez Blake—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —a nice—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —SUPERFLEX.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —SUPERFLEX work of—on euphoria [*Euphoria Now*]. You've got a group show. It's a perfect time to be talking to you. But let's start by saying that, when and where were you born?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I was born at UCLA Hospital on July 1st, 1961, to my parents Richard—[they laugh]—and Mary Butler.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Richard and—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Mary Butler.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: M-A-R-Y?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: M-A-R-Y. They had graduated from UCLA, so I like to think of myself as a product of California's public school system in every way possible.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And, were you their first child?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I was their second child. I have a brother named Bruce. [00:02:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Are there—are there only two of you?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: There are only two of us, and we're a little more than a year apart.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And tell me about your parents, how they both happen to be graduates of UCLA, what did they study, and what did they do for a living.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. They both grew up in Los Angeles, my father in Manhattan Beach, and my mother for the first part of her life, she grew up in Los Feliz and then they moved to La Cañada. They went to UCLA, and they met there. My mother was a schoolteacher in Santa Monica, second grade. My father studied art and studied under William Brice and various other teachers at the time. Charles Garabedian was, I think, a little older than he was, but he always asked me about Charles, so that was always funny. Anyhow, he then had two kids, and so the life of being an artist, I think, quickly went away. He went to work for Shell Oil company. But before you could go work for the company in terms of doing anything, you had to work in a gas station, so that seemed to be short-lived and then he went to work for Glendale Federal. Now, I can't remember which came first, but anyway, he worked for Glendale Savings and then he worked for CBS, and that's what I remember the most. He worked for KNX radio when it was still a mixed radio station before it was all news.

They lived on Barry Avenue in West Los Angeles in an apartment and then they moved down to Manhattan Beach. We lived on 23rd Street for a little while, and then we moved to Palos Verdes to Lunada Bay on a little cul-de-sac called Via Fortuna. [They laugh.] [00:04:02]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What a wonderful name.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, a good name.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, during this timeframe, to back up a little bit, where did you spend most of your time growing up?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Most of my time was spent in Palos Verdes. We lived until I was four years old in Manhattan Beach. We moved very quickly after, because I think it was a very tiny apartment on Barry, but—so, my first memories were Manhattan Beach and running around with a bunch of little kids and stuff. My grandparents lived two streets over. They had been there since 1939, and then we moved, yeah, to Lunada Bay, and it was, again, I think part of that classic California thing. It was because the school system was good, and it was very simple and a neighborhood where one could go run around. I think my parents had thought about moving to Sycamore Canyon, is that right? No, Mandeville Canyon, but there had been a fire there, so I think they thought, no, that's not going to happen. The funny thing is that my—the doctor who delivered me, Dr. Bick, was this beloved doctor in the Palisades who, actually, had been a German doctor on a U-boat, but he was very loved in the Palisades. So, we used to have to drive all the way from Palos Verdes, all the way up to the Palisades for the physical as a kid, and I just remember like, "This is the longest drive ever," or something, anyway, so. [00:06:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was Palos Verdes like? I mean, now, we think of Palos Verdes as a very upscale—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, it was all working.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —community.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was like—there was a lot of aerospace people. There were some people—this is before I think being a stockbroker was really what it is today, you know? And as a stockbroker I think—so, there's a group of people that were stockbrokers and insurance people. Stockbrokers, they all had to get up early because of New York, or they were working in the Pacific Stock Exchange that no longer exists.

My dad was ultimately working for KNX and then started his own company, which was called Hall, Butler and Blatherwick, which was an advertising agency.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was it called? Can you spell?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Hall, Butler, and then Blatherwick.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's the killer.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's the killer, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: B-L-A—? Spell it for me.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: B-L-A-T-H-E-R-W-I-C-K, probably. But to go back, that—so there was a sort of—you know, there were people who were cops and there were people who were, kind of, schoolteachers, everybody. Because what I don't think you would realize today is that California was kind of inexpensive. I mean, I think that my parents paid something like \$50,000 for their house in Lunada Bay and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year would that be?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That was 19—would have been '66, I think.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were they close to the ocean? [00:08:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, we were back. There was—Lunada Bay is sort of in the—not quite in the middle of Palos Verdes, but it's—you're—there are only cliffs. You could scamper down those cliffs, and we did, but it's not totally far away. But compared to where my father grew up on—in Manhattan Beach, that was like a five-minute walk to the beach. For us, it was like, you had to get—go to Torrance, Abalone Cove, or Portuguese Bend or any of these sort of places, which that was a whole another sort of thing, but yeah. No, growing up was pretty—pretty simple, lots of open space, lots of parkland and undeveloped areas that soon became very developed when somebody decided to give Pepperdine University some land, and they started building houses behind us. We were at the end of the development, which had happened in the '50s, but by—I would say by the early '70s, they were already starting to build. And I think that was—so that, what I would say, was the change. That's the—that's the moment that Palos Verdes changed, but also the thing that changed Palos Verdes was that—or why Palos Verdes never changes is three things: There's, one, the great slide of Crenshaw, which led to lots of—one part of the peninsula to slide, and it's continuing to slide into the ocean. The turning down of the UC campus that was going to be built there that I think, ultimately, went out to Riverside.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [00:10:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I think that's because the aerospace industry that was there would have been part of it. What I never realized is that the UC system always builds universities near areas where there is some economic drive to the—to California. So, San Diego, it's the military, and General Dynamics was part of it, much more than Scripps. I mean, the—you know, the marine biology and things like that, that wasn't why it went there. So, Riverside and UC Davis is all agriculture, and so I never realized that until somebody told me the other day. And then the third thing was the freeway never went there, so it's an island.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But they prevented it from going there?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think it was—well, it might have been prevented because after the Hollywood Freeway and that—and what that did to Whitley Heights, I think that was the wakeup call that caused the people in South Pasadena and anybody—but also the freeway going to Palos Verdes, like what was it really going to do? Unless, they figured out—I think there was that show that was at the—was it the Art, Design [ & Architecture] Museum, there were all these futurist drawings of Los Angeles, things that were never built. And I think somebody had an idea once that they were going to make a freeway that went along the coast and out into the coast, so I think that might have. But for the most part, there's not that population that was there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, where did you go to school then? What was—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I went to Lunada Bay Elementary School.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how do you—how do you spell Lunada Bay?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's spelled like "luny bay," L-U-N-A-D-A. [00:12:03]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So, Lunada Bay Elementary?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And then Margate Middle School.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How do you spell? M-A-R-G-A-T-E?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And then you can tell that there's a Spanish idea to Palos Verdes, which means the green stick—only one tree. It was part of the big rancheros, the Sepulvedas, at one point anyway. And then I went to Palos Verdes High School, which actually, little did I realize at the time, but it was a Neutra & Alexander building, probably we wouldn't have, you know, defaced it as much as we all wanted to. [They laugh.] But it was an interesting school in that it had these courtyard structures, these sort of quads. Anyway, so, yeah, that was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when you were going to school there, do you have your—you, clearly, were exposed to art through your father. Did your father and mother ever take you to art museums or art galleries?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, not to any galleries, but to some museums that the school went to. I was kind of around it, my uncle also studied art at UCLA. He's 12 years younger than my father. One day, we went with him down to—down the cliffs. There's—there had been a shipwreck in 1960, [19]61 called the Dominator. It was a Greek freighter that ran aground in Palos Verdes. And my uncle who was studying photography at UCLA, or—  
[00:14:08]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was your uncle's name?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Ron Butler, or Ronald Butler. Anyhow, we climbed down there, and he took photographs and then he—we took some rusted bits and parts of not only the Dominator, but they had—I guess they had put down two cranes to try and get it off. Because one of the things that had happened with the Dominator is that the captain—the Greek captain refused to say that he was abandoning ship, which is part of its problem, because he didn't want it to be salvaged. As soon you abandon a ship, it becomes salvage to whoever gets there. So, anyhow, he was making this sort of combined work of photography and rusted gears.

[Phone rings.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, I'm so sorry. Hang on, let me just put this off. Here we go.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, there are things like that that happened, you know?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think art was just always around my—you know, my dad had been a painter, and so he had some of his works and works by other friends of his from UCLA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What kind of work did they do?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I would say—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What were you looking at?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: [Laughs.] There's one painting that my dad did of Westwood in, I would say, a very post-Cubist style. And then there's a guy named—well, his first name was—Templeton who, again, it was very much of that moment of like Bay Area painting, figuration. If you look at like the Pacific Jazz series where they invited painters to be the covers for—it was in that—it was in that genre. [00:16:09]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, from the album covers of that. You know, Altoon used to do those, [Robert] Irwin—and Irwin. But, yeah, they—it was—so, they—you would call it sort of the—sort of slightly Cubist-inspired abstract art, but they would do abstract art.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's—so, you grew up in a house where there were abstract paintings?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Sure, and then slowly—I mean—and I would say, the crazy thing is that my parents were very much part of a modern, of-its-time sort of thinking. I mean, we—in Manhattan Beach, we had all Danish furniture, or Scandinavian furniture. I would say for the first couple of years that was exactly what we had in this house in Palos Verdes and Lunada Bay. And then my parents—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Would you describe it as a modern-ish house?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. It was sort of a post-war house that had—it was like one flat floor that sat. It was on a hillside, so downstairs was a garage, a little bit of like, under the house sort of. It wasn't really a basement for anything. And then there was like a TV room and then everything else was on the same level. And—but I would say that what happened, and I don't know exactly when it happened. I would say probably starting in the—around '68 is the—two things that happened to modernism was the encroachment of Neo-Victorian, which is like, thanks a lot, San Francisco and Haight-Ashbury!

[They laugh.] [00:18:09]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And my parents, we went up to—one of their best friends from college moved to Danbury, or someplace in Orinda [sic] County, and we went there. And then we went like to the gold country, and we ended up in San Francisco. My father somehow decided that he was going to buy an old ice—you know, one of those ice, refrigerator chest things? He batiked the whole inside with like paisley wallpaper and painted it a mauve, and that was kind of the end of modernism.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I was going to say, is this sort of like the—of the '60s?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, end of the '60s.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I would say that that was, sort of, like—that began—between that and them going down to Mexico, and they would go to Puerto Vallarta or Mexico City, Acapulco, and then there was—began to be a lot of influence of Mexican, you know? I mean, some things that were, like, people they'd meet, some art they'd buy but not so much that. It was really about furniture and, yeah, just things. So, I think that was a major shift in terms of like the Danish modern things started to go away. But there was like leftover, sort of leftover things from that period.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Did you get along with your parents? [00:20:03]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, my parents are—I think there was that moment of—we were just talking about this the other day. I think he started watching lots of TV and maybe there's already movies before that about the strife between adolescents and teenage, and parents. And this was somehow supposed to be part of—maybe it's just part of American vernacular of reinventing each generation. But there, of course, was that and there was, I think, a difference in, like, way of thinking. And I think the Vietnam War, particularly by the '70s when I became more conscious of what was going on, I think those things sort of—I think that everybody was kind of lost, you know? And I just thought, "Wow, these people who are like five years older than I were super cool so whatever they were doing, that was cool." So, I think, probably through the '70s we were just like, wow, those people are really interesting. I think also the teachers that were teaching us then were—I don't know if I agreed with all of them, but there were some that had come back from Vietnam. There were others that, yeah, they were just putting other ideas in even though Palos Verdes High School was very much, I would say, a college prep sort of school. So, if you didn't do well in math and English, you were sent—which, I think luckily, my mother was—had been a schoolteacher, and so she very much helped me through school because that was not my strength. Because—I guess now, I'd be considered that I had dyslexia, but no one knew what that was so, I was just slow.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But your memory is quite extraordinary.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Well, I think that—I still think this. I think everybody is different, and everybody learns at a different pace. And the running joke in our family was always that my father was a C-student but remembers everything. My mother was an A-student, and if you asked her any sort of geology things like, "What's that?" And my father would be like, "That's an alluvial fan," and my mother would be like, "I have no idea what we call that." [00:22:09]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And he was like, "We were in the same class, and you got As, and I barely made it through." So, I think that—but I think they—what they taught me was that learning and curiosity and all these things are so much part of your life. And if you—if you're not curious no matter what the teachers are saying or the college, the guidance counselors, which were really—I mean I think there's a guy who was the guidance counselor at—was just such a disaster Mr. Pierce was. But he—ultimately, because my parents framed it in such a way, he became that classic motivator of like, "I'm going to show you, asshole," sort of thing. And I think living in Palos Verdes, like by the time I finished high school, I had planned on going to ArtCenter, and my father was like, "You know what, you can go to any art school you want to go to, but you have to have a two-year education somewhere."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean a regular college education?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. At least get an AA before you transfer, or do whatever you want to do. Just by strange luck, I happened to be walking past the library, and they had a poster in it for a school called Franklin College, which was in Lugano, Switzerland. It's now called Franklin University. And it was—it was part or involved with Claremont McKenna [College]. I said to my parents, "I've never really left the country before." I mean, we'd go to Hawaii, and I wasn't really interested in Mexico because, for me, Mexico was like my friends going to Tijuana, and that was super boring. [00:24:03]

I think, also, because I didn't quite understand how interesting border cities can be, but anyway. I got into Franklin College, and I went there. It was going to be one year and then I went for two years, and that was also—like that was kind of one of those things that you realize this world is mind-blowing. We'd gone to London in '76, part of a conference that my dad was part of. And that was kind of—that was great going to London, and I totally fell in love with London. The—oh, my only regret about London is that we could have gone to *Rocky Horror Picture Show* original cast and everything, and the guy at the hotel said to my mother—because my brother's Spanish teacher had told us that that's what we had to do.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, how funny.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And the concierge is like, "Oh, Madam, I don't think that's appropriate for the boys." [They laugh.] So, we went and saw—we went and saw—we saw some other—like other—we had—did all these plays like *Round and Round the Garden*, which was—Emma Thompson's father was the director of this play, which was

super funny. It was—it was part of this trilogy that was called the *Norman Conquests*, which I'm sure now would see—be seen as very sexist and incredibly inappropriate, but it was—and then we went and saw, oh, I can't remember who. It wasn't Sir John Gielgud. It was somebody else. Anyhow, and I had horrible, horrible jetlag, and I fell asleep, and I nearly fell off the balcony of the theater— [00:26:00]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —but anyway, yeah. But—so moving to Europe for three or for two years was kind of like—it was great, and out of that, some very interesting things happened. I would say I moved—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But just to pause, like when you went and—when you went—were thinking of going to ArtCenter and your father said you had to do—should do a two-year prep course first, were you already thinking of already working in the art world or being in the art world in some way?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I think that's what—I loved history, and I loved art, and I was really good at art. I was part of these Saturday classes that, you know, ArtCenter used to go around to various schools in LA, and they would ask the art teacher, "Is there somebody who should come?" We used to drive up from Palos Verdes on Saturday morning, and we did this life class. And there was a teacher named Carol Bennett, who turns out that she was really good friends with Fred Fehlau—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How funny.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —which only later I found out. And she—yeah, she was super cool. She was part of that very early—that would have been like '77, I guess?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Early downtown people who were involved with like, Madame Wong's and that X, Blasters sort of punk scene.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But she was teaching a life-drawing course?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And she had been—she had gone to ArtCenter, I think, in—at some point.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now how—when you come in—as you're coming from Palos Verdes, and where would you actually take these classes?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: At ArtCenter—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, so at Art—[00:28:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —they were at ArtCenter, okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They were at ArtCenter. Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And they were open to pre-college, high-school students?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: On Saturday, yeah. I think it was a way—and they weren't really interested in fine artists, by the way. They were interested in figuring out how they could get us to be industrial design people and advertising and, oh, do illustration. I was super interested in the idea of illustration. There was like—I was—you know, it was the '70s after all.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You know? And people like Roger Dean or Rick Griffin or Mouse—Kelley/Mouse, which did illustrations for the Grateful Dead. You know, [Roger Dean -BB] was famous for his album covers for Yes and Tangerine Dream. That was like—yeah, that was like super cool. That was cooler than—I mean, art was cool, but illustration was like super cool. And I think that's also because maybe we just grew up with album covers.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But I have to go back just one second because the most important art when it comes to

contemporary art, let's call it performance art—there is a friend of mine, Fred Schriver who was in school with me, and we went to LACMA. This was 1966 LACMA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, brand new building.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Brand new building. But it was—it was probably in the '70s, and we were up on the top floor, and there was an exhibition that had the Claes Oldenburg oven, I remember. And there was also—like, there was also a Larry Bell smoked-glass piece. But that wasn't what was the most exciting. The most exciting is that Fred Schriver dropped a water balloon off the top floor there down into where the Japanese, Chinese section was. [00:30:06]

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Because that used to be all open in that building. And the water balloon hit it, and I claimed that this was the first performance art I ever experienced, it was genius.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's twice as good as anything Chris Burden ever did.

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I thought that—like that was—that was punk. That was—he was quickly whisked away—[they laugh]—but he had filled it up. They had—they had like water—little drinking fountains, I think, on every floor and he just went *shh*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's so funny.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He didn't hit anything other than the ground, but it was kind of like—I just remember that, like going, "Wow." I've never—I've never talked to him about it, but I always think about that because performance art comes into my life in various different moments in the future, but I, kind of, think like that was the most radical. Everyone else was—is too thought out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] I was—we—but you're also in this—these years of—? Weren't you also a surfer, am I remembering correctly?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: We—yeah, we all surfed, and in the end—I just body surf now, which was kind of hardcore. Because we would spend summers in Hawaii, and we'd go up early in the morning to a place called Brennecke's on Kauai, which just got destroyed during—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's it called?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Brennecke's. And Brennecke's was on the Poipu side, and it's still there, but it kind of got destroyed when the two hurricanes hit. Well, it must have been like the end of the '80s, beginning of the '90s. And, yeah, I just hung out with these locals, and they taught me how to body surf with fins, and angle across the wave and think about it in a totally different way, yeah. No. [00:32:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But before that, you were surfing on a board?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. We did it all. You know, there was the inflatable mats. Those were—those are now coming back. Those were very hip. Then there was a guy when [Tom] Morey Boogie was inventing the Boogie board up in Oxnard, Ventura, there was a guy named Hilton who was down in Palos Verdes who also was making his version, which was whatever. And then there was surfing, and there was like a hierarchy to the whole thing, and there's—you know. I guess I know a lot of the people who were part of the Bay Boys, the Lunada Bay crew, which was less about localism and more about the invention of a thing called the leash. Because you had to be a really good surfer to surf the waves, and when you got a leash, you could lose your board, and then you were still there. So, the lineup changed and then I—the lineup—and so, I think, a lot of the people were just like—and because they're 200-foot cliffs, you didn't want someone getting hurt that you'd had to get their hurt, sorry ass up a cliff. So, it became this sort of—you know? I think that's generally the same place. Like, wherever I've surfed or wherever I body surfed, you have to prove like you should be there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Was it a big influence on you as a—you know, growing up that way?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think—I think yes and no. I mean yes, I couldn't wait to leave. I knew I had to leave. That's part of why I think when this opportunity to move to Switzerland happened, I knew that—I saw my friends, and they're all cool. But most of them were all—it was like the best and the brightest were heading off to Kauai or



wherever, and some of them came back okay and then some of them came back born-again Christians and some of them are still trying to deal with substance abuse. I knew that Palos Verdes was a nice place, but it's—it was a place that, at least, as somebody who was 17 it was not going to be what I wanted. [00:34:11]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But, you knew that? You knew you had to get out of there? You knew that this is something that in the bigger world, you had to experience somehow?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I guess so. I also thought, like—I mean maybe this is like this false notion of an American sort of thing. But leaving home, this idea of leaving home and, you know, whatever that means, that I kind of felt like, okay, let's leave, let's really leave. My parents always said, "You know, the greatest thing that you can be as a parent is to be fired from your job."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then the kid comes back because they want to come back, not because they want to move in and, you know, or whatever. But they—it's like they come back because you're nice people, not because they're guiltig you or anything like that. So I think that they were—so what—with that, my father was like, "No, I don't want you to go to Franklin College. You're just going to go ski. You're going to fuck around." So, he said, "Oh, you have to pay for your first quarter," and or—I guess maybe they're on a semester, and so I said, "Fine." And then Carol Bennett comes back in the picture, and she says to me, "Hey, we're doing this mural at this really cool club that's opening up where—where Art Linkletter's bowling alley used to be, at the corner of La Cienega and Santa Monica Boulevard. It's going to be called "Flipper's Roller Disco Boogie." [Flipper's Roller Boogie Palace] [00:36:03]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I was super into airbrushing, and she's like—and I guess somehow, she had seen my portfolio. So, I went there and was hanging out with all these cool people. I have no idea what age they were.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And just for the record, this was the roller—a roller-skating disco rink that I also remember. It was a—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Blue—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —legendary place.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —yes, powder blue, urethane floor, and—yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you did the mural? What did you do there?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I did most of the leaves and the bananas for the big mural. So, the long wall had a remake of Rousseau's jungle scene that then turned the corner—it wasn't really a corner. It was actually like just a big curve—to a gigantic mural of Carmen Miranda, whose fruit hat turned into a gigantic banana extravaganza and—yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And so, did you work for Carol Bennett doing what she wanted you to do?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: As—and just—is it—also, is it B-E-N-N-E-T?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's like I think it's B-U-R—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: B—U?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think it's, yeah, Bennett. [. . . -BB]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But did she—did she hire you?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, she hired me, and then—which is also funny because we would go to the International House of Pancakes next door and then slowly, we went to Barney's Beanery. But that was already—like that was summer of '79, I guess? [00:38:06]

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I was working. I worked for her to make enough money so I could pay for this first—my first semester.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And you did it?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I did it. Yeah, and I also worked at BBDO. So, I'd work like part of the day at BBDO Advertising, doing just runaround stuff, and then—and I worked there over the summers. And then I would—and then I would go drive over in my really groovy Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser station wagon.

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then I'd go over to Santa Monica and La Cienega. But the thing that, I think, most people don't understand is, like—or maybe you do if you grow up outside of Beverly Hills and stuff. It's like, for me, driving the surface streets of LA were like—because you just—you drove freeways. My entire relationship to LA was totally freeways until, I guess really, I moved back to LA, but—and lived in LA But it was like you get off on La Brea and you drive straight up La Brea off the [I-]10, or you would come off the [I-]405, and you drive all the way along Santa Monica, but you didn't ever drive around. You were just like—you know. There were freeway exits, and you figured out which freeway was—using the Thomas Guide—which freeway was going to get you closest to your off-ramp. And then at your off-ramp, you just sort of—like it was—it was a long off-ramp to your destination, so. [00:40:03]

But—and then they, somehow, figured out with this project that we could go drink at Barney's Beanery. And I didn't know anything about *Barney's Beanery* [*The Beanery*], the Ed Kienholz piece at that point. So, only later, you know when I'm sitting in an art history class at Berkeley, and they're showing that, Peter Selz is showing that, I'm like, "Oh, my God. That's—wait, we were drinking at that bar," so, yeah. So, I think there's—there's these sort of moments and then anyhow—but there's a guy named Bob Herzbrun who worked with my dad, who's the one who said, "You should let him go." And Bob's major claim to fame was that he wrote like the quintessential book on martinis which—besides other things, but that's—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And, so you know—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: H-E-R-Z-B-U-R-N [sic]?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. He was somehow related to some studio executive, and I want to say Paramount, but I'm not sure. And that was the other thing, it's like there was this weird family. Like, Hollywood was always on the periphery, but never—like we never went into it. [They laugh.] There's all this family folklore of Bob Hope, who was supposed to be giving money to the Elks or some club that my step-great-grandfather was part of. He had the big check, and they had the photo op, and then after the journalist left, my step-great-grandfather said something to the effect of, "Okay, now, you're going to give us the check for—what—" whatever, 15 grand or however much it was at the time. Bob Hope turned to him and said, "You know that photo op was worth more than any money I can give you," and walked away. So, there's always this like, "Those Hollywood people." [00:42:08]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] That's funny. So, that—but—your friends, your father's friend said, go ahead, and let you go to Franklin College, and how did you—? I presume you flew there? You got to the airport—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: We flew there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You flew there? Did you go on your own?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I went on my own, yeah, and that's when you used to be able to walk people to the—to the gate. So, it was a sunny, Southern California day, and we're at Torrance Beach in the morning, saw all my friends, and then packed. Everything has been packed up, and got on a TWA flight that had to fly to New York because no plane went that far, so. And the—you know, I—supposedly, my mother says that I said goodbye and I didn't turn around at the end of the gangplank. [They laugh.] I just kept going. It was like, "Okay, let's go. Let's see what happens, and—"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is 1981?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, that's 1979.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, '79, excuse me—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: '79.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: '81 was when you graduate. 1979, perfect.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, so. And part of the great thing about Franklin College, and they still do it, is that two

weeks out of every quarter, you travel somewhere. So, I got there and I took an economics class and German history. I had this incredible professor, Frau Holman, who had been a film actress during the Second World War, had a very like—I mean, her life, unto itself, is one of those fascinating things. Had been a speed skater, had—was supposed to be part of the Hitler Youth but somehow Adolf Hitler flew around the German or the Berlin stadium too long. [00:44:18]

She fainted and—[laughs]—ended up with her first husband who was a film director. I mean, these whole sort of things. You know, he ODs on something after the war, and she ends up marrying this Hungarian Jewish guy Mr. Holman, and she goes to Switzerland. She is like teaching German, but she's also the voice of Berlitz.

So, she's living—and it's like—but she was fantastic because she took us to Germany, to West Germany and East Germany. She was from East Berlin, so we went and saw things. Really, that to me became this idea of, like, I really always want to go to places where there's not a McDonald's. [They laugh.] It's so funny—gag. Because it's just you—it's just—you just think like, "Oh, how is this structured? What's this society looking like? What—what are people making? What are they thinking? What's the art look like?" So, there's always art even if it's state—you know, and there's always art that's not state-sanctioned. I mean, we live in state-sanctioned art. It just happens to be commercially driven as opposed to socially driven, I think. And so, that was great. So I—you know?

I lived in this house outside of Lugano with a bunch of people in this crazy like 15th-century housing, a place called Gravesano. And the Elseners were German-speaking Swiss, but then we lived in the Italian section, and they made grappa. [00:46:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You know, some of the things that are lost in generations, is like—if you lived abroad, besides getting—sending lots of letters on the sort of—whatever they were. There was like airmail stationery, or the—you had to—you had to go to either the post office, which was called the PTT, and you have to wait. They would say, you know, "Palos Verdes box 18," or whatever, and—or you would make a call from downstairs, which by the time they finally called you back—because they had to call you back once they got the line through—you'd be completely drunk. Because you would not want to say no to the Elseners, who were very nice and generous with their bread and wine and their grappa.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The—they were—their names were the Elseners?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: E-L-L?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think so. And they were very funny. But so—but because it was kind of far out, after the first month or two having taken the bus, which was kind of ridiculous, I bought a little Puch Maxi moped.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: A Puch.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's a Puch?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: A Puch is a type of moped. So, they were—that was like the mode of transportation, and then we figured out a way to sand down the head, so we could go faster.

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And no helmets ever. That was—nobody ever thought about wearing a helmet and so, yeah. So with—that also led us to meet people outside of Lugano. [00:48:02]

It was a fascinating group of people because it was quite—it was like a way for—there was a Dutch guy who was a really good friend. So, there were like people from all over that were either—if you were from Europe or the Middle East, you were there because you were trying to get into—after two years, to get into a university in the U.S. And a lot of like second-year Claremont McKenna people were there. So, those people who were doing their junior year abroad, and then there were sort of people like me who were like first year. And then I was going to see what I wanted to do, and then it was great. So that—the first year I went there to East Germany and then the second semester, I went to—I went to—I think I went to St. Ives and I—and which was also like a major sort of shift.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In England.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: In England, because this professor who taught—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Cornwall?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Cornwall, yeah. The professor who was teaching art, this guy Brian Stanford, like the school, he had spent a lot of time there and was really a devotee to Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth. Patrick Heron became his friend. The whole—you know that whole group of British artists.

[Side Conversation.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Should I put it on pause?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, so we were talking about St. Ives, which of course, had such an extraordinary reputation, and let's see. You're in that—at that point, it's the late '70s, so its big moments had long passed, but at least, it's a legitimate history.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. No, and I think that was like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when I say its moment had passed, I just meant that their—the interest in that body of work was reduced at that point in time

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And I think the power of someone like Patrick Heron, because he was writing for *Arts International*—*International Studio* [*Studio International*] I think, or—? You know, his voice had been, I think, truncated, and—

But we went to London and we went to Cornwall. And it was a very—I mean, for me that was also really interesting because it was like, you know, people who had decided like they really wanted to go be artists. But there's an event that comes before that, and that is within the first year of being at Franklin. We went to Bern, Switzerland, and went to the Kunstmuseum there and—oh, a docent or a security woman or whatever yanked on my sleeve and then was saying something to me in Suisse Deutsch, and I was like, "I can't really understand what you're saying." And then she says, "Felix Klee, Felix Klee," and my professor, Brian Stanford, I mean, besides loving Ben Nicholson, and was—was Paul Klee, so then—and I think these are these moments when you move away from the illustration or whatever, I'm kind of thinking to—like, you have these explosion moments in art—I would say modern art. Felix Klee was there, and he gave us a little tour, not of his father's work but of African masks that were in the collection. It was one of those moments where you kind of—like all of a sudden, it starts opening up, instead of like what art is supposed to be and how it's supposed to behave, to all these sort of possibilities. [00:52:12]

And, you know, the joke actually goes after that when we came out—right next door to the museum was a Scientology—[they laugh]—office, and they were trying to get us to do the test. And Micheal Hooykaas, this guy Micheal Hooykaas was just the most troublesome anarchist, and he just wanted to do it to fuck with them. And so, he's like, "Oh, we should do it." I didn't do it but—because I—my feeling about any cult in coming from California was like, just stay away, as far away as possible. I think that probably was because of the Manson thing and what impact it ultimately made in one's subconscious. Like, you know, it's all going to go very badly. Anyway, so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Do you have any idea how to spell Micheal Hooykaas's last name?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I would say—I don't know—H-O-Y-K-A-S-S, something like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, yeah, that—I mean that was—but, you know, so there were these moments, these things that happen. Or we were supposed to go to the Soviet Union under a Swiss visa, but because the U.S. had pulled out of the 1980 Olympics, we did not go, and people were very concerned about that. [00:54:02]

So being—doing our due diligence as students and what money we had, we figured—having looked at various places around the Mediterranean that the one place that had the warmest weather was Tel Aviv. [They laugh.] And so, this guy Micheal Hooykaas and—what was her name—like, three other women, we all took the train down to Rome, got on a plane to Tel Aviv, and arrived in Israel for two weeks. Then figuring out that it was cheaper to rent a Volkswagen Polo, which was like a subclass to a Golf, or what we called here a Rabbit. And we

drove around, of course, spending most of our money the first night at the—though we didn't stay there. We somehow—we figured the only place that you could drink was at the Sheraton in the Seven Tribes restaurant, which blew all our money. [They laugh.] Because it was over Passover, and Easter fell exactly at the same time, so.

We then drove up to Haifa and then across to Nazareth to the Sea of Galilee, or Lake Tiberias, at which we met some very nice Palestinians that then said, "Oh, you want to go waterskiing?" The funny thing was that Electra Preston was Catholic, Maria Brisbane was, I think, a good sort of New York Protestant, and there was somebody else. And then Micheal was completely atheist, and I was from California, and we had—my family has no real religion other than gardening. [00:56:08]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. [They laugh.] So I was going to say that, were you—did you ever go to church?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Our next-door neighbors were Catholics, so I think I learned a lot about art history through going to Catholic Church.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: With your neighbors?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Because you would go, like, "Oh, that's the Trinity. That's what this means, that's what—" You know?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you did—but you—your parents weren't Catholic?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, we would wake up in the morning with—generally on a Saturday, if it was football season, we did college football. So, we had a football pool, then my mom would make, I don't know, breakfast. For a long time, the joke was it was the Church of the Holy Waffle, because we had waffles, and somehow she had magically figured out how to put bacon in the waffles.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then we had the garden. Once we were teenagers, we were like, "Oh, my God," because basically, we would garden until, like, two o'clock on a Sunday. Of course, seeing our next-door neighbors who got to go to church and then stop at Winchell's Donuts on the way home—[they laugh]—and they had the rest of the day off. And they were big Rams fans, so—I—anyhow. And—and yeah. So, my relationship to church was like little to nothing other than, maybe in high school, the cool thing—and I was just talking to my assistant Casey who grew up in Houston. We were talking about Young Life, like Young Life became a very cool thing. It wasn't because you wanted to believe in Jesus Christ or anything. It was because of the cool kids. Somehow, everyone thought like the cool kids were going to do Young Life, and then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was it like a young church—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Young Christian—yeah, it was like—yeah, like they had renamed the Bible, "The Way." It was — [00:58:02]

But what I will add to that is, there was a woman my parents met in Mexico. Her name was Gemma. I only knew her as Gemma. She was a ceramic artist, and she had a kiln in Malaga Cove, which is when you go into Palos Verdes, it's the first thing there, and they made it look like Malaga. Like all that—the roofs had to be tiled roofs, then the first houses that were built there all in the '20s are all sort of very much Spanish, Mission-style sort of houses. My brother used to work for her a little bit taking out the kiln.

When my parents met her, she was making papier-mâché things that were covering lipstick or really—like very, very articulate, interesting things. Anyhow, Gemma was kind of a super hippie who believed that one should be taking peyote as opposed to finding God through Jesus Christ. [They laugh.] So, I think one day I came to her, and I was supposed to do like what my brother was doing. We were talking about God or something, and she's like, "Throw that Bible away. Why don't you ask them these five questions right off the first chapter of Genesis? And watch them stumble and fall." That was her whole thing.

So, anyway, I went back and said to the counselor, "I've got some questions for you"—[laughs]—which to this day just keep lingering on, and—but yeah. So that—I think that was— that's sort of the funny part, is like that went forward into jumping all the way back to Lake Tiberias. We're all there, we're about ready to water ski, and—because we met this nice Palestinian guy who was like, "Yeah, I can take you waterskiing." [01:00:06] Micheal Hooykaas is like, "So what's the big deal? I'm walking on water? What's the—?" And Electra Preston is like, "Your grandparents are monkeys," like it's—[they laugh.] But it was really—I mean to me, it made my—it made me really think about the insanity of this place that's called Israel and American's insanity relationship to it. I think it should have just been a gigantic UN free zone for three great religions. And all the rest of it is completely insane,

and it continues to be insane.

I didn't understand why there were very Orthodox Jews taking stick to the girls who were wearing skirts that were well below their knees as we were walking towards the Western Wall and Jerusalem. We basically went everywhere. I went to Masada, went to the Dead Sea, went down to [Eilat -BB] as far as we could to look at some crusader castle. And then realized that we had barely enough money to make it back to Tel Aviv because there were no ATMs or anything. No one had credit cards. And Micheal Hooykaas who was a—everybody was a big smoker except for me. They were all—like he said, "I can't drive back unless I have a pack of Marlboro Reds," so we were like, "We need the money for gas." [01:02:03]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And we barely made it back on fumes, and he got his cigarettes.

[END OF TRACK butler18\_1of3\_sd\_track02.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But no, it was—but—I think those travels and—I mean the crazy thing that somebody just reminded me is, like, we had gone to Oktoberfest, and that was the year that Oktoberfest was bombed. Our train went through Bologna one day before the Red Brigade. And, I mean, it does make me look rather suspicious that things were happening around me, but terrorist acts. But, no, I think the real thing that was interesting is there was—it was like we now talk about these terrorist's act or whatever, but there was stuff happening that was internal that was really—it was not—there was no pacificity of, like, that everything was just fine and hunky-dory. There was a real movement that was still afoot in a very—in a way, a really real, sort, of anti-industrialist position that I think today with all the inequity, I'm very surprised there hasn't been that sort of reaction to wealthy people and European and the United States. Somehow, we think like they're not doing anything, but one day, we'll be like them. [Laughs.] It's a dream come true, anyway, so yeah. So—and then we went to Czechoslovakia, which was super interesting, and by then we're studying—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you went back from Israel to—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Went back—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —school?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and then back to school, and then that term finished and then I came back to LA. I worked at BBDO during the summer.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did you do for BBDO?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I was in the traffic department, which actually I have to—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: What does that actually mean? [00:02:13]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Traffic was—once upon a time, they were the people who organized when a campaign happened. So, let's say the account executive and the client said, "Right, we need to have this ad in the *New Orleans Picayune*, and it's got to be there for Christmas." And so, what you would do is you would—the traffic department would work backwards. So, it's going to—it has to go to press on this day and then—so everything has to be sent to them on this day. And then we have to get the creative, and we have to think, so on and so forth. Proofreading, everything that's—that goes, and then—so you'd have to build it all the way out, which was kind of interesting. It also caused—I think that the client had to make decisions, which is something technology has taken away from the world. Like everyone thinks they can make the decision to—up to the last, last, last, last second, throwing everything into chaos. But that's okay, because the client is the client. It doesn't matter if it's the art world or if it's advertising, if I talk to people who are still in advertising. So, that's what I did.

So, I basically would take things around. And you had—they had these big envelope sleeves that had stuff in it. The paperwork was put on it and then you had to check off, and you have to make sure that you're hitting your deadlines. If you weren't hitting your deadlines then people had to be encouraged to hit their deadlines. And that you're behind, and you had to make it clear to the client that things were behind, and that they weren't—you know, if that was print. And if it was TV, it was something else. And so, it's like this big kind of go-between.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But you were working part-time there as—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Just as like—as a summer job.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A summer job. And did you learn—what did you learn from that experience?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think organization.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] At which you're very good, by the way.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I'm okay. I have dreams of being better organized. I always say that, you know, my—like, Virgos are incredibly well-organized people. [00:04:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm a Virgo. I would—I would dispute that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I know. Well, that's the beautiful thing about—[they laugh]—a Cancer. I'm a Cancer, and my desire is—we joke, like, "And Capricorns think they're really well-organized," and we'll argue. I jokingly also say like, you know, "Christ was supposedly a Capricorn. If he had just said, 'Maybe I'm the Son of God,' it would have worked out so much better." [They laugh.] So, I think that, yeah, I'm okay in my organization. I really like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —to have things organized, and—but also things that are behind-the-scenes-organized. Like that idea, that super sort of bourgeois idea, like, there's no piles anywhere. It's all—it's the Julius Shulman version of the world. That's why I always—I love the stories of like Julius Shulman and the Eames. Like, I can—I'm sure he was just, like, "Why don't you just guys go away? I'm going to clean up the house to just make it—" and they were like, "What are you talking about? This is our brain exploded on the walls and everywhere." And he's just like, "No, there's nothing, just a nice pile of books." I'd rather also see everything behind the doors really organized.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And do—what did it do for you in terms of just make—helping you decide whether to go into advertising or not?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think that I thought advertising was cool and fast moving. I wanted to go into illustration and so when I would come back, I would meet with people who are involved in illustration or—you know? Because we lived in the South Bay, I had a very, very short stint working for Dewey Weber doing—like, airbrushing surfboards. But I didn't really want to make classic surfboards. I wanted to be much more punk about it, and so that job didn't last very long. [00:06:01]

But having said that, I think it was somehow somewhere in the arts, you know? I took photographs. I took a lot of photographs and so that was—you know. I shot film, I shot Super 8, and then I had a summer after I went to Berkeley, one summer I went to—back to St. Ives and shot a documentary film that I don't ever think saw the light of day, but we're shooting 16-millimeter, like climbing around quoits, which are these Neolithic stones things.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And just to get back to this. Like, you're in this advertising environment, and in the course of just—going there every summer, instead of encouraging your appetite to go into advertising, it sounds like it actually decreased your appetite to go into advertising?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I thought—I thought it was really good, I would say, until this thing happened with—at TracyLocke, which is down the road a bit. That just made me think about something else. I mean, I think that we—that I thought about different things, but in terms of going in straight ahead into the arts, or having a gallery, that doesn't really happen until I'm living in London in 1984, so. And even then, when I moved to London, I wanted to go work in advertising. I thought I could get a job. Little did I realize that I can't get a work permit.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We'll go back and get you, at least, to finish up Franklin College. So, we're at Franklin College, and in the summers, you're working at BBDO, and you are—then you go back for your second year at Franklin College. [00:08:05]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And that takes me—that takes me back to Germany again. And that was—you know. And it was—the conferences we'd have with people. There was the Burgermeister from East Germany, and he would be like, "Yeah, one day we'll be reunified, DDR." And he would be like, "Okay," and you think about this now. I mean, think about it. Like that's in 1980, and in nine years, the DDR is gone. So, I think that's become now, as time has gone on, super powerful. At the time, we were like, "Wow, that's incredible," and, you know, there's Axel Springer's building and his—he was broadcasting news across the wall. And then we'd go down to Jena and Weimar and Wartburg, and all these sort of places in the East. And so, you realize like it's just people living a completely different life, the way they're living and what they have and don't have. And I was never that interested in being judgmental about if they were right or wrong, but it was just—it was a really fascinating period of what was being developed or not developed. [00:10:00]

And then—and also, I met this woman who was in Weimar who was an architecture student and her—she told me the story of her family. And, you know, having the father and two of the brothers, were in the West the day the wall went up, and her and her other brother and mother were in the East. And the story of mother finally divorces father because it's too much, and marries a party member. Her plan was to go to Yugoslavia and then get to Trieste and get out. But because she was a, you know—and—but go on a holiday, and you could do that if you're a part of a—so it was this idea of, like, think—how you think outside the box within the—within this sort of trapped world. So then in spring of that year, we went to Czechoslovakia and studied cooperative farms, and that was again super interesting. And this woman who worked with my father who was an accountant was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, sorry—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —from Prague and had left in '68, and so she asked me to bring hard currency to her sister who was a librarian. So, I would meet her in the evening, and we would have dinner, and I would pass money to her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is around like, 1980?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's 1980, yeah, going into '81.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, with all these life experiences, how are the courses at Franklin College? Are you learning anything?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, they were great. They were like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And did you take art history there at all, or just regular history?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was regular history. I took regular history. I took German. I took—I probably should have taken Italian and English, and I think—and English lit, which was interesting, European literature, which introduced me to people like Max Frisch who—you know, *I'm Not Stiller*, which I think is one of the most interesting books still.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Max Frisch. It's *I'm Not Stiller*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *I'm Not Stiller*?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Most people know *Homo Faber*, which they made into a movie, but *I'm Not Stiller* is—and it turns out he was dating Ingeborg Bachmann, who's an Austrian poet. But it—and so I think that idea of like, being in Europe and reading European literature, and reading Henry James in Europe, and reading *Daisy Miller*, and having been in Rome. Like there's—for my brain and the way I think, like, experience is everything, you know? I still, one day, want to do this exercise, which is to read *Frankenstein* in 10 different places, starting in Geneva. [00:12:21]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Well, this is—it explains a lot, because you're always—as long as I've known you, you've been more open. You've been very open to having Europeans, showing Europeans, being involved in the European art scene.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, yeah, it explains your origins a bit.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, I would say that, and so then I applied to go to Berkeley to get into the art school there. I got in, and I was supposed to do studio, and I went to get my studio. Peter Voulkos was supposed to be the professor who was supposed to give me my studio, and he didn't show up. I had to hustle and figure out what other courses I was going to take. Because I had already had studio courses, I somehow didn't have to immediately take studio courses. I took a history course on—"From Beowulf to Bede," which is early English.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I took a course on 20th-century art with Peter Selz. And quite honestly, I can't remember what the other one was—the other class, but those are the two that made a major impact. [00:14:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, Peter Selz must have made—he was—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, he was great.



HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —quite a lively character.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He was lively and he—yeah. I mean, he was fantastic, and devastating for an art historian. Because he wanted you to live in the 20th century, and the rest of the art history department was like, "You need to be taking medieval art, or—" you know? There's a guy named Harvey Stahl who was teaching medieval art, and there was—Northern Renaissance was—oh, no, I've just forgotten her name. She was the one who was proposing that Northern Renaissance was far superior to—to Italian Renaissance. I'll remember her name in a minute, anyway. But there were—all these people were there. These guys [Loren] Partridge and [Randolph] Starn were doing an amazing combination between history, and art history, and studying *The Battle of San Romano*. And Jacques—what is Jacques's last name? Jacques de Caso was like the premiere scholar on Rodin, and so. Anyhow, I just took all these courses. Cahill was still there doing his Chinese art, and it was just the transition. And then there were people, like, Molly Nesbit was there, but she was doing her PhD. Kristine Stiles who's—that's—to go to performance, that's where the whole performance thing because she was very much involved in performance, and performance that was happening up in the Bay Area at the time. She would take us to these things and—but, yeah. [00:16:12]

I mean, Berkeley was—it was—for me, it was also, I think, coming in as a junior, I was scared shitless, which—I was just talking to some professors about that. And they're like, "You know what, we love people who transfer into the UC system. Because if you just had only freshmen that were coming in, and then you went through the system. But these people come with all these different life experiences that bring a completely different conversation." And I think a lot of them also find that when you come in and you're the brightest and the best at a high school, that you then hit these bumps in the road for the first time. A lot of freshmen and sophomores are like, "I'm not the smartest of my class. I'm not—" You know?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, for me, Berkeley was great, and I basically spent most of my time up in Doe Library in my carrel, that I could get to through the classics department. And, you know—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you were serious—you took your—you took your studies very seriously there, it seems to me, more seriously than at Franklin—well, you're older, and you're getting more established? Or did you feel like it was harder, or the classes were harder?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think there are—I took them seriously in both places. I just think that the structure and the way of thinking was different. I kept thinking when I was at—you know, partly because I became friends with Peter and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Peter Selz?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Peter Selz. He said to me in the second year I was at Berkeley, "Why don't you take this graduate seminar on the human figure in post-war art?" And so, I tried to think of different ideas of what I wanted to do. One of them was the transition from all these artists like Patrick Heron, who were very much indebted to people like Braque, but then they became abstract painters. They're all this figure—like I was really interested in the—how did that move happen. Because a lot of it was they were making figurative work but then moving out of the figuration. And Peter was like, "No, don't do that." [00:18:04]

So then in the end I did, a piece on Frank Auerbach. I somehow figured out a way to fly to London, and I got an interview with Auerbach. We sat at a café near Marlborough Gallery in Mayfair and talked and talked and talked and had a really interesting conversation. But the thing that—you know, so I came back, I wrote my piece, and then Peter then proceeded to tell me, "Very nicely done, but never believe artists, what they say." [They laugh.] Because as I found out later, one, he was—a lot of what he was saying was very much about perpetuating his legacy, which goes all the way from Bomberg to Sickert to Whistler, so on, so forth, all the way to Jacques-Louis David. So, he was making this incredible—but he never mentioned his wife, who's Julia. And even when you go back and read all the Catherine Lampert essays, she never says his wife once. He, also, had a son, or has a son, and—you know? [00:20:03]

Later that weekend, I went down to Cornwall and saw Patrick Heron who I had become friends with after making this little film. Patrick's driving back, and he's telling me all the stories of Kenneth Noland and Greenberg coming to Cornwall and trying to convince Patrick Heron and everybody, part of that abstract group, to paint like them. We get back to London after Cornwall, and we go to the Tate then—what is now the Tate Britain, but that's—there's where the whole Tate was. And there was a show of Julian Schnabel that I guess that Doris and Charles Saatchi had paid for, so people were up in arms about that. But we walked through, and then we had dinner with Patrick's two daughters, and I'm telling them, because I'm very excited that I met Patrick—I had met Auerbach. And Catherine says, "What a load of crap. He does not get up every morning at six o'clock in the morning and go to Primrose Hill and Mornington Crescent station. I see him leaving the house at like 11," like—

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and it's right. Anyhow, and then I send a note to Frank Auerbach just saying how great it was and I don't know, writing. He sends me back a letter saying, "I saw you with Patrick Heron at the Tate. I was too embarrassed to say hello." But what I realized only now is that they kind of hated each other. They didn't really hate—I mean, like most people don't—but the position that each one of them took was a very—you know, at total other ends of the world, which—we'll come to Los Angeles at some point. But this was always a question that people from Europe and New York could never understand when you'd say, "Oh, yeah, I was just with Chris Williams and Paul McCarthy," and they'd be like, "What? How are they friends?" And you're like, "We live in LA, who cares? Nobody—" [00:22:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You know? The turf wasn't—the turf wasn't that hot. There was very—for the most part, it was, I think, when people felt like you turned against them or something, that it was something. So that was—so Berkeley was great, and in terms of like, again, meeting people. And strangely, out of Berkeley, and kind of becoming slightly fearless about talking to living artists, there was also a guy named Brian Wall who was there who had come out of the British scene. He was the guy before Caro who was welding. He was—he was welding stuff and then—but he left, and he went to Berkeley and taught at Berkeley. And so, I became friends with Brian and never met—funny enough, never met Peter Voukos, who—all I know is famous stories of him being high on cocaine and pulling out loaded guns and—you know, because they had like poker night and things. So, he was kind of there, but he wasn't really there. He lived in Oakland, and so I just ended in the art history department by chance and really liked it, and liked the people that were there, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when you did your degree, what did you do your degree in, as it were?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was in art history.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Your BA was in art history, but did you have a specialty? [00:24:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I mean, I guess, it would be 20th century. It would be 20th-century British. And then at the last term I was there, I met this guy Peter Lasko—I think is his name? He was somehow involved with the Courtauld Institute before they moved to Somerset House. He said, "You should go like get a—you know, an MA there," and so I wrote them, and they're like, "It's a bit late, but why don't you come do an interview?" And I had already made up my mind in March of 1984, I was leaving the United States, and I was moving to London. And so, I sort of got myself together, and I had a couple of extra classes to take to be able to graduate officially, and then I left.

In March, I flew to London, and really good friends of mine from—she had gone to Franklin, and she was there with her boyfriend who was at RADA, at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts. She was going to the Cordon Bleu, and they had a place in South Kensington, and I slept on the floor. [They laugh.] I was looking for apartments, and I was also trying to get a job in advertising.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I thought, this is no problem. I've been working at BBDO and they said the same thing to me, "Do you have a work permit?" "Oh, you're going to get me one," and they were like, "Yeah, you're hired, kid." Because also, it was a time when the EU was really coming into fruition. That—you could cross borders in terms of work. So, first of all, they had to hire people who were Commonwealth, then they had to hire EU people, or vice versa, and then Americans. So then, at one point, I jokingly said to somebody, "Oh, my family was absolute Royalist. We were totally against the revolution. [They laugh.] Can't I get a job?" But I—every day would get—you know. Like every week I got *Campaign* magazine, which was an advertising magazine, and I really had ideas of doing that. [00:26:06]

Finally, I found an apartment after much shenanigans, because I nearly had an apartment, probably would have died in a basement flat across from Baker Street. But that would have been like—yeah, that would not have ended up well. I found a great apartment in Kennington, which is on the south side of the river, but nobody ever came to visit me because they thought it was too rough or something, and it was great. It was a really fascinating—a fascinating place to live. Because it was right behind City & Guilds, which is a little art school.

And then I did my interviews for the Courtauld and I realized, at that point, that I didn't really want to do that, because I wanted to write about three different things: One was the destruction symposium ["Destruction in Art Symposium"] of 1969. It was when Hermann Nitsch and all the Actionist people came to London, or Light and Space, and or, sort of late St. Ives stuff, which wasn't—I mean, I loved it but it was kind of like—[00:28:04] And they said to me, "You can't do that. It has to be at least 30 years to make it art history." And I was like—which I now understand, because it—there has to be some sort of distance. Also, that we can go back to the objects in

some way, and just look at the objects, and are they—are they still transmitting anything without folklore around it?

Anyway, and I was—I was too impatient. Also, I think there is another thing that had happened at that point, which was—Tina Orr-Cahall, who should live in infamy and have never been able to work again after what she did to the Corcoran and canceling the Mapplethorpe show. At that time, she was the director of the Oakland Art Museum, and she taught a class with Peter Selz on museum studies. It was right when they were making the Vatican show at the de Young. They had moved the American collection to the Palace of the Legion of Honor. We were doing a walk through, and she made the most snide, superficial comment to a young junior curator, which was not even part of her institution saying, "Really, you're going to paint the baseboards that color?" And I thought, I do not want to be a museum curator. I know you get paid nothing, and it's for the joy of being a scholar, but if you have to put up with people like this?

[They laugh.] [00:30:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think my brain said, "Bitches like this?" And also, she failed me on my paper about the University [Berkeley] Art Museum. [Laughs.] Because she disagreed with my argument, which I still think is one of the greatest museums ever built. I think it's so beautiful, and Peter said, " You missed one point. You—the galleries you got all right, but having to work there, they never thought about the amount of offices one would need. They didn't walk that through." Anyway. So that together with this interview, where they were really saying like, "Don't you want to do medieval art or something else?" made me think like, you know, that's not really where I want to go. I still wanted to be in advertising.

And then I got this job at this gallery right next to Covent Garden. There was a group of three little galleries that were there, and this guy Graham Paton who had a gallery and showed British artists—I will say that the world has changed so enormously that, other than Lisson Gallery, and maybe a few others, nobody ever showed any artist straight out of school. It was like, three years in a studio at Stoke Newington. And if you could make it past those three years, you were going to—you were going to be okay enough that you're a serious artist. And so, I kind of worked Saturdays for him just sitting there and moving art. And he did a show that the *Telegraph* had supported called *10 Artists for the '90s* [*Artists for the 1990s - 10 Galleries, 10 Artists*], and it included Julian Opie as probably the only artist— [00:32:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: *For the '90s*, but you were working there in 1984?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. So, they were trying to think who the big artists of the '90s were going to be. Julian Opie was there, and Alexis Hunter, who actually was a New Zealander, but she had moved there. She was a really interesting feminist artist. So, anyway, I kind of started meeting these artists. There was a guy named Simon English and Simon Edmonson who are figurative painters, but they were kind of youngish. Ultimately, Simon Edmonson had kind of a big figurative career for a moment, with people like Steven Campbell and that whole sort of new figuration. And so, yeah. So, I kicked around London for a while.

The other thing that was great is that you could go to the Tate and you could put in a request to see a work of art. You could still do it. I mean, I think the waiting list wasn't so long. Maybe it's longer, but in the basement in Millbank, they had these works. So, I'll be like, "Oh, I want to see that Brian Wallis," or I want to see that," you know whoever it was, I could just go and have looks. I would just make an appointment, and then you could sit there as long as you wanted. It was totally insane. I have my notebook, and I just sit there and then I'd ask if I can get some sort of reproduction of it. And then I would tape this reproduction into my notebook, and then I would go upstairs and I would sit and I would look at the Pollock, which is *Spring 1955* or something, which is this long, thin, horizontal painting. And then I would sit in the Rothko room and then they would, you know, whatever. I would look at Reg Butler's *Maquette for The Unknown Political Prisoner*. So, I just kept looking and looking and looking and then I'd go to the Wallis collection, and I was always trying to figure it out. And I just wandered around London pretty much for a year and a half. [00:34:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And the only income you had was just from this gallery? Did you parents send you money?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. My parents didn't send me any money. [Laughs.] No, I would—I—it was so cheap. It was so cheap to live in South London. And then I was always kind of insane about—or like, I would get—you could get fish and chips for really cheap, but I always cooked, and I always—when I lived in Lugano, I had come up with this concoction of ketchup and this little teardrop pasta. You could have that mixed with ketchup with butter and salt and pepper and then you would put it on top of your pasta. [Laughs.] And you just eat. And then there was—there was always like a night that you would go out, and people would drink. I remember I always lined up their—and it was not very expensive to drink. So, you would go, and you get a pint of Directors and after about two pints of Directors, you were like shitfaced. And then there was a pub, The Prince of Wales, which was in Cleaver Square.

I lived up above a bookmaker, which was quite funny. It was just like—you know? It was a little—basically a converted flat that it was, like, you walked in and the kitchen was there. There was a little bedroom in the back, and it wasn't anything. And that's the other thing that, I think, ultimately, that you kind of think, like, you don't really need anything to live. So, I did that and I— [00:36:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How much was your rent there?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I have no idea now. I'd have to go back. It was—I don't know—maybe 60 pounds at most.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now through all this time, we haven't talked about any of your romantic relationships. Did you have a girlfriend or a boyfriend or any romance at all at this time?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I met this lovely woman Lisa Bailey, and she was at City & Guilds, and she studied gilding and calligraphy. And I had other girlfriends, too, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This was in London?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: This was in London. And before that, there is—yeah there, were girlfriends. They're all great. I mean I don't think there was a bad girlfriend in the bunch. There was maybe—there was like insane, crazy, it—we ended it, like—you know? Lisa, I would say, was the closest thing to it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: To being a girlfriend?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. To be like splitting, and never wanting to ever talk to the person again, or seeing them again.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. [They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, I—like, if it didn't work out afterwards, I'm always happy to be friends with them. [They laugh.] It's like really—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it the longest-term one? Is this woman Lisa Bailey, she's the long-term relationship?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, there were other ones. There were ones in high—like there was one in high school, but we—I went to—she went to UCI, UC Irvine, and I went to—and I went to Franklin and then we split. But that was for a while and then—but I would say Lisa was—because I had stopped moving, and I was living in London and then she moved to LA with me. Highly illegal, overstaying her welcome. [Laughs.] [00:38:09]

And that was—yeah, that was fantastic. And her family was like—I always wanted to make an animated TV show about her family, because it was the definition of bedlam-ic. It's like, it's so—it's super brilliant. [They laugh.] Her father was this amazing mind and tinker and he—John Bailey, and he would come home, and he would—they lived in this—it must have been like, I don't know, some sort of—it was across from Rose's Lime Juice factory in Saint Albans, originally known as Verulamium.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What was it originally known as?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Verulamium was the—was the Roman name of it, and that's where Saint Albans was martyred. They chopped his head off and then the—the guy who chopped his head off, his eyes fell out, or some great story. [They laugh.] But—and they lived in this big brick house that didn't have any central heating or anything. And Mrs. Bailey was five-foot-nothing, and there was like—Lisa was the oldest one, and then there was Sophie and there's Greg who—or not Greg. There was George, who was done for burglary.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: The father was—had started a computer company, and when it—and it had somehow begun to make some money, though you'd never know it, right? He would—like they fixed their own cars. The day they came to California and saw that I took my Volkswagen to get fixed, it was kind of like, "You're insane, right?" [They laugh.] [00:40:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's so American. We fix our—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We fix our own cars.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was a very hotheaded sort of house. My favorite guy was a guy named Gus who was the

neighbor who was a communist, who drove a three-wheeled ŠKODA. [They laugh.] I would take the train up and they—you know.

When I met Lisa, she wasn't talking to her family at all. They were all—and she was engaged to somebody she went to City & Guilds with. And literally, within three days, she had moved in with me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, and how long were you involved with her?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Almost seven years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my gosh.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Is that right? Eighty-four—no, no. '84, '85, '86, '87, all in all like four years. Basically when I started to work in the art world, that was the end, because she thought I was not a financially viable character anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes. So, what was this Paton Gallery, because that's where you end up working in '84?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. It was like a little—it was like a little gallery—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, who was—who was Paton?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Graham Paton's—I only found out later, had come from New Zealand. He showed a group of artists, you know, a guy named—it's like John Monk, or something like that. Like various people that were—probably none of us know any of them anymore. They were, I thought, certainly talented, I mean, some more than others, and they—a lot of them were painting abstract, or abstract with some figuration in it. And—and, yeah, it was fine. [00:42:09]

I mean, there wasn't anything there, and he was a very funny character that had a comb-over. He would lick his finger, and he would make it so that it's perfectly—a very, very affected gay man, but super funny and very sweet and nice in a way, and I liked the fact that he was paying me under the table.

And then he would say, "Oh, like—" There's this Italian street that sort of—maybe it's near Holborn station or something like that it's just like this little, walking thing. He would be like, "You know, Brian, we're going to go to The Spaghetti House." Again, there's going to be a—there's going to be a rift between people who are old, and know what it was like to eat in London in the '80s, and even into the early '90s, and people who would go there now and think it's some culinary delight. Because it was like—it was like nothing. And the spaghetti, or like—and that was like a big night out. There was a place that we used to go, this canteen that was on King's Road, that literally was like—you know, it was some sort of shepherd's pie mush and a cup of tea, and that was it. I mean, like you'd go, or you go to people's studios, and it was like you had instant coffee, or you had tea that took the enamel off, and—but nobody cared. Like I—so the other thing was like, there was no hope for bourgeois aspirations. You just hoped you got a show. You had to show your work, and you were like pushing away and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You must have—so, this is where you really learned about how a gallery runs? I'm asking— [00:44:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I hope not.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that—? [They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think it was—yeah, I mean maybe. Maybe, yeah, there's some aspect to that, but I think there's also like—that comes later. But I think that was really just periphery, and moving art around and packing it and—but it wasn't—it wasn't anything that I really thought about because, in my mind, this was just something I had to do to get some money. In getting the money, then I could just hang around with more people and meet different people and go and see these American friends of mine that were living there.

That was the other thing. It's like, because Tink was at the Cordon Bleu, she would bring food home. And what I totally had just forgotten was that Richard, who was at—who was at RADA, he was working in a butcher shop. So, between the two of them, you could get like some lamb chops or whatever. Like people—like, you just did stuff, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that—where does the cooking come from? Where did the interest in—cooking starts as necessity, or did you always like cooking?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, my mom. I think my mom was highly influenced by Julia Child and—yeah. I mean my mother—my grandmother on my father's side was a big pickler, and she used to win, and make pies, in

Manhattan Beach, she kind of ruled the county fair there. [They laugh.] And as a kid, we have to—we used to drive out to Hemet and pick apricots, because she would can apricots, these Blenheim apricots, which are now—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, they're so great.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —so fleeting. It was just like—and I had a great-uncle that lived out in Hemet, and we could go out there and pick lugs and lugs and lugs, and—[00:46:10]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now you've got me worried about Blenheim apricot season and when we can get them.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Soon.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Soon?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, we have—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Those are the best.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —they are the best. And to get a big lug of them and then can them? And so, there would be this canning thing, and then my father's birthday is in January, so there would be—they'd make pies, and they were not cooked. They were all ready to go, and then they would freeze them. It was this big deal of like, having apricot pie in January. Historically, since we're talking about produce, angel food cakes are like the official cake of my family. So, it's become, like, if you don't know how to make angel food cakes—anyhow, so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I forgot to ask you at the very beginning. I'll just quickly ask you now. What is your actual birthdate?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: July first, 1961.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think I did do that. Yes, I did, I'm sorry, never mind.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Strangely, the exact date that Princess Diana was born and year, and I made it much further than her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, you did.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry, I did ask that. I'm just going to—I just forgot, okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, moving on to—here you are working, according to this, '84, you're at Paton Gallery, and then '85, suddenly, you're back in LA.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How did that happen? [00:48:04]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, because I didn't have a work permit. I didn't—I wasn't really legally in Europe, and I left. I left and went to Europe. I went to Switzerland, went back, went to Zurich just so I—and I took the train there. I did that so I could come back in again and not get in trouble, and then I just realized I was running out of money. Lisa, at that time, she was working in a pharmacy on Sloane Square just at the beginning of King's Road, which was quite funny as well, because I would—I'd wait for her, and we'd go home. So, that was where the money was going and she was living with me. But then I decided to move and when I decided to move, she moved into Battersea into this state council housing, which was like—this is the thing. You had to—you had to put money in a meter to make the electricity work, and so we had no phone. I had a phone in my place, but I gave that up.

Thatcher was privatizing everything, so things were changing, and anyhow—so, she lived with a roommate and then I kind of lived there for a couple of weeks before I moved back, and I didn't really have that many things. I bought some books, and I had a turntable that I had bought, and like a stereo and a whole bunch of vinyl—[they laugh]—a whole bunch of them. Yeah, that was my other addiction was like, you know, "Should I buy drinks or should I go up to New Bond Street and go to HMS and get my—get a record or singles," or whatever. And I went to a—and like—yeah. Now, I mean—now, that I think about it, I went to a ton of concerts that were sort of—like, I hung around with all these people and went to clubs and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was your persona? Just, I mean, as long as I've known you, you've always looked very businesslike. I mean, were you—did you have a punk edge at the time? In the early '80s, London is very punk? [00:50:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, I would say there is a guy I met on the edge of Covent Garden who had this clothing store, and so I kind of—you know, I had jumpers and pants. I wore Doc Martens, and no.

But my feeling always has been to look rather businesslike because it's better to be a communist businessman or a radical that wants to upend the world, and that was something that my brother told me. He was at the University of Oregon, and he was friends with Ken Kesey's sons. He told me one night he was watching television. There was some really brilliant guy talking, and he said, "But then you looked at him and you thought he was such a freak. How could you possibly believe in it at all?" I mean, my brother was there when the Bhagwan was driving around Eugene, Oregon and stuff. So, I think with that, I thought, "Oh, if I just kind of look normal then I can keep my brain like really—and I don't have to do this other thing." I also think it's an enormous amount of upkeep. [They laugh.] I think about Brian Grazer all the time thinking like, it takes a lot of energy.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that—so you were hanging—but you were interested in music at that time? You were involved, and you were going to clubs and things like that in London?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But then in '85 you—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I moved back—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —moved back, and you bring Lisa with you.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —yeah. Well, she comes later—slightly later. But basically, I moved back, and I applied for a job and I get this job at Chiat/Day. [00:52:02]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which is of course this pivotal territory right there, Chiat/Day.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And they were downtown. They were in the Biltmore still then. There was a model when you walked in the entrance, of a Frank Gehry Claes Oldenburg building, which comes even—that's the third sort of thing. Because I had been reading *Campaign* magazine, and I knew all of these British hot agencies, hot shops like GGT and stuff, I went in, and I said to them, "I want to apply for this job in account planning," which was the hot thing. It was qualitative research. So, you were supposed to be the third person that went along with the creatives. So, there was the copywriter and the art director and then this other person. You were supposed to ask the qualitative questions, and so we ran a lot of focus groups. And I said, "Oh, you know, I have this analytic sort of thing. I can do all this stuff because when I—I've—art historian and—" You know.

But what I didn't realize, because I was never that good at math, is that what they really wanted me for is to crunch numbers for the clients. We had, at the time—I mean, there was Apple, which is what kind of put them on the—we had Apple, Yamaha motorcycles, Home Savings & Loan, Porsche, and then we got Pizza Hut, and then so I really worked on Pizza Hut and Nike. I worked on Nike as well, but anyhow. So, it was great, and there is a small—so, I was working away, and they sent me to Chicago, and I went to conferences. I realized I was kind of good, but I also would leave the conferences and I would go to art museums. [00:54:13]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And when I—I think that goes to this wandering, like just walking around cities and looking at cities and going down alleyways and not being stupid about it, but—and ending up in places where you're going to get completely rolled. But I think during some of the summers in the late '70s, I'd go back and see my now friends that were living in New York, or grew up in New York. And they would tell me, like, "Brian, keep your head down. Don't be an idiot. Don't look up at the high-rises," you know?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And you have to also remember Walkmans were in, so in the summer of '80 and '81, it was like everybody had their Walkman. One of the people who I was friends with was kind of a girlfriend, and so she had a—she was super cool, so she had a Walkman. I would wander around New York and I realized, okay, this is how you're safe, and you keep your eyes open and stuff.

Anyhow, so I realized slowly as I was working for Chiat/Day that I still really loved art, and there was stuff that was happening. One of the things that was also happening is that when I was finishing at Berkeley, I had this friend, Jennifer Wortz. She had these parents Ed Wortz and Melinda Wortz, and I had no idea who Ed Wortz was or Melinda Wortz was. And then probably, in my world, Melinda Wortz was more important than Ed Wortz,

because she was the director and curator at California—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: UC Irvine. [00:56:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —at UC Irvine. She said, "Oh, come and see my parents. They live in Pasadena." So, we had to pick her up, and then I think it was like, UCLA was playing Cal in football, or something like that. For some reason, we were down, and she introduced me to Melinda, and there was Allan Kaprow who was hanging out, and a whole bunch of students were there. I think we were all, "Cool," but we didn't know how cool, and we're like, "Let's get out of here."

But when I moved back, before I moved to London, I met with Melinda again, and then she introduced me to Kimberly Davis. I kind of had remained friends with Kimberly Davis, and on this occasion, there was Leon Golub and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Kimberly Davis was already at L.A. Louver.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Melinda Wortz said, "Why don't you come to this talk at Duke Comegys—Comegys's house?" I was like—you know, it was very "Miami Vice" or something. But the crazy thing is that, two artists that were so far away from anything I ever thought about other than the fact that I think Peter Selz really liked Leon Golub. Leon Golub was, in 1984, kind of it. He was on the cover of *Art in America*, and it was—like that was tough art. And then he had to give his talk, and then they said, "Oh, you should meet this guy Simon—not Simon—Robyn Denny, and—"

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: "—all these British artists." So, when I was in London, I met them. But the thing was, out of that and Kimberly, I found out that Jay Chiat was a big collector. [00:58:04]

One day, I was by myself in what's called the bullpen, where people did all the layouts and stuff at the agency. Jay came in, and we were working on a pitch for Löwenbräu beer, and he was asking me about something. He had given this big talk to younger people, like, "I don't care what you—just do what you're passionate about. Do what you really, really love, and I'll help you." And so, I always remembered that, like, "Oh, that's—" And he's like—because the joke at Chiat/Day was, "Shit pay, Chiat/Day, Chiat/Day and night. If you don't come in on Sunday, don't bother coming in on Monday." I think they were really part of that evolution, which is, right or wrong, but it's a way of thinking that you gave everything to the—to this business. It wasn't like you were a nine-to-fiver. It was your family. Well, when I got laid off from Chiat/Day because we lost some accounts, that was a rude awakening at what happens in their version of the family. [They laugh.] It never happened in my family. And, yeah. So, anyway, that led me to go look for more work, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And connected to the idea of him being a collector?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —well, what I—well, what I said to him was, "Oh, I hear you have an amazing collection." And I've never seen anybody—and maybe collecting contemporary art, at that time, was a very secretive sort of thing or whatever, but he basically was like, "Oh, I—how do you know?" and I'm like, "Oh, Kimberly Davis at L.A. Louver says you have an amazing art collection. I would love to see it some time." He was totally befuddled and off-balance for somebody who was notorious for being in control, even when he was screaming at Guy Day. I mean, they're like the—yeah. The amount of screaming at Chiat/Day, at that point, was like, people were yelling at each other, and it was all—but it was to bring some, you know, something forward. The reason why they had the research people was that, because we were all supposed to justify whatever the creatives were doing. So, if the creatives said, "We just think there should be a swoosh in the middle of that image, and that's it," we would go out and we would say, we would get there, you know, we would get, so then we could argue it to the clients. [01:00:08]

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Anyway, so with that, I was gone, and I had—I knew that this guy who did the "1984 won't be like 1984" Apple ad, which launched Macintosh, he had gone to TracyLocke, which was out of Dallas. I got the job there, and that was all swell until there was this upending of that, and everybody's doors closed, and everyone started looking for another job.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But you were at TracyLocke in Los Angeles?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At their office in Los Angeles? [01:02:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: At their office, yeah. They were opening an LA shop because they had Taco Bell and Princess



Cruises. So, what's interesting about that is that then there was an article that came out in like, '86, about how the LA art scene was on fire.

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BRIAN D. BUTLER: And when all this was going down and everyone's doors were closed, I was like, "Well—" First of all, I got laid off from Chiat/Day. I got—I was making more money. I was now—I was making \$18,000 a year at Chiat/Day. I was making \$22,000 at TracyLocke, which seemed to be unexplainable, to how you could be laid off somewhere and then end up making more money. [They laugh.] And so, I started reading about these galleries in LA and I then went—I don't know how I found out that—I think I was just beating the pavement, which is such a weird thing now. But I think I just went into Asher/Faure because they were one of the names that was listed as like a really hot gallery. So, I did that, and they hired me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you know who Asher—Betty Asher or Pat Faure were?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I—and, yeah, I had no idea of like the whole LA history other than, you know, now I knew about Ed Kienholz, and I knew about Barney's Beanery. [Laughs.] And it's also interesting because thinking about that now, it was like I really thought, like Bruce Conner was the Bay Area version of Ed Kienholz, because we didn't really study his films. So that was to me a very—like, these are the sort of things you figure out later in life.

And so there was an artist named Jamey Bair who was the preparator, and Jamey was leaving, and I took his job. And then I immediately became friends with this guy Michael Kohn who was opening—he had written for *Flash Art* and he was opening a gallery on Robertson, and everything was kind of over by Robertson. It was like he was there, and Margo was up the street. [00:02:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And didn't he go to Berkeley as well?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, he went to NYU. The person who was in my class was David Maupin—he and this woman Jennifer Gordon, who was the most brilliant among us. She lives in Berkeley, but she took a rather circuitous route back to Berkeley going to Leeds. I don't think she ever finished her master's. She would study under Griselda Pollock, and—but, yeah, David ended up being in Italy and meeting Stefano [Tonchi] in Italy. And somewhere, he made a magazine, or Stefano made a magazine and—but it was kind of—and Jennifer had been working at Gracie Mansion in the East Village. And I think it's like this. All these things came together, and literally, on my last maybe two weeks of being at TracyLocke, I saw the doors were closed. There were only certain people that had computers, by the way. And I think that sort of—I started writing this idea of making a gallery and that gallery would have had—actually, it would have had a café, and it would have had a printing press.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I had this idea. Because when I lived in London, there was a thing called the Riverside Studio that was incredible. They had a show of Antony Gormley. And that's when you knew that things were starting to open up, because Gormley and Alison Wilding were there. Michael Clark was dancing. He did this performance with The Fall. And then he did another performance that was this fashion group called Bodymap. You know, Katharine Hamnett was this fashion designer that was—wore a lot of her stuff like this— [00:04:02]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I remember Katharine Hamnett.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —this—I didn't ever wear her T-shirts that had stuff on them. She made these blue smocks that were like workers' smocks that were like, really—yeah. I'd still probably wear those. But—so, already, you could sort of feel when I—when I left London and came here, and then by then, I think Jennifer had met this guy, and she moved to London. So, it was like this whole idea of things happening, and she was really good friends with David, and so it slowly—like I kind of was looking around and thinking. And then with TracyLocke, I was like, "You know, I could keep this job, and they'd probably give me a raise," but I was stupid and—[laughs]—or something. I took the job at Asher/Faure, and they offered me the job for \$16,000 a year. And that's when Lisa left. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's when Lisa went back to England?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. She ended up—she's amazing. She—I mean, yeah. She was somebody who was an incredibly accomplished calligrapher. So, she was getting work as a calligrapher in LA. She was an incredible gilder, so she did like gilding for Rose Tarlow, or calligraphy for Barbra Streisand's such-and-such. And by then I think I had already started working at Asher/Faure, and through that I kind of told people. She was kind of put out of business by—because Francis-Orr, now closed, bought like an automated calligraphy machine, but the irony of the whole thing is that she ended up marrying, after we split up, she ended up marrying Greg Guss.

[00:06:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who's Greg Guss?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's the owner of Francis-Orr. [They laugh.] Which—but Lisa was always somebody who was never without a partner, so. I think—I think the second she moved in to the apartment across the way from me that immediately she was like—actually, I went to—I was working at Asher/Faure. It was the Hockney opening at LACMA. There was a dinner downstairs where Fred Schriver had dropped his water balloon. And Patty had sent me out to get an Armani tuxedo, which by the way, I can still wear, and it's still very fashionable. Seriously, it was like—and it was the first time I had worn a tuxedo, and Lisa came over and was like, "I'll do your bowtie," and everything, and then something happened and then she's like, "But knock on my window when you come back and we'll talk," because we were still friends. It was just like we decided that we couldn't live together anymore.

It was a highly charged and very unfortunate relationship. She would throw her pens at me, which are razor sharp, so. And I would walk down the street because it was where—near where the original gallery is. There was a place called The Irish Rover, which is a fantastic bar. It's the only bar that when they did last call, he would try and get you to drink more. [They laugh.] People are like, "Oh, I've got to drive to Pasadena," or something, and he's like, "One more Murphy's for the road," and you'd be like— [00:08:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where were you living?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: On Franklin Street.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where in—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: In Santa Monica, so between Arizona and Santa Monica. So then—so anyhow, so I worked for Asher/Faure, and that was—I kind of, into my brain, already had this idea, like this was my gallery, and what could I do, and how could I do it. The first work of art I hung there, which I have to say was probably very crooked, even though—you know, one of the games in my household growing up with my father was called straightening it. Basically, we went around, and he had an amazing eye, and everything would be like, "Let's straighten the thing a little bit this way or that."

And so, I hung a Craig Kauffman painting, and that was quite funny. And then we had to hang a Jonathan—it was a group show. It was like a summer sort of thing. There was a Jonathan Borofsky *Flying Man*, and that was—you know. And I think they were like, "We thought you knew how to install art." [They laugh.] But I somehow—and maybe—like some summers, my brother and I used to paint houses and stuff, apartment buildings. And so, I had this idea that if you're going to do a job, you have to do it really, really well, and you have to jump into it. So, I was like, "Okay, I'm going to be really, really good at this, and I'm going to have like a really—like, and Koontz Hardware. Koontz Hardware was like—it was on the pier. It wasn't on Santa Monica, and it was like it is today, but even more of a fire—like a fire trap. [00:10:03]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I did this and I kind of—but I met the artists that came. Like Jack Goldstein, I met, and one of the—you know, there was this artist that was from Seattle that made this show called *Dazzle* that was made out of—it was like a big, gigantic ceramic ship because Betty was really into ceramics. I just—I met all these different people. I met Sid Felsen. It was kind of—it was a very—like, it was interesting because you met these people, but you also then—because Dagny was across the street, and Dan Weinberg was across the street. Gagosian had already left.

But I started meeting people, and on top of that, I met people of my generation, like that CalArts group of people, Jamey Bair and Cindy Bernard and Mike Gonzalez and Thad Strode and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: My, God, that is an interesting—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Sarah Seager. I mean, there's—you know, there's this whole group—and Meg Cranston.

But for the most part, the CalArts people were such snotty people, at least because I wasn't part of that group, you know? And they came out so hot, partly because of [John] Baldessari, I guess, or whatever, but—so I was like on the periphery. But somehow, it—it was—it was kind of good because I sat there at the desk, and I met people. But also, in reflection, it's like people like Steve Prina, for me, were the greatest lookers ever. They—and still to this day, like, he looks at exhibitions, and there's very few people that really—you know? I think there's a woman named—well, we'll—but there was a woman named Jacqueline Lejeune from Belgium, like, the same thing. They look, they look and look. [00:12:09]

For the most part, the crazy part of being at Asher/Faure was because of where it was and because, I think, probably my history of like being straight, and whatever. But even—you know, jump to 30 years later, my roommate at Berkeley was gay. It's like he's actually still a really good friend, and he's involved in the Hammer and—you know?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, Bill Hair, like—it was nothing. It was nothing here or there, but it was like really out and really in your face and really at this moment in 1986, every man is gay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what's—what was his name?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Who? Bill Hair?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Bill Hair.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Bill Hair. How do you spell that?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: H-A-I-R.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But Bill's great, and he's—but it wasn't like—Bill was still hiding it. But at Asher/Faure there's this guy Steve Rock Savage who came, and I'm sure Steve died of AIDS. I mean there was like—AIDS was coming into focus in a way. You know, Duke was—got sick. I mean, all these people got sick and—but it—and Jeffrey Linden had that gallery, and he did a thing against Lyndon LaRouche. And I didn't have enough cash to give money for the Keith Haring T-shirt, so I wrote a check, and for years I was on the *Advocate's* mailing list. [00:14:09]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But it was like, I didn't really care. Like, I don't—I didn't care about anyone's sexuality, or whatever. It was never an issue.

But the thing was, it was this kind of funny moment where everybody was like, "You're young, you're new, we don't know who you are, and we're hitting on you." And then the—I would say, "Well, I have this girlfriend Lisa," and they'd be like, "Oh, yeah, like, your beard." [They laugh.] There was—you know there was a lot of—and then there was Betty and Patty who were, as you know, you can't say it too often, because that's how you always call them, who were Petty and Batty.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And we had to have lunch every day in the little office of the house. She'd send us over to—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And is this the little house on Almont, correct?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, this little house, famous, a famous gallery in a little house on Almont, with these incredible exhibitions and—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And they did shows from Joel Shapiro to Michael C. McMillen, Jack Goldstein. They did a show with that—Ruth Kaufmann, who was an advisor, curator, did that was about abstraction. Andy Moses figured out a way to get himself involved in the gallery. [They laugh.] And he managed to curate a show that had Matt Mullican, and Troy Brauntuch and Alan Uglow, and, of course, he curated himself into the show.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I ended up buying a painting of Andy's, which is funny now that I just think—like, I started collecting when I was in Czechoslovakia. I bought my first piece of art. It's a photograph. But then when I did the interview with Auerbach, I bought a suite of self-portrait, not self-portraits—of portraits of R.B. Kitaj, Lucian Freud, Julia, and—but anyhow, so I— [00:16:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But there—but they were—but they were prints.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They were etchings, yeah. That's why—I mean, this maybe—like I've always been interested

in prints. I think you can put together—sadly I think the problem is that we think that original work is more interesting, but it's not always more interesting. You know, I think *The Horrors of War* [*The Disasters of War*, Francisco Goya] can equal any great work of art, any painting without a doubt, but we somehow segregate them, so.

But Asher/Faure was really interesting, and then—and I was kind of tighter with Patty. I was kind of her walker, as Dagny would say. Betty worked closer with Stan Hackney, who was their director. They sat—and their gallery had been redone by John Fernandez—is that right? Who also—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —did—where he was kind of—he did the place where Robyn Denny had his place up in—he was this hot architect that was very much like—Fernandez or something? Anyway, but he was interesting, because he was kind of alongside of Fred Fischer and that whole group of people, and Frank and—you know? And so, Betty and Patty would tell me Frank Gehry stories like, "You know, Frank used to babysit Zazu," which is Patty's daughter. And then I met Jacques and I met Rudi Gernreich and I met all these people— [00:18:03]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean Jacques Faure?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Patty Faure's husband, whose lover had been Rudi Gernreich, and then somebody else who was—he was like teaching at UCLA. What's his name? He was super interesting, because he was like the person to go to on Existentialism. But we were—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean Gernreich's husband, or partner?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah, partner, but they were all somehow intertwined with each other. And, of course, now you realize that there's this incredible lie that's being—that was going on. Because Patty was talking about Jacques in a certain way, and Zazu, and she lived in Paris and with—there's like all this stuff that was transpiring that I had no idea about because I didn't come from that world. I had just been dropped in. So, I was like this person who they were telling all their stories to.

And then other people would come in to the story. Like Sterling Holloway, who was the voice of Winnie the Pooh, would show up, and he started selling off his collection. The reason why he's selling off his collection is that he had this new lover, and the lover had a little drug problem and had, really, a mother who was out of, like, "The Rescuers." I was going to say she was like Cruella de Vil, but that's too easy. She was really like the woman in "The Rescuers," or something. They would come, and he was like selling *John Doe* by Kienholz. Betty and Patty would say, "Brian, can you clean up the *John Doe*? It's a bit dirty." I get in there with my toothbrush and like, doing everything you're not supposed to. And then you open it up, and there's like a little envelope with a letter in there from Kienholz, and then I open that up. And then Walter Hopps is coming today to like—and he ends up buying it for the de Menil. You know, we're eating off Lichtenstein *Paper Plates*, which now are selling for—and it's—[they laugh.] And it's like nutty, nutty stuff, and people—anyhow, so— [00:20:11]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what was—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and then you—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —their relationship like, because—what were Patty—what was the relationship between Patty and Betty?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They bickered. I think they loved each other deeply, but they bickered. I think it's probably why I didn't take a partner when I opened the gallery, and I'm always scared of that idea that—and that's why they were called Petty and Batty. The funniest thing would be like we would be having our lunch, and Bob Halff who was a collector would come in, and Betty would say something—or I don't know who had started, but it's like, "I think Bob's had a number of little strokes. He's really forgetting things," and then Patty would say, "Isn't that funny?" And Betty would say, "Funny strange, or funny ha-ha?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then Stan and I would look at each other like, "Oh, my God, here we go." And then one of them would say, "You know what I mean," and the other one would say—you know? But they played off each other as well, because they knew who was going to talk about art, who was going to be talking about a social thing, who was going—you know? [00:22:06]

They were—they had backing. That was the other thing that I always thought was so interesting, they had backing from the Weismans. They had backing from the Coopers, Bea and Nate Cooper. And there was other—there's another couple who I loved, oh, they were so nice. I think she's just finally passed away last year. I have

to remember them. They bought one of the things that Sterling sold, besides the—they bought a McCracken *Red Box*, like perfect, in perfect condition. And it wasn't Jack Brogan. Jack Brogan wasn't the guy you went to at that moment to fix. There was somebody else in Venice, and he basically took like nine months to repair this box. It had been cracked because it was still—when he was making them out of—they were laminated wood, with tons and tons of enamel on them. But what I always wanted, and I—at the time, I think it was like \$4500—it was a little painting on paper by Ed Ruscha, and the background was gray and in ochre, it said "Hotel." And \$4000 was a ton of money, and I was like, oh. To this day it's like, "How can I figure out how to get it," right?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But before I could figure it out, Robert—what's his name—from Pasadena?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Rowan?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Robert Rowan walked in and was like, "I'll buy it." It was gone. But I thought about that piece endlessly, because it was just like, it had everything that—you know? And then just as I was leaving, Betty was selling *Annie*. [00:24:05]

So, there were things that were around. There was also another work of Sterling's they sold and—but the car would come in. This big beater of a car would come in, and you would hear, "Where is my fucking money? Where's our money?" This boyfriend of Sterling Holloway. Or it would be the mother, and Betty and Patty would scatter. They would hide, and Stan and I would be there like, "Oh, no check. You know, we're working on it." "Sterling told me there's money coming," and it was like really—it was like. But also, what you'd have to remember, which is so interesting, is that like, Sterling—you couldn't marry your boy—you couldn't—same sex marriage did not exist, so you would adopt your lover, and then—and this is what was going on. He was adopting this guy. It was like, "Why?" Like, it's so messed—it was such a messed-up relationship. And the guy was just stealing right and left from Sterling. As far as I knew, that's like the thing, so.

But it was a funny neighborhood, because all these people would come in. And they were like—who—Steve Rock Savage was wearing this underwear, like cotton underwear of things. But he was riding his bike around, and he would stand with his, sort of, package, his junk, like, on the counter. Because when you came into Asher/Faure, you came in at that height, even though we were lower and the counter was higher. So, my eye level is like right there, and he'd be like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] I remember that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He would just be trying to pick up—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God— [00:26:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Stan and I—anyway. And so, I think the thing that—that's so interesting about Asher/Faure is—and particularly Patty was like, "Okay, Brian." Because I was going on and on about British art, and so she let me curate a show called *British Art: The Literate Link*, and that was kind of—that was great for a lot of different reasons. And it's—and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And who was in that show?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, that show—and I don't ever—I don't even have a catalogue. I have to ask Dagny, or see if I can find it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I might—I probably have to—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So *British Art: The Literate Link*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —just think about it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You walked in, and there was a large—there's a large Steven Campbell painting. Then in the second small gallery, they had—there was Simon Edmonson. And my—it was kind of a foil, because at that moment in time, that British figuration was everything, and particularly that Scottish group of artists. So, I thought, "Okay, let's use that," and there was a gallery in London, Nicola [Jacobs] Jacobson, and she showed all this figurative art. So, she showed Julian Opie. She showed Lisa Milroy, and so on, and so forth. That was like her—like that was the gallery. But I wasn't so interested in that. I wanted to use it as a foil, so I used that as a foil and then the main gallery of Asher/Faure had *Art & Language*. It had Susan Hiller. It had Bill Culbert.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know who—Bill Culbert?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, it had—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: C-O-L-B? [00:27:59]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Boyd Webb. C-O-L-B-E-R-T [sic]. Boyd Webb, Alison Wilding. I'm thinking if there was somebody else I'm missing—oh, John Murphy, such a good artist, like completely. John Murphy turns out to be much tighter to the Belgian group of people like Lili Dujourie and Jan Vercruyse than the British. But the concept of the show was that, within the UK system, there's a nonverbal communication that can take place. That's why in advertising, they can just have a green screen and the sound of the blender or whatever, and it's like, "Oh, that's Gordon's Gin," whatever, because that's the Gordon's green, so. And Lynne Cooke wrote the essay. I wrote a foreword and—and yeah. It was a really—it was a great show.

It was also interesting because, for me, in looking back on it now, so many of the artists that were included in that show were ex-pats living in the UK. So, Boyd Webb, actually, is a New Zealander, and Culbert was a New Zealander. Susan Hiller is American. So, it's almost like when you over—you overstate yourself when you're living somewhere else. And then in some respects, the British artists that I did choose, the Alison Wildings and the John Murphys and Art & Language, were much more European, and the British art, the way it was, was much more out of that sort of Auerbach, [Leon] Kossof sort of school of— [00:30:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But just knowing—having that Art & Language as one—the basis of the show that you were involved in, the show that you did, it speaks so much to where your own interests ultimately go.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Sure. And what I was interested in, what I was—what we showed was one of the Whitney paintings where they did the—it's like, Jackson Pollock painting Lenin [*Portrait of V. I. Lenin with Cap, in the Style of Jackson Pollock III*], in the Whitney. Like that—now I think, like, "Oh, that's like a painting—that will be a really interesting painting to see in now, or in 20 years' time. I think that it will hold up in a particular, interesting way, so. And out of that, also, because my friend Jennifer was at Leeds by now, and Griselda Pollock and Fred Orton. Fred Orton worked with Art & Language. And then, you know, one of the people I had met at the end of Berkeley was T. J. Clark who gave this like never-ending lecture on—on Jacques-Louis David's *À Marat* [*Death of Marat*].

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And all that stuff was like floating around, and I met all these—I was still involved in art history in a funny way, and that's how I met Lynne Cooke.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I started doing this show, thinking about the show. And Karsten Schubert had just left Lisson, and he was opening a little gallery. I thought to myself, "Oh, I should go see him because he's stolen Alison Wilding, or somehow he ended up with Alison Wilding, and I need to see him." Lynne Cooke had done the books for the Saatchi's *Art in [of] Our Time*, which I thought was funny because it—they had stolen the title from Peter—from Peter Selz and Kristine Stiles, that had this amazing book called *Art of [in] Our Times*." [00:32:04]

But I started reading Lynne Cooke. I thought, "Oh, it's really readable. It's super interesting," and so I went to Karsten. I said, "Can I—can you introduce me to Lynne Cooke?" and he did. We went and had this Italian meal. I was super, super nervous, and I started talking to her. She does this thing where she goes, "Mm, well, hmm." I freaked, and I was like—I just kept talking in total panic. "Mm, well, that's interesting, hmm." She'd say, "That's so interesting."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where were you having this dinner?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was like off of Charlotte Street in Soho, and that's a whole another thing. Like Soho—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In New York or here?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In London.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —in London.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wait, let me. Okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, when Soho wasn't Soho. It wasn't—Soho was a skanky—yeah. And you'd go see bands. Like, yeah, you'd go see bands that are at the Mud Club or Wag or—and so, she was great, and then she like said to me, "Yes," and I was like, "Okay, great." She was at—and she was at University College London, and so through other people, we—you know, I sort of made all these links together. And she was—you know, this—not only was she smart, she was incredibly sweet and thoughtful and nice and beautiful. And I think every student was like, "Lynne Cooke." [00:34:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, she wrote this essay, but after—as I did this show, and I was waiting to get the catalogue done, I get a phone call from Burnett Miller who says, "Do you want to come work for me?" But that's—but anyhow. But Asher/Faure lets me do this show, and it's one of the things that I loved about that neighborhood, is that across the street from Asher/Faure was Art Catalogues and Dagny Corcoran. Dagny was great, I mean, an incredible flirt, and got me to buy more books because I was a sucker to her compliments, "Brian, you look very attractive today. I'll give you a 10 percent discount. Have you seen this?" And she remembers. She knew that I was interested in British art, and so there would be some little box set of something that came that had somebody that was on the periphery, or somebody that I was not that interested in, or kind of, could have been. And she's like, "John Latham, Brian did you—?" I'm like, "Woo." I'd get all excited. [Laughs.]

Anyway to make a long story short, she's—she would—because I had to do metering there, so all the postage that got metered, I had to go do it. And Dagny said I would be in the back. And who do I meet there, but this woman Sarah Seager, and I had no idea that Sarah was an artist until so much later in the game. And so Dagny would be like, "Oh, Brian, here's another book," and I went in and then she said to me—I would be like, "I have no money, Dagny. I really can't," and then she would be like, "You can have a store credit." [00:36:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And probably I think by the time I left, I said the greatest financial thing that ever happened to me was that Dagny moved to Bakersfield when she had gotten remarried. [They laugh.] Because it was like, "Oh, thank God." Because I walk in a bookstore still today—you know? I'm better, but it's like I would always—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where do you keep them?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Some are here, some are at home, some are in closets because light damages them, and a whole bunch are in boxes that are in public storage. Actually, we just cleared out. I think my art form goes all the way back to 1984. But it's like a question. It's like, do you keep them? What do you keep them for? What are we going to do with them?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did you end up doing with them?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, at the moment, they're just in storage. All my *Parketts* are in storage. I just ran out of room.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I understand. So just sort of—to back up a little bit—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Should we have—should we have lunch?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, we should, but just one quick question I have for you, is you talked about the backing of Asher/Faure, and I don't really—because they're not around anymore, I can't really ask them. So, do you know what the arrangement was with them and the backers? Because, of course, by the time they were backing Asher/Faure, the Weismans were already super established collectors.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I think it's because Betty had worked with the County museum. And Patty knew them—knew people because of working for—I'm just forgetting. He had a gallery across the street from—from Ferus. What's his name? He's an abstract painter too. [00:38:09]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean Felix—not Felix Landau?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The one next to it is the—okay, we're both getting so senile. The primitive—the primitive art, or tribal art—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He showed Bruce Nauman and Hockney.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You don't mean Wilder?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Nick Wilder.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Nicholas Wilder. But he wasn't across the street.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Where was he?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, he was—he was on Santa Monica, you know, that's later.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Maybe it's later.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anyway, so Nicholas Wilder. You know, Betty had worked with Nicholas Wilder for sure.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, Patty, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I mean Patty, who did work with Nicholas Wilder.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She took photographs. I mean, the—we know the whole thing, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Dear friends.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and through that, I became a friend, or friendly with, because Patty had shot photographs, had been an assistant, and a model too. Yeah. I need to eat something because now all of those names are gone. Yeah, but anyhow, so they would all come traipsing through. And, again, there is this—I was thinking about this other day. It's like—because I think sometimes my son goes like, "Oh, I don't give a fuck." And then some of these people are like—I was like, "Helmut Newton, like really? Helmut Newton, whatever. I'm more interested in Mike Kelley," right?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Like I think that—and maybe every generation is like this, but certainly, my generation was like, "Out of our fucking way, already. Open up the museums. You're all old farts. Okay, Michael Asher, we love you. John Baldessari, we love you." But for the most part it was like, "Clear it out." And so anyhow, these people would come through, and I'd so—but I would meet these collectors, and then—you know, I think Bob Halff was an investor?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] [00:40:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And, I don't know. I think they had first go at things, and I think they got a very big discount. But it was never talked about, and it was—it was really—it was kind of lovely just in that they would—they would—all these sort of people around. But then they were kind of there, and then the Weismans split, so that was—whatever. And when times got tough, I think they made the call, and they said, "Fred, you need to come in and buy this," or, "We're bringing in a new artist from New York. His name is Jack Goldstein," and they all bought those late paintings. Fred bought the late paintings. Eli bought the late paintings. They all bought them out of that show. And that was like—you know, that again was like a really interesting—because I then started to work with all these artists in terms of hanging things, like Barry X Ball, like insane—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, God, that's right.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —like—you know? And sadly, I love Linda Janger, but half the time she remembers me—that's not really true. She's like, "You know, Brian, that Barry X Ball is still installed in our house just as you installed it." And I'm thinking, "Oh, my God, that was like 1987. It's—you know, it's still there." But out of that, it was like—it was kind of—I met all these artists, and Jack was one of them, and—Joel Shapiro, who always makes me laugh, because one of the Shapiros arrived totally damaged. Dudley Del Balso was, I guess, working—like managing him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who was?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: This woman Dudley Del Balso, who seemed to be like she was very East Coast. And I think she might have been at Pace or somewhere before, and she was also working with Judd, and Paula was working with Joel. Anyhow, and so there was this moment that the work arrived. Most of the things were in bronze. We had sunk this thing so it could stand in the space. It was all perfect. And there was this wood one, and it had been broken. And so, everyone freaked out, because it was hand-painted in this one area, and so—it was just after Denise Domergue had come back from Venice or something like—you know, because there had been floods in Venice, that she was called to come fix it. And it cost—I'm going to say it cost in the neighborhood of like five thousand dollars to fix this. It was not cheap. And I think the piece was somewhere in the neighborhood between twenty-five and thirty-five thousand dollars, so already like, they weren't making a lot of money, and she fixed it. It's perfect. It's in the small gallery. It's all lit very dramatic, and Joel Shapiro walks in and goes, "Yeah. [*Makes crunch sound.*] That's better." [00:42:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, no. [Laughs.] Oh, no.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And everyone is like, "Oh." And that's like, oh, my God. That's crazy. This guy has like done this and—yeah, and, so later he leaves to go back to the hotel. I'm trying to think where we put up everybody at that time.



HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The Chateau. No?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. I think more people stayed at that motor inn on the corner of Doheny.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, yeah the Beverly. Beverly—not Beverly, yes. [00:44:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Beverly, the—whatever.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. I know what you mean.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I know, because that's where like the Ferus—not Ferus, that's where the Gemini people were always being put up. And they were all—like, that whole group was very tight. Like Patty and Betty were—or particularly Betty was very tight with Sid and also with the Grinsteins.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, they all come out of the '60s together really.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And—but what I wanted to say is did—with—just before I forget and we'll move on, is the idea of a backer for a gallery, was that something you knew about, or something you thought you could ever work with? Did you ever think, "Well, if I have a gallery, I'll need a backer, or look for—?"

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, what happened was—you know, jump ahead, way ahead and I'm—there's this expansion that starts taking place in 1990. And one of the people I had become friends with was Maureen Paley in London, who had Interim Art. Now, it's Maureen Paley Gallery, or whatever. She had expanded, and she had this backer who—I have to remember his name. Anyway, he made his money by selling textbooks to the East when the wall came down in 1989, so he got rich very fast. Anyhow, he decided to invest in her. She had this little space, which was also very influential of me taking a little—like, being interested in the domestic. But that's—anyhow, he pulled the money from her like that.

And so when I started the gallery, I was like, "I am never getting myself in that position," you know? Because it's like tasting something, like—and so for me, the gallery was always about what we can afford and what we want to do. And if we're selling art that allows us to do more, that's great. But to me, it was always about, I think, going back to this idea of being completely embedded and being part of art in my time, you know? And I think that would be, funny enough, the title of, you know, Peter's book, and also of the—like, I think that I'm not interested in contemporary art. I'm interested in art of my time. [00:46:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's nice. So, let's stop there because I want to go into Burnett Miller in depth, and I think we need a break here, don't you?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I will say thank you, Brian Butler, for your fascinating and long and wonderful interview with us so far today. And this is the end of disc one.

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HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Brian Butler for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc two, June 19th, 2018, and we're at his gallery 1301PE in the mid-Wilshire District. Hello again, Brian.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Hello again, Hunter.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So when we last spoke, you were—were talking about your—you had been working with Asher/Faure Gallery. And it got to be around August of 1989, according to your very thorough CV, and then you go to work as the director of the Burnett Miller Gallery.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Can you tell me how that came about, and what Burnett Miller was doing, and why you were attracted to that position at that time?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I opened the show *British Art: The Literate Link*. I have some feeling like it was maybe at the end of June or something. It was going to be their summer show, and Patty had promised me to make a catalogue, and so I had been working on that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Patty Faure.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Patty Faure. And then Burnett contacted me, and I don't know if it was—he came in the gallery, or what have you. He is like, "Let's meet for a drink," and I was like, "Okay." I don't think, at that point, I had been to his gallery. I sort of was—the galleries that I was going to were Rosamund Felsen and Margo Leavin and Dan Weinberg and the galleries that were around and about that area, Michael Kohn. And at—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where was his gallery at that time? [00:02:04]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: His gallery was on La Brea between Ramona, or Romaine and Willoughby, or something like that, just down from Santa Monica Boulevard. Anyhow, I met him. I met him for drinks at Morton's, which was the original space where Trump's was, on one corner, and Morton's was the other one, on the other corner of Melrose and Robertson. We had drinks, and he is like, "I want you to come be my director," and I was like, "Okay, great." I don't know what he thought my capacity was or my talent or anything. I think he thought I could sell art. He was rudely awakened to the truth that that was not what my forte was about. Or that I somehow had contacts into that world, being at Asher/Faure, perhaps. That would have been an interesting, sort of, question. But anyhow, he—we hit it off, and he was charismatic and incredibly excited about all the possibilities of what was going to happen in the world. You know, he never, sort of, stopped, and I was like, "Okay, great," and then he said, "But I need you to talk to my other assistant," or somebody. Her name was Tarlton Pauley, and again, back to Morton's I go. Little did I realize that she was the then-girlfriend of Peter Morton, and so this was like going into home turf. She was very—yeah, very much in control of, like, this is my turf, and this is my land, and you're going to come work in this gallery, and you might be director, but—she was, in the end, was quite sweet, but it was really the whole world was about Peter and their relationship. But—but I then— [00:04:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let me pause now and ask you this, was Peter Morton a backer of Burnett Miller's?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Or did he buy art from Burnett?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think he did. I think Peter took counsel like he does with many gallerists around Los Angeles. Peter was somebody who—I think partly because Tarlton was there, there were some things—but Peter was not adventurous. He thought adventure was John Baldessari or Ed Ruscha circa 1989. For—I think for any of us, that was not—they were already well-established artists. And so, when I started work—so then it worked out with Burnett. I'll go back to Peter in a minute, because I think that becomes the central, sort of, funny moment.

But I go and work for Burnett. One of the things is also, that Karsten Schubert—

[Side conversation.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I immediately start working at Burnett's, and he worked in this very low-slung, former warehouse, big pillars. You know, there was no skylight. There was just track lighting.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Burnett? [00:06:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Burnett. And across the way on the back—out the back side window, which was a steel casement window—it's still there—was this concrete, this concrete factory where they fill up the trucks and everything. So, there's a weird, crazy kind of kinetic thing, and then—and just as I started, Burnett hired somebody else as well, and Tarlton. It was kind of like things were going, and Burnett had this amazing program that, when I looked into it, its interest wasn't British art other than Antony Gormley, but he did like that I had that sort of focus. His focus was more on Richter, Polke, the Minimalists, including—from Sol LeWitt, Fred Sandback, Judd, Flavin, and then he had his stable of artists, which included—because he was the first person to show—Roni Horn, but that was at another space. I think it was on Sixth Street somewhere. Joel Wachs was the first person to buy a work of art from Burnett, and it was a Roni Horn drawing if I remember it right. And then he had Charlie Ray, and he had a number of other artists, but he would get material.

So, when I walked in that day, my first day on the job, Burnett had this beautiful Pistoletto piece, Michelangelo Pistoletto, one of the Arte Povera artists, which was these rags that formed a square. There's a piece of glass over the top, but inside that square was a kettle that was steaming, and there were three of them, you know. And it's like—and over time, we included [Giovanni] Anselmo. He loved Anselmo. I, particularly, loved this projection piece called *Particolare*, which was three projectors, like little Kodak projectors. One projecting the word *particolare* on the side of the next, on the side of the next, and then one on to a wall. [00:08:07]

So, Burnett had this way about him. You know, he had this incredible ease of talking about art, his passion. He wasn't particularly tall, but he was—he was really, really passionate. He wore this overcoat over his shoulders almost like a cape. He was married to Tara and they—when I started, they were living out in Pasadena, like on an orange grove or something. He drove, like, a Porsche 911, light blue, silver and he was just this kind of—you

know, he was a little rabbit, and probably would be not in favor of the world at the moment because I'm sure there would be a lot of "me too" sort of things. Not because he was—not because he was inappropriate, but he was just—he could just seduce you sexually, or otherwise, and just in his way he lived his life. He was all go all the time, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did Tara—was Tara accepting of that?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I don't think. I think she was in denial of it. I think that comes out later, when there is a moment when I'm living in Germany that she finds an American Express bill that says that there were some hotel charges. But I think at the time, it was just like—and I was thinking about this the other day. It's like—it was the land of like, no holds barred. I mean, it wasn't—I mean, Günther Förg is yelling anti-Semitic things at the Broad dinner, and people are still buying his work. People are sleeping with people, and people are—I mean, even with AIDS fully relevant in one's life. The drinking, cocaine use, you know? I don't think smoking pot was—smoking cigarettes. You could still smoke in a restaurant, and so I—you know. [00:10:03]

Burnett had a preparator and he would come in during installs, and so we would all install together. Burnett loved installing the work, I loved installing, and so there was this magic moment of going and—or if we were doing a show with, let's say Fred Sandback, sitting with Fred on the floor and making pieces, which is very interesting. I guess as a side note with David Zwirner, now representing the estate, all of a sudden, he's making these pieces that Fred was very specific of how tall they should be. Because that ceiling was a 10-foot-high ceiling, and what was going to happen when that line went into that ceiling at 10 foot versus nine foot? Or do I—because of the architecture, do I need to go diagonally on a wall, one wall to another wall? And now that Fred's dead, that person is no longer there, but the work still exists, and they're being readjusted. My question, which is just a question, is like, can they be readjusted? Weren't they site specific? They weren't just off the shelf. They were very—they were very specific. [00:12:03]

Anyhow, so you would sit around with Fred, or then Franz Erhard Walther would come in, who was a German artist that showed with this Galerie Kubinski. And we would install stuff, and then we, generally, would go afterwards to Chianti and sit in the back, in the back bar of Chianti. Burnett would ask me to go buy a pack of cigarettes of these Canadian cigarettes, these—what were they called? Shoot. Anyhow, these, like something-extra-lights, and then they would smoke. They're short cigarettes, and we'd smoke them and then they would have, like, one or two martinis, and then we'd go in to the kitchen side of Chianti, because they had opened the kitchen side, the cucina side. And then we would have—it was always—almost always the same thing. It would be like—there would be a bottle of wine. There would be risotto, then branzini, then there would be a grappa and an espresso, and I always joked it was like a highball. I would then get in my car and drive back to Santa Monica, and he would drive out to Pasadena. Or what—more often times what would happen is he would go back into the gallery. He would take one of our chairs that were on casters, on wheels, and he would sit and look at the show. He would sit and look at the show, and who knows how long he was there. He always would then come in around 11 the next day, and he would just be like, "Okay, this needs to change," or, "It's perfect," or, "I love." It's like—and he would just get it in his head. [00:14:00]

So, from that perspective, there was—I don't think there was anybody better that I could've worked with. In terms of business, however, he was always on the edge. He was always trying to do deals that he could give himself, like, 30 days that he had to flip something around, and it was like Donald Judd *Stack*, or. This was a time that there was no internet, so you had four-by-fives, or slides. And there was just—and you were trying to—you were trying to do it. You were trying to make stuff happen, because—you know, Charlie Ray topped out at about \$20,000 then. And so, we did two shows with Charlie, and the last show a lot of people liked, but it would have the Plexiglas *Table*, it had the white cube, it had the *[Revolution] Counter Revolution* carousel. And, it was just like nobody really cared except for, like Peter Norton—not Morton—Norton.

And that's what I would say. It's like Peter Morton would—should have—could have bought that work. He never did because—for various reasons, and even with Tarlton Pauley saying he should buy it. He bought an artist who was like the boyfriend of David Hockney. I'm trying to remember. I think his last name was Flemming [ph] or something like that. [Ian Falconer -BB] I want to say—but it was very Hockney-esque. I think Peter Goulds showed it for a second, and literally, Peter Morton called me and said, like, "I don't want this work anymore. We've got to sell it, and we—" But still, like he was a flash in the pan enough that we—I kind of sold it. But I began to know Peter Morton better because he wanted to sell this little painting of Jackie O, and he kept calling me in the gallery, and asking if Warhol was any good. This is right after Warhol had died, and, was he going to amount to anything? I mean, it's hard at this point in time. Like, you just laugh hysterically. And he had a double *Race Riot*, a blue-and-black with white and black, I think. [00:16:05]

And then I had been asked by Karsten Schubert if I would do an exhibition called—well, if I would do an exhibition about LA art, and I said, "I'd love to, but I don't want it just to be about LA art." This show was called *A Brave New World*. Colin Gardner wrote the essay. I wrote the foreword with Karsten and the show was Ed Ruscha, John Baldessari, Alexis Smith, Vernon Fisher, who was from Texas, and Stephen Prina. That was very

funny for a whole bunch of other reasons, just because—Baldessari showed with Lisson Gallery at the time, and Lisson hadn't done anything really with him. Karsten Schubert had come from Lisson, and there had been a very bad breakup between Nicholas Logsdail and Karsten Schubert. And Karsten was kind of with Interim Art, this other gallery. They're kind of the two hot young galleries. This is pre-White Cube, and Anthony d'Offay is making his big move into—into being the king of London. [00:18:00]

Anyway, and so I curated this show, and out of it, Peter Morton bought a work of Baldessari's. By the way, Margo Leavin was the most difficult person on the planet, not for Baldessari, but for Alexis Smith, who had no visibility outside of the grand city of Los Angeles. [Laughs.] If it hadn't been for Colin Gardner teaching at UCLA and Alexis being at UCLA, it would never have happened. She was like, "Ho, ho, Brian, why would I possibly need Alexis to have an exhibition in London?" I was like, "Because I think it would make sense there. It would be really interesting there, you know, this idea of California, or Hollywood," so, anyhow. So, she did—she made some nice pieces. John was supposed to make a work for this staircase at Karsten's. He had a gallery on Charlotte Street near Tottenham Court Road. Ed was super cool, and he had two great paintings. Peter bought one of them, and it ended up—well, it ended up in his home. And then he didn't think Ed was good enough, and so he put it in the restaurant. He put John—the work he bought from me and John at the restaurant.

And then he would call me all the time. Like, "Do you think Baldessari is any good? Do you think this—?" I was like, "Peter, come on, like—" Which I'm always fascinated, because people think that Peter Morton has this incredible eye, or this—he just has an incredible ear. I mean, he learned a lot from Gil Friesen who was, you know, I think, an extraordinary individual and took very good—I mean, the thing about Gil is he took great notes from Paul Schimmel. When Paul said, "I think you should look at Franz West," Gil said, "Okay, I'll look at Franz West, when you should look at Jorge Pardo or Diana Thater or Uta Barth," whoever, he took advice on that, and [Robert] Therrien. I mean there are so many things he'd buy. Charlie Ray, he was going to buy a Charlie Ray white cube [7 1/2-ton cube, 1990] out of Burnett's. We actually made a foam-core mockup and moved it around his yard, which Pamela Burton had designed, you know? And then he realized that they would have to helicopter it—I think it was—was it nine tons, or six tons? I think it may be nine—this nine-ton white cube over power lines on Bonhill Road in—[laughs]—Brentwood Hills, and to put it there. He loved the idea of it there, but Charlie insisted that the work could be loaned, and had to be loaned. So then it was going to go right near, like, when he pulled in the driveway, and I said jokingly, "I think it would be fine there, but it's one of those things that, one night you drive home drunk, and you run into it, and the car loses, and the piece loses too." So, you know, it was kind of but, yeah. [00:20:01]

So, Peter was this—he would buy things. He bought a little Kounellis print from Burnett to go in his bathroom. He was supposed to buy the photographs of the *Plank Piece* of Charlie's and the tree piece, but it was for Tarlton's birthday. Tarlton called me and said, "Don't sell it to him. He forgot my birthday. This is him just trying to save his sorry ass right now." So, you can imagine where that relationship was going. [00:22:02]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then in the midst of all this, I convinced Burnett to do an Ian Hamilton Finlay show, and he's like, "Great." There was this deal I had with him, which was basically, I had to sell something while I was traveling in order—or I had to go be able to get stuff. So, I would go, let's say, to London, and I would go to d'Offay, and I found—you know, Matthew Marks was working there. Then—what's her name, the guys who had CRG, all those people—Glenn, Richard, and Carla who ended up forming CRG, they were all at d'Offay. James Cohan, ultimately, was at d'Offay, but that comes a little bit later. Matthew who was a very jolly kind of fellow at the time would be like, "Oh, Brian, I just have this edition. It's a Bruce Nauman. It's *Double Poke in the Eye*," you know? And then you'd go, and you'd see it, and it would be like, *chug, chug, chug, chug*. Because if you ever see them now, most people have taken the housings out of them, and have made them electronic, as opposed to the old-fashioned neons. So, you would hear the—the workings clicking to make the movement go—anyhow. I would call Burnett. I'm like, "Oh, they're \$7000 each, or \$15,000," or something like that, and Burnett would be like, "Okay, you've got to get them!" [They laugh.] "Okay." "Matthew, like, do that," and then—anyhow.

So, I went up to Scotland. I went and met Ian Hamilton Finlay and became good friends with him and said, "Look, we really want to do this show with you." He said—he had—was—had been suffering from shingles and was not in the best of shape, but he is like, "Okay." And then I got the whole Ian Hamilton Finlay battles that were going on, from Little Sparta all the way forward. I mean, all the way forward to what was happening to him at that moment, which, he had won the bicentennial monument for the French Revolution. And he wanted to make this beautiful garden for Saint-Just, and he was going to plant cherry trees in this place of quiet. The idea was that at some point during the year when the cherries came, they would start falling like heads. [00:24:03]

But the women of *art press* thought that a Frenchman should win, or maybe a woman, but I think at that point in life, it was probably going to be a man and not a woman. And they just made a political campaign against him that was unbelievable. They said he was a Nazi sympathizer, even though he had fought in the Second World War, and he—you know, all this sort of stuff. It was all based on the fact that he had made this work called *Osso*,

O-S-S-O, which means bone in Italian. It's like a dried bone. It's not just—like, osso buco is one way of thinking. But the way that people really—he was using it, was like when you see a bone that's been bleached by nature. There was a little postcard that went with it that said something to the effect of, "nature is the devil in a fancy waistcoat." And then reassigned, "nature is an SS Stormtrooper in a camouflage smock," to change it—about the voracity of human devastation to this world, and particularly out of war, which was his world, or then I guess ours at that moment. With that, they went completely after him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's put it on pause for a second while you're adjusting the microphone.  
[00:26:08]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: All right. Anyway, so he gave me all this—he gave me tons and tons and tons of publications he had done, all his concrete poetry. And then he sent me to go see this guy Graeme Murray who had a gallery on the second floor, I think, of this incredibly beautiful Georgian apartment in Edinburgh. The only reason why I say that is I think people like Graeme Murray, Maureen Paley, all their spaces in some way or another, even Karsten Schubert's, all had a human relationship to the scale. And, anyhow, so then Graeme had a Sol LeWitt show that was unbelievable in this Georgian apartment, which is like a perfect mirroring of each space. So, wherever there was a window on one side, there was another window on the other side. Where there was a fireplace on the left, there was a fireplace mirroring it in the other room. So, this room was this perfect room.

Anyway, and so, I went and saw that, and then we did this show with Ian Hamilton, which was a neon show of his pieces. So, there was one piece that was about wave in various languages. And there was another one, which was a diamond-studded net, which was about fish in a net, and the piece was in neon orange. But we could—we could fabricate everything in LA, which was great because then I started working with this guy who still makes neons for me today from time to time. He has a company called Hollywood Neon, which was on Melrose. He did worry me when we were installing because he seemed to be—liked to be electrocuted a little bit. Because he—[laughs]—turning the wires and putting things together, and he would be zapped and—anyway. I thought after a certain amount of time, it did something to your brain. [00:28:04]

As all of this was happening, all of a sudden, Burnett says to me, "Hey, look, I'm going to open this gallery with Claes Nordenhake." Claes had a gallery in Stockholm, right. I guess, I should back up slightly before that. Is that—in all of this stuff that's happening with Burnett, art fairs begin to happen.

[Side conversation.]

[Audio break.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —fairs, the thing that happened—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, art fairs. We took a little break, and now we're back. We're talking about art fairs.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, Burnett says, "Okay, art fairs, we should do the art fairs," and so the—you know, there were not many art fairs. What I think most people today don't understand is, like, Basel is out if you're a young gallery. You have to be in business for 10 years. Basel starts as a dealer gallery, not as a—not as a—wait, let's say that again.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Dealer fair.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Dealer fair, not as a gallery fair. Cologne starts as a gallery fair. Chicago is a gallery fair, and if we all—what I have not said is, like Ash—well, LA had a fair that opened, started very early in '87, '88 I think. John Baldessari did the first poster, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's pause there for a moment while I ask you what the difference for you is between a dealer fair and a gallery fair?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think, the way that Basel had set it up was that you were going to find things, a lot of re-sell material, people who were—I guess what we would look at now is Maastricht, in terms of very serious people who owned works that were not representing artists. But it was about the redistribution of material from one place to another. [00:30:06]

And the people like Beyeler who now—you know, there's now their foundation, were central to that you know? Because he—one year he might show Monet. The next year, he might show Jasper Johns. The next year he might show Picasso, the—you know, whatever. And maybe he would move forward and say, "Okay, now all of a sudden, I'm going to show Julian Schnabel, or—" So that was—that was the positioning I think that people saw. But for them, you had to be established, so you—it wasn't about the now. It was about art, which was something that we look at, we take time with. And the market might be moving around, but it's not about the now, or this

thing that has now become contemporary art.

So, that was out in terms of Burnett applying for that, because he wasn't 10 years old yet. So we—the first year, he—the first year, he did the fair, which must have been '89. So, Art Cologne was—he was invited as part of a group of young galleries, which was also this thing that was happening. LA did it when we invited Gisela Capitain, Max Hetzler, Daniel Buchholz, Sophia Ungers, I think Esther Schipper, and they all came. The next year, I think, it was the French that came. That didn't go so well, because it was a very rainy December. It used to be in December when that art fair was. And I think that's always been a problem of the fairs in Los Angeles anyway. Because Europeans think that they're coming to Florida in Los Angeles—[laughs]—and then they get a hotel room on the beach, and then it's freezing cold. The Pacific is freezing cold, and they're like, "What's this thing? What? It's going to be our last holiday before Christmas," and so, anyway. So, he was invited or, yeah, the Burnett Miller Gallery was invited, and what was part of that was there was Pat Hearn, Colin de Land, 303, Joost Declercq from Ghent. I can't remember who the rest of the crew was, but Burnett was part of that, which was really great and amazing. [00:32:03]

So, he wanted to show Charlie Ray, and things were going well, but Charlie had, at that time, and maybe still does, but really like constant, constant sort of blocks, creativity blocks, what he—what's the next thing he was going to do. And he—things were sort of picking up for him. There was a show that was coming up at Newport Harbor Art Museum, and so all the minimalist pieces, or the performance-based pieces were going to be there, the black cube, the tables, even the new work that he was thinking about. So, Charlie didn't know what to do, and then he decided, because Burnett and I and Charlie had said, "Why don't we remake some works that had been destroyed, or photographs?" [00:34:03]

So, the first thing we did, which was the first edition that Burnett Miller Editions made, and maybe the last—and part of that was my interest in multiples and books and things—was to reprint the *Plank Piece*, which is a diptych of Charlie with his legs behind a plank which is leaning into a wall. In one, he's on the outside of the plank. In the other, he's on the inside and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But he's hanging, isn't he?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —he's hanging, yeah, from his knees, and the plank is into the back of his—the back of his knees. And then this other one where he's lashed to a tree, and that's a horizontal image, and the other ones are two vertical images. It was an edition of nine, and there were A.P.'s. I think that's how—yeah. I think it was—some—like nine or seven, anyhow, which by the way, it's never noted. It's always had been in an edition, and it's—if you go to the Broad, it's not noted what the edition size is. And the dating, everyone dates it 1972, [19]73, but they don't do the second date, which was 1989. This has carried on since Douglas Vogel did a show that included it at the Hammer. I said, "Where'd you get the information from?" And he said, "Well, it was sold at Sotheby's, and I just used their information," so, just something about scholarship.

So, we published that, and we went to Olson Blow-Up, which was on Beverly, and they made them. They're on rag paper. I mean, you'll see that there was a lot of commercial techniques being used at the time. So, if you look at those, that wasn't really good rag paper. There are some yellowing on the corners if you look carefully at them. But anyway, it was all exciting. We made them and sold them to various people. [00:36:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How much were you selling them for?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think like the—all of them was maybe \$5000, and I got a set, Charlie got a set, Burnett got a set. It was always the way we did things as a way of just thinking about it. And then the first one that sold, that money went back to pay off the production, and then it was split fifty-fifty.

And so, that happened, and then this opportunity at Art Cologne happened for Burnett, and so Charlie said, "Well, why don't we just remake the chair piece?" So, Charlie and I met, and we drove to Western Boulevard—or like, Western Avenue, where, at that time, there were all these old furniture like bric-a-brac shops and stuff. So, we spent the morning driving and stopping at each and every single one, looking for a chair that matched the chair from the original photograph, which was now only a slide. Because the work had been destroyed, or something had happened, or maybe he gave it to somebody, or—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Can you describe the chair piece to me?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, the chair piece is a high back Americana-esque chair that has no arms to it. It has a double strut that goes around where the leg—that holds the legs together. So, it's not just one dowel that holds the legs together by four. It's actually eight of them. The reason why he needs that is that he cuts between those dowels, those stabilizers, and so you have a base. And on that base, he puts a six-foot-by-six-foot piece of glass, and then the chair sits right on top of it. So, it lines up with where the legs are, and so it has this very strange relationship. And the—how it works— [00:38:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, it looks like it's sitting on the glass, but the legs are actually under the glass?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And so it goes through. So, there's this kind of weird thing that happens to your eye, but also because it's a six-foot piece of glass, it's going to come out like three feet to you on any edge. It's kind of an amazing piece. Again, it's like really this moment of Charlie's work, which was about perception, and it's from '73, and so. So, anyhow, we did that.

We found—strangely, we found two chairs—one that had a crack in it and the other one that was good, that was nearly identical to his original. And then we drove back to the UCLA sculpture lab and then proceeded to cut the chair.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And where was his studio then?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He was living out in Fillmore then with his—he was married, and he was living out in Fillmore and had a studio very close to the Fillmore train station, but he would come in. Charlie came in a lot, and there was a little taco stand behind Burnett's space where like—it was really for workers and stuff. We would go, and I would always have, like, a quesadilla, and he would have coffee. Yes. So it was always like that, sort of over-boiled coffee with—you know—[laughs]—yeah, in a Styrofoam cup, and then we'd talk. We talked about everything from JPL to whatever his ideas were, and talked about the idea of making art and what it meant to make art, and at that time, also, was this idea of fabrication. [00:40:01]

So, anyhow, back to the lab. He says, "All right—" And this also speaks of the time. He's like, "All right, which one do you think should go to Cologne?" And I'm like—I looked at them, and they were sitting on—you know, even though they've been cut, they're now sitting there one on the—and the one that did not have a crack in the seat, I was like, "That one should go to Cologne," and he said, "Fine, the other one is yours." I was like, "Oh, great, thanks," whatever. Because he was this sort of friend and he would just talk about nutty ideas. And also, this idea that I always think now is about this, and I think about it a lot, because I think there's different artists. And I think about this sometimes with Nancy Rubins, but for other reasons.

But he said, "You know, sometimes Brian, I just have bathtub ideas," and I said, "What are those?" He's like, "They're half-cooked, and you have to keep working on them. You have to keep working on them." And then we were talking about fabrication, and he said, "You know what fabricators do, is they solve the problem for you, and that doesn't mean that you're making good art." And I sort of joked, because I knew Nancy was a good friend. And actually, he was really trying to get Nancy into Burnett's studio—I mean, Burnett's gallery, and get Burnett to go to her studio. That—I thought I said to him something like, "Yeah, but sometimes, they're stoner ideas that, when you're stoned, you think they're really good ideas, but then you have to sober up." And I said, "There are some artists that just never sober up." [They laugh.] And they keep thinking they're really, really good ideas and—anyhow, we had this thing. But we would talk about these things and how to move forward. He was already beginning to move towards the—he had done the mannequin, which was the *Male Mannequin* that I always thought looked like Jeff Koons but with Charlie's genitalia on it. [00:42:11]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And at that Art Cologne, Joost Declercq traded his Jan Vercruyse multiple table piece. Well, now, nobody knows who Jan Vercruyse is.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know how Jan Vercruyse is.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Jan Vercruyse was like in there with Franz West. He was—he had his own gallery in Brussels. He was like this artist that was so smart and so interesting and complex, and there was Lili Dujourie, and there's this whole group of Belgian artists in the '80s. Anyhow, he made these—he made all this very different work, but this was a sort of systems of, like copper top, like plates with legs or—yeah. So, Burnett traded a Jan Vercruyse for the Charlie Ray.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, how unfortunate. [They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then—yeah, well later, it becomes unfortunate, because Burnett when we part ways, he's calling me saying, "Give me that chair." Then he said, "Oh, why don't I trade you the spinning disc for the chair?" Which I probably should have done because, yeah, the world gets weird, and artists and their generousities flounder in the time of money. Anyhow, so there's that, then we do EXPO Chicago.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, what—? Was this 1990 when you do Cologne?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I moved—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, it must be '89.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, Cologne then was in November.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay, so—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —it's November of 1989.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So the—yeah, yeah. He does—he does Cologne in November of '89 and then he does Chicago in May because it was always on Mother's Day. So, there was—you know? So then— [00:44:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, May of 1990?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, yeah. And maybe we did it in 1989 and then 1990. That would be right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No. Because you started in August 1989—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, then that's—yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: According to this, your CV. Oh, no, because your—well, you haven't done the Cologne. You haven't become—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I haven't gone to Cologne yet.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And so, anyhow, we did Chicago, and Chicago was great. It's super crazy, and in fact this—what's his name? I don't know. They just did [356] Mission Road. Charlemagne Palestine.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, he's great.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: There was an incredible argument between Rhona Hoffman, a guy named Eric Frank, Caroline Bourgeois, Burnett about the difference between Charlie Ray and Charlemagne. Yeah. I was sitting—and there was this woman Renate Graf that's there, who was working for Krinzinger at the time. She goes on and ends up being the partner or marrying Anselm Kiefer. But it's just like this blowout argument that Mike has completely ripped off Charlemagne Palestine.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mike Kelley?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And that's the whole Eric—that's the Swiss and French contingent. And then there's this other side pushing back, and Rhona Hoffman is pushing back, and Burnett's pushing back, and I'm sitting there, and like—because I'm still young. I'm still thinking, and I'm listening. I'm like totally—and then Caroline Bourgeois turns to me, and is like, "You must have a fucking opinion," and I was like, "I don't have any opinion at all about this." I'm just fascinated and totally alive. People are arguing, like really passionately arguing about this. And I didn't realize that he was actually there. [00:46:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Palestine?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. He was there not at the dinner, but it was in Chicago. This is when it went—and he's still bitter about it today. Alex Tuttle told me that he's basically still going on about this art fair in 1989. That somehow he saw Mike's work, and people were all jumping up and down about these soft, soft toys.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And he's like, "That's mine." And I think, for me, it was the first time I realized that there was this—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because soft—because Mike was doing installations with stuffed animals, and Charlemagne Palestine had already been doing them?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And he would put it—he would do these piano performance pieces with them, and—



HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, we were saying that it was two different things, and—you know? But what I didn't realize, and maybe because I was super young, was that this—there was this history to territory. But I think as an art historian, you would say, "Well, nobody says, like, I get to paint Jesus on the cross, and nobody else gets to," or even looking at Cubism, you know—and this might be something that—I don't know. I just haven't read far enough. But nobody said—like Braque did never say, "Hey, hey, hey, keep the newspapers and absinthe glasses out of your images, Pablo. [They laugh.] That's my—you know, that's my territory."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and if I remember correctly, Palestine taught at CalArts.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Maybe.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I think there's like a—there was the—there was another connection there. You're right. [00:48:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, there was, you know? And, so anyway, there was all this stuff that was happening, and these art fairs that began happening. And then Burnett met Claes Nordenhake from Stockholm, that's with a C and an E, C-L-A-E-S. They then decided, because Cologne, Germany, was happening, like it was the place. In 1989, it was—I don't think there was any other European city that was—Paris was dead. London, nobody cared about contemporary art really. YBA [Young British Artists] hadn't invented itself, and so, and there was this—all this excitement. And it wasn't just—I mean now, I think we would say, "Oh, it must have been around Kippenberger, [Albert] Oehlen, Werner Büttner," you know, that whole group, Georg Herold. By the way, artists like Georg Herold were far more successful in that moment of time coming into Los Angeles. Dan Weinberg showed that—showed them and people went crazy for those caviar paintings, and the—I think it was much less that group, but it was like the Walter Dahn, [Jiri Georg] Dokoupil, that sort of group of artists, and people like Paul Maenz who had a gallery in Cologne. Michael Werner had his gallery in Cologne and that showed. Besides the fact that, I don't think—I don't know if he was married yet to Mary Boone, but he had—like, the Americans were there, but then he had all his German figurative artists that he was showing.

And then, there was Polke and Richter poking around, but again, nobody really cared about them in the same way. It's like—I think for Los Angeles, it was probably like the '87 documenta, something like '86, '87 documenta that a group of County Museum people had gone there and seen the work, and people like the Jangers, or Nan and Gene Corman, you know, Roger Corman's brother. Yeah, like they bought, but they—the Richters they bought were, like, abstract Richters. They did not go and buy, like—[laughs]—they did not buy the *Color Chart* paintings. They didn't buy any of the figuration. They didn't buy any of that. It was all abstraction. [00:50:26]

So then, I think that the point is that, Burnett, I think, thought I was getting a little bit bored, and so he said to me—and there was a woman named Bergita Werner who Claes had hired too. And she was very good friends with Rosemarie Trockel, and—who showed with, and has always shown with Monika Sprüth—that she was doing like—was going to set up this—they called it a *lager*, which basically is like a storage. But it was on—it was on the second floor of—I guess there was a ground floor, a first floor and then a second floor in the American way of thinking, of this *hinterhaus*, the inside house of this place on Bismarckstraße. And there was König Gallery—not the König who was from Munich, and she was actually Lebanese. She had a gallery there. It was around the corner from where Paul Maenz had been and then down the street was Max Hetzler and Tanya Gruner, Daniel Buchholz, Rafael Jablonka. I mean, it's kind—so, this is already like 1990, and he sends me off to go to Cologne. [00:52:12]

And it's kind of—it's kind of nutty because, immediately, he—they're like, "Well, where are you going to stay?" And we're like, "Well, we're going to rent something," but what had happened in 1989 was that the Berlin Wall came down. Strangely, I happen to be in Hamburg at the opening of the Deichtorhallen, which was this very big deal for Hamburg, because they had converted this old market, like big fruit-and-flower market thing into an exhibition space, and that was quite brilliant. However, this architect [Josef Paul] Kleihues had done it, who ultimately does the MCA in Chicago, and he's a disaster. So, he puts in a flooring that can't hold like a little scissor lift to change the lightbulbs, because you have these gigantic high ceilings. Because his whole idea is that it's an open hall, and then it's going to be this long, perfect slope down to the next building. So, there's no stairs or anything. It's—but to do that, he has to jack up and make this structure that can hold up the floor. And ultimately, jumping ahead many years, Jason Rhoades makes a piece that, ultimately, is talking about that as a sub-context, because he has all this sort of scaffolding and stuff, so. And he brings it to whatever the maximum level of the floor can bear. [00:54:02]

So, this whole thing is happening, and I'm there because one of the artists that—other artist that Burnett shows, a guy named Serge Spitzer who is originally Romanian and then—but he lives in—he had lived in Berlin and lived in Israel and then finally ends up in New York City. He's kind of a darling of people like Harald Szeemann and Jan Hoet. He does a lot of thinking about object's position on the wall, tension. Anyhow, he's there, and that's why

I'm there. And so, in the middle of the night as everyone is drinking away, we hear the sound of Taubis, these cars from East Germany [makes chugging sounds]. And the look on the Germans' face was the most amazing thing I've ever seen because it went from this jubilation to realization. And then these sort of jokes came, which was like, "Hide your bananas," which was because the East Germans didn't have any fresh fruit, so it was like, they're coming. But I think what they realized—and this is why I say this, is because they realized that the East Germans weren't all going to stay in East Germany. They were coming West. They were—they're coming for the good life. They're coming to reunite with their families in some cases. They were—whatever the case was, and so on that night, it was like, holy shit. [00:56:00]

I so go to Cologne a year later almost, and there are no apartments to rent. There's nothing to rent. There's—and so I'm sleeping in a—like a work—like businessman's hotel on—Flandrische Strasse, which is great because it was right next to the Hallmackenreuther, which is this bar that funny enough had a Garibaldi fish, one fish in a fish tank, and it was an albino Garibaldi.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I actually wrote something recently for a friend who's—took tons and tons of photographs during that period, about like—I always wonder what it would be like to be that fish, night after night seeing this group of people from Cologne coming in, drinking, drinking, drinking, drinking, going to the next bar. And what's like—that fish is just sitting there like, "Nice to see you again." [They laugh.]

Because the question that somebody asked me was to give a recollection of Cologne, and I said, "Well, you know, it's all fiction. It's what everybody wants to hear now." Like this was this time at the—it was and I learned a lot. Max Hetzler told me not to drink Kölsch and schnapps at the same time because, ultimately, I'll lose most of my intestines—[they laugh]—which had some part of it—I think he lost 17—you know? But we kind of jumped ahead.

But the thing is like—and this is where it all becomes so compressed, because what we don't talk about is like, you know, what comes to Los Angeles just before Burnett going to Cologne is Luhring Augustine Hetzler. Luhring Augustine Hetzler is trying very hard to make inroads into Los Angeles, and, I'll tell you, and they didn't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, and they showed all these people who now are there, but they showed Chris Williams and Steve Prina, and they gave all these people, who are conceptually rooted, shows. I wonder briefly, have you talked—I don't want to get too far off of this, but can you sense two things? One, the economy, which is contributing to this boom of art fairs. Two, the—your interest in Conceptual or Minimalist-oriented work at a time when, really, the larger trend in this country was to collect Neo-Figurative painting, especially in Los Angeles—Neo-Expressionist figurative painting, excuse me. [00:58:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, let's talk about both those things briefly before we go on. A, to what extent does the economy contribute to this?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think there's this—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And then what happens when it falls apart?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, I think two things happen. I think that auctions—there's this big shift that happens in the auction houses, and they start selling contemporary art. I think before that, if I remember correctly, it had to be, like, 10 years out of the studio.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is as a result—how the early '80s boom of, say—I would say, like Schnabel, [David] Salle, [Eric] Fischl, all those kind of artists, or later?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I would say, like, mid-'80s.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mid-'80s?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Mid-'80s, yeah. But there is this moment, this famous moment, and I can't remember which auction house it is. I want to say it's Sotheby's, but it very well could have been Christie's. Phillips wasn't in the pictures then—picture then. People sit on their hands, and they don't bid on the Julian Schnabel, and it fails and then people clap. It's kind of the revolution against, one could say, the over-exuberance. But that doesn't really change any—but you could see it starting to happen. And I think someone like Fred Hoffman saw the writing on the wall. I think a lot of people saw the writing on the wall that it was—the economy was shifting. But also, this idea—and I think it had started before that with the East Village—that there's these overhyped things. And it probably even happened—I mean, if you—I know Peter Selz always said to me, when he was the chief curator of

painting and sculpture at MoMA, that the day that people got all excited about Pop art, and there was a line out the door to buy a Warhol *Brillo Box* or something. He—I think they're—I think they were all confused. I think everyone was still confused. [01:00:03]

But I know that, already, by the late '80s, there was such a speed to the turnover, and the Whitney Biennial had become this real, market-testing ground. People like Cindy Bernard were being picked up, and Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler and Charlie Ray, and then Charlie decided not to do it because he said—I've always thought that he was right about that. Wait, he did not do that one? He did do the one with the—but I think that was later with the *Firetruck*. It was later.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was later.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But the first one he didn't do, because he said, "They'll always remember if you make a bad show." And if you're not in it—or maybe another. So, I think that all those things were coalescing together, and then there was the real economy outside that was playing havoc. But it—but then the next art fair starts—or that people start looking at, is Madrid, and so then we're going to do the Madrid art fair. So, in 1990, we do the Madrid art fair. And then we do Chicago in '89, and it's pouring with rain and the pier is leaking and Burnett by then is like—

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BRIAN D. BUTLER: —trying to show Imi Knoebel who was, sort of, fashionable, and he had three red constellations, and he presold them back to Germany, to Rudolf Zwirner and Barbara Gladstone. But then the—and we had a Wolfgang Laib *Milk Stone*, and the rain's coming through the roof, and Burnett is sitting there in his booth during the night trying to keep the work from getting totally destroyed, or getting rained on at all, because he's already sold it. And, you know, that's—but also, it—there's this thing about gallerists and dealers. Like Zwirner was really a dealer, and Barbara was—she was a gallerist, but she came much more out of a dealer sort of mentality. I think that she wasn't about originating them. I think when we talk about gallerists, you do think about like the people who are the originators of, they start working with the artists early on, and then they work with them and grow up with them. And I think there's a number of galleries that were picking up artists or picking up artists and representing them. And, you know, they had been in Europe and then we are, for the first time, really going back to Europe, which would have been a very American-centered thing trying to bring—so, I think, this all just has a crescendo, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But anyway, back to you. Here you are at Nordenhake and then what do you—so, you're—what are you selling at Nordenhake, or are you selling anything? That, you're there from September 1990 to June 1991 and—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. So, at Miller-Nordenhake, which is this collaboration. So, I think Burnett wants to hook up with Claes, because Claes shows Richard Serra, and also he just started showing Mirosław Balka. Claes likes Sarah Seager's work, who's an artist from Los Angeles and probably wants to do something with Charlie Ray, so on, and so forth. So, there's this discussion between the two of them. Alan Uglow is a painter that I knew from Asher/Faure because he was included in the group show that Ruth Kaufmann had put together. But Claes shows Alan Uglow, and Claes shows this Polish painter, and it's sort of—but he's sitting there in Stockholm, and I think he thinks Stockholm is very sleepy. I think, also, that you need to be able to move money out of Sweden, or at least make money outside of Sweden and keep it outside of Sweden, instead of just— [00:02:00]

So, they came together. They took the space. And upstairs from me was Isa Genzken who had her studio, and then in the building that was—we were in Bismarckstraße 60, and then in 50 was where Paul Maenz was, and then there was Kirsten Ortwed and Troels Wörsel who—they were both Danish artists, and Claes showed Kirsten Ortwed. The reason why that's interesting is because her best friend is Rosemarie Trockel, and Rosie and her were—had just made this great edition in the end—in the end—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you go there and you start this—start working—you started something in Cologne. How does it go?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's tough. It's tough for a lot of reasons. People like Erika and Rolf Hoffman who are collectors, you're like, "Hey, I want to see your collection," and it's—you're slightly naïve about it, and they're like, "What do you want?" I mean, they want you to prove every night at the Grünes Eck or Dos Equis or the Hallmackenreuther—you're—have to prove yourself, not so—drinking, but also arguing your point, and they want to know why. Because there's a Cologne artist that Burnett shows whose name is Günter Umberg and, I would say, Claes shows him too. Günter Umberg makes these really beautiful black paintings, these black, square paintings that—of like Dammar varnish and pigment. And so, they're like, "We don't need to see this shit." He also lives in south Köln, Cologne, and so, it's like these groups. It's these gangs, and who's doing what, and where they're doing it, anyhow. And they want to see Charlie Ray, or they want to see something else that's happening or—you know? [00:04:13]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They want to see the LA people?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, and so we show Fred Fehlau who makes—I think probably the best show he ever made in his life—with these mirrors. It's kind of fantastic. Fred comes and he's trying to get people to come there and sell stuff.

I've now met, like, Doris Saatchi, who is Charles Saatchi's first wife who is the brains. She's the one who got him to collect Minimalism and all that amazing stuff as well as, I guess, figurative, all the Schnabel and stuff. And so, she's interested in people like Tony Smith and Günter Umberg, and there's this early Umberg, and so talking about all these sort of things.

I'm living in Cologne, and I'm living in this hotel and then Burnett says, "Okay, it's time to move out of the hotel. You really need to find something." I'm like, "Burnett, I'm really trying to find some place." A friend of mine who works at Joachim Kobinski's, she's like, "Oh, there's a friend of mine who's moving to Canada, you should move into her apartment." I said, "Fine, I'm all ready to go," and so I move—I move into the apartment with all my stuff, which was not much. Like, one big box, and somebody gave me a mattress, which was—well, just like a foam thing that had a cover on it. I go out drinking and I come home and off the door—the locks are changed. Like, I hadn't even slept there one night—[laughs]—and then I take the key off her, and I opened it and there's someone who has, like, candles on. There's somebody I was sort of seeing at the time, and I thought, "Oh, that's really funny. How did she get in, and that's like, okay." And I look, and it's nobody I recognize, and I go, "Well, this is weird." [00:06:06]

So, I leave, and I take—I kind of take myself, and I go back to the gallery, which had this little nook. I sleep there for the night, and then the next morning I call, and I'm like, "Hey, I'm supposed to be living in this apartment. Who is this?" And it's the person who owns the apartment. She had gotten cold feet and decided not to move to Canada, and so then I take my stuff, and then for the rest of my time there, I'm basically sleeping in the gallery.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Oh, God.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I would sneak upstairs to Isa Genzken's where she had a little shower. Because each floor is like—it was either a toilet or a toilet shower, so I'd sneak upstairs and I would take a shower. [00:08:04]

Isa who, you know, was troubled, and having a troubled relationship with Gerhard Richter, at that point already, at first she hated me, and then she decided that she liked me a lot and was super nice. Really, to this day, I think even though she's kind of—I think everyone kind of knows—very, very difficult, and not mentally consistent. She was always like super loving, and would ask me to come and give her opinion on things that I wish they had made at that time. There was one that was like a big gateway into Holland, and there was a gigantic, like—I mean, it was like a window piece, but not quite a window. It's much more sculptural than that, and you would drive underneath it. But you could see it because she was—her idea was, like, Holland's so flat that you could see it for miles. So, anyhow, then Burnett comes just after ARCO in 1990. The Gulf War has started and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: ARCO the art fair?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: ARCO, the art fair in Madrid, and it's dead, and it's a disaster. It's a financial disaster, and the reason why is that the Americans were flying sorties to Iraq for the sorties—I mean, or for the Gulf War—and shut down all of Madrid, so there was nothing. So, already, there's financial stuff happening worldwide, and that just kills it. And he comes to Cologne.

And the thing that I realize now that was so interesting, is that if you open a second gallery somewhere, you better be ready, that the person who's there on the ground every day—who's now made friends with those people, because you're drinking with them every day or whatever, you're hanging around with them. That when you walk into a room, you're not the center of attention.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-mm. [Negative.] [00:10:09]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And Burnett came, and he came with this woman Ute Hammer, which I always thought was funny because there's, I mean, hammer. I mean, there's Christian Nagel, which is a nail, and—anyhow. And Ute had come with—she had gone to ARCO with Burnett, and she was a very statuesque woman. They came, and it happened that Gerhard Richter and Isa came to the Fred Fehlau opening. And they said, "Hi, Brian, well, let's get together for dinner," or, "When are we going over to Kirsten and Troels' house?" Because they lived literally next door to each other, and Burnett was not happy about that. We went and had dinner afterwards, and it turned into this incredible blowout argument, and then I said, like, "I have to get out of here for a second." I went down to the toilet and cooled off, and I came back. And then we were kind of like, "But, hey, let's work on these things and figure out what's going to happen." And then because Burnett never wanted to hire me officially in Germany and have a proper contract, he might be paying me, and I was like—I had an American Express card that was my American Express card, so when we didn't have enough money, and this is like—this is the thing. It's like there

was nothing fluid about this. I would go see Claes in Stockholm, and he would go in his drawer, this is pre-euro, and he had envelopes of francs and deutsche marks, and krone and guilder, and he was like, "So, you need rent?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I'd be like, "Yeah, I need rent," and then he'd say, "Okay, here's rent, and a little bit to—" You know? "How are things going in there?" And I'll be like, "Well, we sold this," and I said, "But you—I need your guys' help. I don't know people." We got rid of Bergita Werner. That was a big blowout argument, and there was Burnett saying, "Brian has to be there, and I don't want this person." Because, fundamentally, she had no aesthetic bone in her body in terms of Burnett's thinking. So, she picked these lights for the gallery, and Burnett was like, "It's over. She's out." She probably would have been better in terms of—she's a really good bookkeeper anyhow. So, Burnett said, "You have to come back, and things are going to change, and I want Ute Hammer to run the space. What I want you to do is I want you to be the floater who goes back and forth between the two places." [00:12:13]

And I was coming back. I had to fly through London. I was going to take the Virgin Airways nonstop flight to Los Angeles, and somehow, I got mixed up and I missed the flight by a day. I went to the Polish club that was kind of near the V&A. Sarah Seager had this show with Angela Bulloch, and Sarah and—anyway, the point is I met Angela Bulloch then, and I sat next to Angela. I had seen Angela before because of Esther Schipper showing her and stuff, but I said to her, "Let's make an edition one day, and let's do something."

Anyway, I kind of left, and I got back, and Burnett was gone. He had flown to New York for some reason, and Tara, his wife, was sitting at the gallery and said, "I'm sorry, Brian, but can I have your keys please? Because we cannot afford to keep you any longer, and you have to go." I said, "Oh, okay. I don't have my keys, but I'll bring them on Tuesday," and so I went back and gave them on Tuesday. I said, "There are a few things that are mine." [00:14:04]

I had made a deal with Burnett, which was, because he couldn't pay me so well, that there was certain art, which—again, these are all these—like, things you learn later in life. Like, if you ever—if you ever write a letter to somebody, they have to write a letter back saying, "I accept whatever it is," if it's just like a letter. And so, the deal with Burnett was that I would be paid in \$10,000 worth of art. Well, for Burnett, that was like at full price, not at the gallery price, so that became kind of a stumbling block, and whatever.

And then there was this Ian Hamilton Finlay material that was there, and they gave that to me. And then Burnett came back and I immediately called Serge Spitzer and some other people who were completely outraged, so then it begins. Oh, and one of the great things that Tara says to me, "So, what do you think you're going to do now?" And because—it wasn't because I was arrogant or anything, I just, like, was dumb. I was like, "I don't know, open a gallery or something," and I think that was like, holy shit, wait, what have we just done, what have we unleashed? [00:16:00]

So, anyhow, and Ericson, Ziegler, and everybody got all up in arms, except for Isa. You can tell who people are. That to me was like, also, a really amazing learning lesson about the art world, and the people who really come and stand next to you. I said, "Oh, you don't have to stand next to me." They're just, "We just don't want you gone." I was like, "Okay, well, then let's figure it out." And other people who are the first to give you a hug while they're stabbing you. It's kind of like those committees that they—everyone comes to you and says, "I voted for you. I wanted you to stay," and—but you're like, "Wait a minute, now the majority of people have told me that they wanted me to stay, and yet, there's only three people that voted me out?" sort of thing. [They laugh.] You're like, that doesn't work. My math's not so good. Anyhow, so that was the—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Tara had a job of her own. She was—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She was at a bank. She was at—I think it was, like, First Interstate. She did commercial banking, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I thought she really was the financial support for that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She was the financial support. She was also, I think, very—I mean, she came and did the books. She was really—and that's where—I mean, I think that's where there was stability. And there was also this ability, like Burnett would buy certain things from time to time that he thought were like, "Let's tuck that away. Let's do what we want to do."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I have one more question for you before we leave Burnett, which is, to what extent was the collector Donald Bren involved with Burnett at that time, or does that come later?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That comes later.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The Newport collector.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, he knew him, but Burnett was much tighter to Arnold Ford who was in Laguna. I would say Donald Bren, that comes out of Paul Schimmel I would say and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, it's after your time?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's after my time. I mean there are these sort of crazy things. Burnett was—because his family, the Burnett family, they were the first governors of California. So, the wood in the state house is all—they were like lumber people. And so, he knew people. He knew the editor of the Sacramento Bee. There was a guy who was doing development up there, and I never have seen it, but there was a building that was being developed, and it has an Ian Hamilton Finlay fountain and a Sol LeWitt elevator bank sort of thing. So, you know, Burnett was— [00:18:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, his family money didn't support him through all this?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think a lot of the family money was maybe gone. I don't know. All—the only thing I knew about the family is that some family members would come. His mother had committed suicide at some point. He had run—was a cross-country runner at USC. He had gone—you know, before—after he left USC, he with Chris Knight worked together at La Jolla, and that seemed to have been an amazing learning place with Lefty, and even though many inappropriate things seemed to have been done.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That Lefty being Sebastian Adler, the director of La Jolla Art—La Jolla Museum of Art at that time.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I mean with Burnett, we used to drive down to La Jolla. We used to—I mean, that's the other thing that I was thinking about when we started this conversation, was the mobility. And maybe it's just youth, but I mean, if there was a good show in Newport, you didn't think twice about just driving down to Newport or driving down—or driving up to Santa Barbara or driving to La Jolla. You'd stop, and there was some crazy Swedish guy that had some restaurant, not up on the bluff of La Jolla, but down below. Burnett would be like, "Okay, let's go," and get all excited. But there was like this mobility that, no matter where the art was, you went. There was—and I was trying to describe this to someone recently, that it—there was this pilgrimage. That was the thing, and that's—and it was a unique thing. [00:20:08]

And what's happened now, with going to Tasmania and seeing the same James Turrell that you see in Los Angeles that you see in the south of France, that you see—like, James Turrell, to me, then becomes a fraud. So, all the things that we believed in—and falsely probably. Because one of the great revelations of when I worked for Burnett was, we went down to see the Richard Long show, and I was like a devotee like so many people. And then I'm talking to Richard Long, who starts his journey coming to the museum in Utah, and he's looking at rocks and then I'm thinking, "Oh, he probably stopped and has like a flatbed truck or something, and he's putting the rocks in it, or—" So, I'm talking to Richard, and he's like, "Oh, yeah, we were coming through here, and we—" I was like, "Oh, these are really great rocks. What kind of rocks are they?" And then he said, "Yeah, then we went to a quarry and got—quarry and got them, and that's how we made this circle, and this thing." I said, "Well, did you stop by Glen Canyon or whatever and like have someone get the mud for the—?" He's looking at me like I'm totally insane, and I was just like, "Okay, I don't quite get it."

And then later, because Matthew Marks worked with Richard Long at d'Offay—I was at this very, very funny dinner and Matthew was a very funny guy. He was telling the story of making the documentary of Richard Long going into the Sahara, and he's like, "Oh, my God, he was not out there walking. There was like a Hilton Hotel right behind it." And come to find out because one of the artists that Burnett showed was Ulay and Marina— [00:22:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Abramovic.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Abramovic. When they did *The Lovers* is like—you know, already she was having this affair with Paco, and Ulay—they had this idea that they were either going to make it or not make it. But the idea was that they had come together and *The Lovers* would happen. But it wasn't going to happen, and they already knew they're going to break up, and then Ulay marries Song—Sung—Sung, who he supposedly meets in, like, the Forbidden City, and she's already heading back. She hates China, can't wait to get out of China and—but meanwhile, they're calling, and it's like '89. It must be '89 still. They're calling every night back to Europe, or they're calling Michael Klein who had a gallery in New York, and Tracy Williams would be like, get these crazy calls, you know, about how miserable they are, or this. But they're staying in hotels.

I thought for years that Ulay—because he became a better friend than Marina, and I would stay with him in Amsterdam. Literally, he would be sleeping in the walls, because he came out of the Gobi Desert, that wall. He was sleeping in the wall there, because he—the way he talked. He was so zen, and I find out years later that like,

"No, he was in a hotel too." [They laugh.] And so, I think this—[they laugh]—explains so much, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The eye-opening experience. But what I want to ask you also is about Burnett. Burnett, as we both know, commits suicide down the road here.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And he—and he tried for many years to become sober or to be sober. He was a hard drinker. How hard—how bad was his drinking when you were working with him? I mean, obviously, everyone is drinking but— [00:24:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I mean, I never—no, it wasn't like that. I remember when Deborah Irmes—he did a fair up in San Francisco and she said—it was like early in the morning and then he had had open-heart surgery then, and that's—he had already moved to Bergamot Station, which may I quote the Margo Leavin great quote of all times?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Which was that Bergamot Station was the waiting room for gallery heaven. [They laugh.] And I still think that it destroyed more great galleries in this town than anything, but—and we really didn't talk after that. He came once to the original space. I would go—I saw the—I saw one or two shows at the gallery. Charlie Ray had already left because Burnett had tried to do a runaround on this guy Craig Cornelius—I guess is his name—who was kind of a private dealer. I think he had a gallery for a little time in New York. He was representing and working with the Saatchis, and because I knew Doris through Cologne, I was like, "You don't want to go around any of these people." Something happened, and it all went south. I think Charlie was looking for a way out. I mean, Charlie was looking for a way out of Feature. In the end, to me, Charlie became an individual which was very much looking for an opportunity. [00:26:02]

And to go back slightly, you know that *Oh! Charlie* piece was supposed to be fabricated in Belgium with Joost Declercq. And Joost—to the drinking problem—Joost had a severe drinking problem, just was fucked up all the time, and Charlie got so frustrated he went to—he went to Paris and hung out in Paris with Claire Burrus who had a gallery there, and would show Charlie's pieces later on. And then, finally, he left Europe and came back to the States and made it here. But I think it was one of those things where with Burnett as long as we were together, I mean, he drank, but it wasn't like—he wasn't drinking in the morning. I think it's after the open-heart surgery that it kind of spins out. Because according to people like Wayne Blank, who is one of the partners of Shoshana Wayne Gallery, who also had an open-heart surgery, I guess, this operation, particularly when you're young, is—it's like life-changing. Burnett became super like running all the time, and doing—like over—trying to overachieve, but then also was drinking. I have no idea if he was doing coke, or he was never a pot guy, so I kind of imagine that would not have been like—but so there was this motion to him. And then he gave up the gallery at Bergamot and then he moved into the Craig Ellwood house where he ultimately killed himself. But I think he was still ahead of the game in terms of this idea of making exhibitions, but also he was ahead of the game in terms of looking at Prouvé but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: No, he was fantastic. I just wonder—I never really—I mean everyone said that he had this massive depression, and that's why he killed himself, and he hung himself. Of course it's a very—it's a very intentional suicide, and I didn't know if you—if you had any insight into it. Because he really was a remarkable dealer. [00:28:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. No, and honestly, the last time I talked to Burnett, I happened to be in the gallery when the gallery was just one floor here at 6150. I got a phone call, and it was about the Charlie Ray chair piece, a piece that comes back, continues to—yeah. He was just like out of his head, and he was in—he was in Paris, and he was with Caroline Bourgeois who, I think, they had run off together, but Tara was like, you know, "Burnett is going to run off and come back and—" But he was like really—and I had said to him at the time, "Burnett, I'm going to be really simple about this. Charlie gave me the chair. I don't give a fuck about the chair. You know what, if Charlie says the chair isn't mine, tell him to write me a letter, and I will return the chair. I just don't care," and never happened. He called back. I had left the gallery, he left this message on the machine, "Give me my fucking chair, you—fuck you. I'm going to fuck you," sort of like—but it wasn't Burnett. It was just somebody else. So that was that and that—and then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean it wasn't the real Burnett. It was a—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It wasn't the real Burnett.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Cross talk.] He was cursing.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Then I suppose he came back, then he went into rehab supposedly, and who knows? Like the

person to ask would be Tara or Rhona Hoffman.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And I don't know Tara's—what is—does Tara go—did she go by Burnett, by Miller? She—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, her last name starts with a G. I can't remember. I saw her not so long after Burnett had killed himself. She asked me to come look at the library and look at some things that were in crates that nobody knew what they were. I think there was hope. "Oh, that might be a Joseph Beuys!" [They laugh.] But—you know? I mean, sadly—because I really love Tara. I think Tara was great and she was—you know, she was—she kind of put up with this thing. And it always makes you also think about this. We all think that artists are the ones who are out of control and stuff. But it wasn't that he was out of control, it was just like it was it. It was center. It was the—like, what this art world could be, what it could do. I think he maybe is part of that last generation of people that took it as a type of religion. And yeah, you might make money, but it was 100 percent, he was going because buying that thing or like championing that artist was as great as it was going to get. [00:30:04]

Sadly, as the art world moved, the thing is, if you go through Burnett's roster now, I mean, again, holding on to it, not holding on to it, but if he had actually just bought in to a few pieces, it would have been an enormous amount of wealth. But it also goes to say that when he was doing what he was doing, people really didn't care. And when you did show them—and I think we talked about this a little bit—like with the Gersh kids, they would come and he would be like, "Oh, my God, look at the Bechers. It's an amazing Becher." And they would just be like, "What?" But they'd been—so, they'd just been telling him two days before that they had bought a Thomas Ruff. And he's like, "But if you have that Thomas Ruff, you need to have the Bechers, because the Bechers are—here's how the tree goes, and here's how they relate to John Baldessari, and here is how they—" Like, he would map it all out.

The other person who had this great gallery that was upstairs from Burnett was Kiki Kaiser who had this architectural. And again, it was like—it was the time, it's like three people cared about that Kiki was doing. [00:32:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Someone who also committed suicide.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're lucky you're alive from that building.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. No, I mean, it's like, and then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't mean to laugh is—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, the other—the other—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —for the record.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, no. But the other really good friend of Burnett's who killed himself as well was Mark—oh, no, it just left my head. He was a secondary-market dealer, and he had an apartment like in the El Royale. Mark [Glaubman or Gladman -BB] who dated Jane Geckler. Jane Geckler who died who was really good friends with and did that incredible show of—she was good friends with Roy McMakin. I mean, it's like—you know, there was some point that my parents said to me, "Wow, you know more people who have died than we do, and we're kind of at that age that—[they laugh]—we should be way ahead of you."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's move on to you. So, you and Burnett have this huge falling out, and you—and that was 1991. You had quite the rollercoaster rides with the art world so far, but despite that, you decide to start Brain Multiples in Santa Monica.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In 1991, which just seems like such a long time ago. [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It does. Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry but—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, it does. It is a long time ago.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And why did you decide to start with Brain Multiples? Was it the experience of doing that one—well, it wasn't really a multiple—



BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, well—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —but sometimes, it's probably—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —it was an edition, and then I lived—living in Cologne, there was—it was like multiple city, and looking at, from Rosemarie Trockel to Kippenberger and Georg Herold and all those guys and then you look at Polke, and you look at Beuys, but also, everyone was like—it was super DIY.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But what do you mean by "Brain?" What do you mean by "multiple city?" They were all doing multiples? [00:34:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. They were all doing multiples. I mean, it was something—it was something that was part of the language. It wasn't like what I saw Gemini as, which was, at that point in 1991, just another means of production, and you would—you know? So-and-so artist, just you can't afford the painting, so you go buy the print sort of thing.

What was happening in Cologne and in Europe was unique objects best expressed in multiple form, and that became really the jump-off place for Brain Multiples. Our first multiple was with—I just have to quickly change something. That flight back from London, one night before I got fired, I had gone back to Cologne to finish a show with Rosemarie Trockel and Kirsten Ortwed. And then when I said to Angela Bulloch, it was July of 1991 when I said, "Let's make a multiple," but I had already started thinking about it. Thad Strode had—was working at Luhring Augustine Hetzler. He had—he was an artist showing there, and they were going out of business. He—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So Thaddeus Strode was working at Luhring Augustine Hetzler?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, he's an artist who shows there. He had come out of CalArts and had shown at this gallery—what's the name—Anderson Gallery, that was over on Wisconsin and like—you know.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Dennis Anderson.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Dennis Anderson, yeah. Good, good memory, yeah, Dennis, and he showed all these artists, but some of them had left. One of them was Thad Strode, and he had gone to show at Luhring Augustine Hetzler. So, we got talking, and I did a studio visit, and I said, "Well, it would be great—really great. Let's make a multiple." [00:36:02]

The other idea I had with multiples was I wanted to start building a gallery, but I wanted to do three things at once. First is that I wanted to make a multiple that was not very expensive, so it was like, production was at \$1500. The second thing was a unique idea best expressed in multiple form. And the third was to be able to work with somebody in that situation that if it didn't work out well, and you wanted to part ways, you just cut the edition in half. So much of the history of the gallery up to that point that I knew was like, you tested out artists. Oh, here comes this artist, and then you put them in a group show, and if they don't sell, bye-bye. Or you give them a one-person show, or you put it in the—or you put it, and if it doesn't do well then you go bye-bye. So I thought—you, kind of, would know, and so I thought, let's try it that way, and it sort of—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When you say cut the edition in half, do you mean you don't make all of them?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, you make all of them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Make all of them.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then if Thad and I didn't like each other, at the end of it, and let's say it was an edition of 20, he took 10, and I took 10, and we said goodbye. It's like a nice divorce, or I got maybe a little bit more because I had to pay for the edition in the first place, so however it went. And so, that's where it started, and then we did—and we did this edition with Thad and then already, I was looking at spaces and thinking, and what I could do. [00:37:59]

I lived in this townhouse apartment on Franklin Street in Santa Monica just at the corner of Arizona. I think I had gone back to Europe, and I saw Maureen Paley. The economy had crashed by then, and Interim was forced to move out of its space that was right next to the d'Offay on Dering Street and backed to her house on Beck Road. I thought, "Okay, I'm not getting a backer. That's fucked up because these people now think there's a lot of money to be made in the art world," so I don't want a backer, and so I'm going to do this. I'm going to try and do this thing, And then I came home and I was like, "Oh, if I just take everything out of this downstairs and everything, and I just sleep in this little corner upstairs, I can turn that other room into—that's great. That will be the office, and then it will be the space, and we'll just do that." It was very—seemed to be logical.

And so, we're doing the edition with Thad. That was going well, and then I really like this artist Gretchen Faust—Gretchen Faust who now runs a yoga-and-mindful thing in Wales but still makes art from time to time. She was

doing these tattoo pieces that—where she would tattoo the wall. So, there would be these words, and she would take like an icepick and hammer it, and they would make these perfect holes. I thought she was super—she was like super interesting, and so we started talking about making an edition.

And that was—just by chance she had walked past the Hope and Grace Mission in the Lower East Side, and there was a sermon plaque and then she took a photograph of it, ran out of film, and then kept photographing it. And then the next day, she was thinking like, "Okay, now, I'm going to have to really make photographs of this. This is what I want it to be, and this is going to be the edition." It was gone, like the whole—it had this image of Jesus crucified, that it was—had turned purple, and it said, "No Greater Love Than This." [00:40:00]

So then we had this idea like, well, why don't we just—each photograph is an edition. So the edition number, which was also part of the fun of what we were doing, would be like the number of the film would be the first number. And the second number would be—the second number would be the edition size. So, it was always like that. And so that was—that was the edition, and it was great, and nobody wanted it, so I then realized—

And the Thad Strode was finished by September of 1991, and it was shown at Luhring Augustine as one of their last shows. There was a little back room, and we showed it there. It was great and then there was this going away, close-down party, and this band called Mifter that had Steve Hanson in it, played. And by then I was friends with Jorge Pardo, and Diana Thater made this—because she is an amazing seamstress, unbeknownst to most people. For Chris Wilder, she made some crazy, green fur thing. Everyone danced the night away, and Fran Siegel who was the director who was—had—was pretty much gone.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That had been taken over by this guy Tim Neuger who I had met in Cologne because he was the preparator of—of Max Hetzler's Gallery. He comes to Los Angeles and then he starts looking at all these LA artists. So, he is putting together a show of LA artists that's going to open in 1992 that include Paul McCarthy, Thad Strode, Liz Lerner. Sarah Seager is in that show. I'm trying to remember who else. Oh, Raymond Pettibon. I don't know if Mike is in that show or not. But it's a—it's just like this group. He becomes good friends with Raymond, and he starts taking people like Marc Selwyn and—what's her name? She is a private dealer for—Cynthia Plehn who now becomes Cynthia Greenwald when she gets married but anyhow—down to Raymond's studio and selling stuff to them. And then they drive back to Ray's studio afterwards and buy again without him there because he's giving it—like he's just giving stuff away. [00:42:10]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Gives stuff away.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, and it's like \$25 a drawing. So then I just decided like, well, let's make a show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You've got to hold that thought for one second. We're back and recording, and you've—you're setting up your gallery in your townhouse in Santa Monica. Is—and is that the address of the gallery?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. So, I wanted to—I come back from Germany, and I was all like, "Maybe we should call it Galerie Butler, spelled like German," whatever. And there were a number of artists, and the one who was most vocal was Cindy Bernard who was like, "Oh, that's so self-important. Oh, galleries," and then I—she's like, "You should be more like 303." And so, I didn't really think about the fact that 303 was no longer at 303—[laughs]—and I said, "Okay, let's call it 1301," so we called it 1301. [00:44:02]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And PE is?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That comes much later. That was Projects & Editions. That comes in like '95, and that comes out of—it was literally then going to be called—once we had—we had to move out, and the gallery was suffering. It had this great moment. There were a lot of really good shows, but we had to move out because the apartment I was in was being converted into condos. It was part of this movement that Santa Monica and its neoliberal positioning was going to happen, which was that. It was called—they were—you could buy your apartment, and it was fine, but it was a way of getting rid of rent control. That was really the whole thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And what was your actual address, 1301 Franklin?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Franklin Street. So, the opening show was Thad Strode—well, that's not true. The first show was—and then I did this edition with Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler called *Raw Material*. And it was a G scale model train, and so there are different hopper cars, the cars that carry like coal or whatever and it had an engine and a caboose at the end. There were all these different hopper cars from different railways, so B&O or Southern Pacific or whatever.

And then in them, Kate and Mel had written on these marble tablets the Constitution and Amendments. The

edition size was determined by the amount of hopper cars it would need to carry these broken-up stones, these tablets. And then it was sandblasted and then hand-tinted so the—what was written was now black on a white marble stone. The marble stone is then broken up, and then—so in the gallery space was this kind of U shape—this U shape of this train carrying its load. [00:46:19]

And so, we installed it, it's all great. We're going to have a dinner, a curator, director of the IC in Philadelphia. Melissa Feldman's in town. My friend Jennifer Gordon, who I had gone to Berkeley with, but now married to this guy Simon Johnson, they're in town. We're going to have this like opening, yay, dinner. And we go to Tom Solomon's Garage, which—and then we go and have lunch at The Hollywood Canteen, and we hear these reports. There's something happening because of the Rodney King. [They laugh.] And the day the gallery officially is open and we're having a dinner is the day the LA riots start.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God. [Laughs.] So, it's 1992?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: 1992, officially, 1992 April 27th. Yeah. And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So people weren't coming?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, they weren't really coming, but it was more like the thing that really happened, we had this sit-down dinner and nobody knew. At that point, Thad Strobe, he wasn't married with Sarah, but she lived in Pasadena. He lived on Santa Fe and Seventh near the firehouse there, and people were driving down the [I-]10 freeway. It was like by the time people left at one o'clock in the morning like fires are everywhere, and people are driving. Jennifer and Simon are sleeping in the floor in the upstairs in the office, and he's supposed to be shooting a music video because he's a director of some heavy metal band. So he has this clever idea that he's going to put everyone on the back of a flatbed truck and drive it through South Central or somewhere. [They laugh.] [00:48:05]

And by the curfew, we're like, "Okay, let's get out of here," and we drive up to Malibu. Jennifer is a very nervous person, so she's laying on the floor because she's like, "They're going to catch us." We get up there, and it's like all the press is up there having a gay old time just partying and drinking because, well, there's no curfew in Malibu. And so then we're driving back in and then the vans, people shaking their finger at us like, "No, no, no, no, you should be in bed already, or staying home." So that, obviously, was a good start to the gallery. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's a perfect start.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, it was sort of perfect. It was also perfect because there's this broken-up Constitution in this piece. And, you know, as we talked about earlier in terms of political art, I somehow think one of the amazing things about Ericson and Ziegler is that it wasn't about, in that sort of, which I always loved, like the Leon Golub portraits of dictators of the 20th century. I just saw some recently at the Met, and I thought it was—I thought it was Rockefeller, and in fact, it was the dictator of Brazil or something. I was like, "Oh, wait a minute, now we're—we're lost in that place of politics and what's timely and what's not timely."

Somehow, today I look at that Ericson and Ziegler work, and I'm like, "Wow, it really is a question. It's this question of this thing that was now written in stone, and it's so hollow, but it's not functioning." And the thing is that—so—and then they were sold, and then it was sold, the engine with the first hopper car and then each hopper car after that came with a piece of track and then the last hopper car went with the caboose. And we sold them— [00:50:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who bought them? And who bought them?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, like—like the Nortons bought one, and my mom bought one. [They laugh.] This woman Zoe Shapiro, I think her parents bought it for her. She ended up having, I think, like some clothing store up in the Malibu Mart. People came, and it was very mellow. And then the first show that got—that had a little pamphlet that we decided to have for it and made it on the Xerox. And then the next one we did a poster for, and that's the first poster. That poster is with Thad Strobe, and it was a drawing show. By this time, we're going to—there's going to be this show in Europe with these artists. And in the meantime, I meet this woman named Jean Rasenberger. Jean came out of ArtCenter, and she's friends with Diana Thater and Jorge and Pae and everybody. I'm at a birthday party for Mike and Bruce, and I think Norman Yonemoto was there and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Bruce and Norman Yonemoto? [00:52:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And it's at Jean's house, which is on Orange Grove. I make the comment, "I hate video," because I do hate video. Because I said, "Narrative, linear video demands an enormous amount of time from you." And I think that's super arrogant that I'm supposed to sit for two hours and then—and like, what the fuck was that? Like, and then if I don't sit through it, I don't get it because maybe there's a punchline at the end. I think I've softened a little bit on that, but not much. And so, Jean is like, "Fuck you," and Mike Kelley is, "Fuck

you." [They laugh.] And then Chris Wilder says, "You know, a video should be the length of an average pop song," and so we kind of sit there for a while and then Jean says, "Yeah, let's do that." So she says, "I'm really interested in this idea of the lapse. This idea when you're holding a glass or something, and all of a sudden it falls out of your hand."

So, we have this exhibition that's called *Into the Lapse*, which is principally a video show in four programs. Jean and I start going through it, and like, okay, there's Mike Kelley. Well, there's Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, *Kappa* that's in it, and then Jim Shaw has made a video, and then there is—there's, you know. So, we're going through all these video artists that, you know, there's, "Well, we should get Raymond Pettibon to be in it," and then Thad Strode's made a video, and then Kelly Mason has made a video, and unbeknownst—well, I guess I knew that by then. But I had met Diana when I was at the Ludwig Museum with David, writer for the *L.A. Times*, starts with a P.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Pagel.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Pagel. With David Pagel, and her hair was cut really short and I kind of—and they're there, and then I didn't realize that she had had this residency in Giverny, part of this Wallace-Reader's Digest residency. So, they're there, anyhow, so. [00:54:12]

And so then Jean says, "Oh, we have to include Diana Thater, and we have to include David Askevold, and we have to include—" And I said, "Oh, we have to include Georg Herold, because he did this piece called *Schweckpfannkuchen*, which means like—pfannkuchen is like a pancake, and it's this idea of the creation of the world. And so we start making this list, and so we make this—these programs, and that's the summer show. The first one is pretty fast, and we also include like, Rocky Schenck, who made music videos of like Bongwater, which was Ann Magnuson's thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's Rocky—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Rocky Schenck, and Rocky Schenck—let's remember Rocky Schenck for the fact that he saved—he saved the Formosa.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's worth having down in history no matter what.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. He failed saving the Nickodell, and because Rocky saved the Formosa, Paramount and all the people who knocked down the Nickodell right there on Melrose. I think that's why they bulldozed it like [snaps fingers] that. There was no—they were not going to get into the—he was highly—but he also made videos with the Cramps. And so that was like laced into the—so, we really made this thing between that. I think Brad Dunning was in that show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That would make sense. [00:56:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I can't remember. So, there was all—it was a really great, fluid thing. Out of that, Diana Thater was going to be slot number three. Somehow we decided to—because she did installation—give her a slot for that. She was really into Maxfield Parrish at that time, and this sort of light. She had this model, and she was going to do it with Steven Hanson who was really an artist. Anyhow, so she says, "I have this idea," and then she starts working on the idea. It's failing completely, you know, and she'd come in at night and like try and do these things with these little, mini Fujix projectors that I think people like Bruce and Norman were thinking about using.

Jean Rasenberger was really into these little, tiny miniature cameras that were called lipstick video cameras, where she would put them around her body and move them and put in her mouth. So, there was all this stuff that's happening, and to complicate this even more, is that Diana had been asked to do something at Bliss House out in Pasadena. So, Bliss House actually opens before her show with us, but it runs longer because our show with us, literally, is for—I think maybe it was two weeks, a week, two weeks. And so, Diana—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what was—and tell me about Bliss House.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, Bliss House was run by Ken Riddle, and I think Jorge Pardo was involved, and I don't know who—there's another person. Maybe Adam Ross somehow was involved in all that stuff. But it was like, you know, as Jason Rhoades would tell you today, a lot of things happened in Pasadena that we just don't know about. [They laugh.] You know, the friendship between [Harry] Miller, who invented the super carburetor, and Aleister Crowley who's friends then with Parsons, as like—you know. This isn't quite it, but there's something happening there, and they're making these shows of these artists that are all—I think partly because it was very cheap to live in Pasadena, so—[00:58:01]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And it's close to ArtCenter.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And it's close to ArtCenter, but yeah, there's—so there's that, that sort of happening coinciding and so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you have this video show and then it doesn't get reviewed though, does it?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, nobody cares about it, but it then gets picked up, and it goes to the Royal Danish Academy. It goes to Karsten Schubert. It goes somewhere else too, and it's kind of great. I mean the—but Diana—because it's installation—but Diana makes this piece *Oo Fifi*, and I'm like, "Wow, this is—" I think Jean thought I was going to end up showing her, but I ended up showing Diana. It kind of always happens this way. Diana was like—it was great. It was like—you know, there are artists that you meet, and you go, "Wow, they challenge me on every aspect of life." Kippenberger was that to me, or even Pardo. I couldn't understand Pardo's work and when Chris Knight wrote this rave review of his show at Tom Solomon's in the original garage, I was like, "What the—? That's crap." And then it wasn't until his show at Lühring Augustine Hetzler that I was like, "Well, okay, something's happened. I've got to pay attention." [01:00:00]

But Diana for me was like watching this brain think, and thinking about architecture and thinking about space. And then the way that she organized the garden, and that she made this piece that was based on spring and summer in Giverny, and that it starts very slow, and it's very like up on tight on daffodils and tulips. And then as it goes on, the garden gets crazy and the camera work gets crazy. And the work is—she's taking a Barco projector, and she opens up the projector, and after perfectly focusing it she then tweaks it. Anyhow, so Diana makes this piece *Oo Fifi*, and Richard Koshalek comes, and Ann Goldstein comes from MOCA, and they don't buy it. It's \$2500, or maybe it was \$5000. I think it was [\$]2500, and then Susanne Ghez from The Renaissance Society comes, and various other people come, and all of a sudden, it's like things are kind of happening with Diana, and then she's at Long Beach Museum. Carole Ann Klonarides says, "I want to make this show," called *Sugar and Sweet*, or *Sugar and something [Sugar 'n' Spice, 1993]*, and that also includes Pae White. So, Diana's like, "Well, let's show each other. Let's work together," and so we start working together. So, Diana is there, and then I start talking to Meg Cranston who I always was kind of curious about. I had seen this piece that she had shown at Marc Richards called *As I Told You*, which was, she was breaking up with her boyfriend at the time. All her belongings were basically in the gallery, and that was—it must have been like '89 or something.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, at one point, she's—I mean she's with Chris Wilder. Isn't she married to Chris Wilder?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. Well, that comes later, that they were dating, and you know, that's—yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Anyway. [01:02:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's an ongoing. But, yeah, they date through the period that I show Meg. I think Meg is incredibly generous and smart—

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BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and I think about that—of that generation, she's probably the most unrecognized but—and yet, yeah, one day, we'll see. You know, I worked with her. I—we stopped working together in '95, and then I did a retrospective of her work in New Zealand and made a great book, which I think is one of the greatest art catalogues ever made. Because, it's my question of, how do you make a catalogue of a mid-career artist, which is impossible because it is a crisis. And the—I realize the crisis like with Baldessari in 1990, when he does his retrospective at MOCA and then—because the deluge comes, right? You're working away, and all of a sudden, like this event of being interviewed, you go, "Holy shit, there's all this crap."

If you're an artist making things, probably the genius of like Lawrence Weiner is like he doesn't have a studio full of stuff. He's like—has a card catalogue file, like, "Oh, yeah, let's use that one. That's good." Whereas, you know, if you're someone like Mike Kelley, it must be kind of overwhelming. And how to articulate that when everyone wants you start at the very beginning, all the time at the beginning. I said to Hans Ulrich once, I'm like, "Why don't you start at the—," where John is now, and say, "Hey, John, why do you get up in the morning? What are you thinking about today?" as opposed to, "So, in 1960-whatever."

Anyhow, so the first of the season is Meg Cranston, *Dull Rhymes Chain'd to Total Gloom*. Make another poster, make a big poster, and things were like, sales were okay, it's nothing much. You know, we sell something for \$800. The Nortons come. They buy something for \$2500.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's the role of the posters in your thinking? Because I know you've taken great pride in keeping and showing and exhibiting and maintaining the identity of each, a poster for each show. [00:02:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, it started with that the artist would make the posters, and it was a way—I think there

was this egalitarian idea that I thought about always. That art—you know, it's why I believe that museums should be free. It's why I believe that there's this poster that you can take away. It's why I think there's various levels of buying art. And you can mix that with risk taking or whatever, or just the willingness that you're going to go from Venice with a gigantic poster that's rolled up, and you're going to carry it around with you to the grand tour and get it all the way home as opposed to abandoning it at the Venice train station.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Like time and energy—those things are time and energy. It has nothing to do with money, and I think that's what it's about. And that's why you can go and stand in front of a painting, and you should be able to do that, and it's yours. I mean, one of the great things that came out of this entire event is Rirkrit Tiravanija saying to me one day, "You know, Brian, you can own art that's in museums. All you have to do is sit in front of it and say it's yours and then it lives in your brain forever."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And it's true. I mean, there have been various paintings that I would say are—like, there's a Velasquez, *The Boar Hunt*, in the National Gallery, which they've moved and lit horribly now with LED lights. But these are my—you know, these are things, and when they're gone, they take them down. I mean it's hysterically funny. You're completely put—bent out of shape, and slightly like someone's stolen it, too, and what have they done, and are they never going to bring it back. And it's also why I think—and I don't know if you've seen this but Beyoncé and Jay-Z have a new video. I think one of the great tricks that the French people or the Louvre has played on us, is they've convinced us that the *Mona Lisa* and the *Venus de Milo* are the two most important things in the art world. Because what it does is it frees up so much amazing art for the rest of us. Like nobody ever looks at Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*. [00:04:09]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's like—I was a little disappointed that they're standing in front of—they're standing in front of—[brief interruption]—the *Mona Lisa*. But I just think like it's this thing that, if you make art free, and you can go, so that, I think, the posters really fall into that, and it was also a way of artists expressing themselves. I love ephemera. I think ephemera is really interesting. It's like works on paper. I think they're underrepresented. I think that—you know.

Sadly, within this bourgeois context that we talk about, you know, that they're diminished, and yet, I think the greatest work that Laura Owens has ever made is owned by Joel Wachs. It's a drawing that she did in her backyard, and it's sort of a stem of a rose. Supposedly, according to Bob and Randy of ACME, that she never intended anyone to see these things. So, she made this drawing, and they convinced her to put it in the office behind where they sat, and I saw it. It's like the only piece of Laura's I probably would ever buy. I think she's an amazing gymnast that should have like a nine-point-nine-nine in terms of her skill. But she, for me, is, that's it. She's always aware of the audience, and therefore, there's never that moment of that little thing of emotion that goes beyond it. This drawing is like, all guard is down, and it's just like—and I always— [00:06:05]

And the next time I go to New York, actually, I need to go see Joel mostly just to see that work, and see if he still has it up, because Joel's crazy, right? He has things in his closet, and he has like—for a long time he had this Rirkrit Tiravanija drawing that was on the back of his bedroom door when he had his place in Studio City, anyway. So, that was why it was always important. There's something that's fantastic when you go to a museum or something, and there's somebody who has a cubicle and they have one of your posters up. And you think, "Wow, it's great," and then they're like, "Oh, I love that," or—some of the artists I work with, like General Idea, there was history to their ephemera, or Kippenberger, there's a history to their ephemera. So I think that just played into it. There wasn't—I mean, it makes me very sad now because I have, like, crazy archives that of 25-plus years of like ephemera, and it's less and less. I mean the only cards I get now are pretty much from like, Gagolian. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Along with the magazine.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And their—yeah, exactly, along with their magazine. So, I think that with that, that's sort of—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, because it really ties into what—where the whole—your whole future goes. I mean, you start with the posters and the multiples and then you've always, in my opinion, just been interested in these, just what you said, areas of art production that aren't about the most expensive possible way of marketing and having a work of art. [00:08:05]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: On the other hand, you do—how have you survived all these years without

having the most expensive work of art available for sale?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I'm frugal.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I mean, I think that's the thing and—you know. Well, this—we're coming to this because this kind of an interesting, weird moment, because what happens in that gallery is then we do the show of Angela Bulloch. She makes the *Rule Series*, which is—I love that. I think it's one of Angela's greatest things. But we make this edition and then—like, the rules, and being very candid. You know, Eileen Cohen comes in, and she's like a great collector, super smart. She loves the show. By then, I know this guy Wilhelm Schürmann who's based in Aachen, Germany. I think he—of that generation, the two of them have the collections. Andy Stillpass who's from Cincinnati.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I know Andy Stillpass.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Andy sort of—but Andy never comes to LA. He's always based in New York, and he's a big supporter of people like Gavin Brown and stuff. But those guys, they all start coming, and they're supportive but—and rightly, it's great, but then there are people like the Horts. Michael and Susan Hort, they walk in, and they do something that I will never forget, and I realize, "Wow, there are these people who have just no class in their life." Angela has just finished installing, and I want to say that Norm was the person who did the wall piece for Angela.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Norm Leitch? [00:10:05]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I think that's who did it, anyway—or maybe it was Jeff Wasserman who silkscreened it. But whatever the case was, the thing that was so amazing about it is that they walked in, and Angela is standing there, and there's just one rule for the *Rule Series*. And then there's a sound piece at the front door, which is the sound of the shortest fight in boxing history, which was like—I can't remember who it was, but it's basically the BBC calling it. It's like, "And they're going to—and he's down, he's down again," and it's like, that's it. So when you stepped on the mat, it caused inside for this sound to go off, this piece to go off.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what is the *Rule Series*? What is on the wall?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: On the wall is the—so the rules for the *Rule Series*—rules are these found rules that are real rules. Like the rules for the August VIII Modeling School which is out of Moscow, and it's like if you have crooked teeth or a nose, Dr. Rudenko will fix them and you have to do this and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what's with the wall on this show?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, on the wall of the show is literally the text for her rule that she has made up. At the time she was dating Liam Gillick, so the two of them really made up for this *Rule Series* edition. It says in the rules that there's this edition, and that you can copy the edition, any size, any color, so that's what you do. So in a way, why would you buy the unique thing? Anybody could buy this edition, and away you go. So, you can photocopy it, and now, as technology has moved on, this idea of photocopying can be expanded on.

We make this show, and the Horts walk in, and they say, "Isn't this the girl who makes—?" Because she made these Belisha beacons, the sort of crosswalk, blinking light things in London for the zebra crossings. She made them. And so, "Isn't that the person who does that?" I said, "Yeah, this is her new body of work," and they literally turn on their heels and walk out, and they said, "Well, this is boring," and walked, but they said, "This is boring." I think like, "What pigs." [They laugh.] They continue that in their behavior in their world. [00:12:04]

But with that, I kind of think like, wow. I mean, I understand like the Cologne fight and having arguments with people, and I've had really lively conversations with people over the years. But this idea of like just walking in and discounting something because it's not what you expect became interesting.

Anyway, Wilhelm Schürmann buys the rules for the *Rule Series*, and he still has them in—he's included them in many, many exhibitions. And with that, it becomes this new group of people, and it goes back to the classic Los Angeles, you know, artists who get their start or get their realization in Europe and not in Los Angeles, to which I have come to the conclusion there's three types of artists in LA. Because there's this Midwestern idea, a small-town idea. You either—like Alexis Smith, you're an artist of Los Angeles, for Los Angeles, and the people around you don't think about moving you outside of Los Angeles. And by God, you're going to be great in Los Angeles because you're an LA artist. Then there is what I call the Lari Pittman artist, who never really want to leave Los Angeles, but they—they're pulled for the greater good. They are sent out to documenta or what have you. Lynn Foulkes is another one, even though Lynn has—for many years—But there's this idea. But everyone loves you still, because you're not too big for your breeches. And then there's the Diana Thater, Jorge Pardo, Pae White,

John Baldessari, Michael—like, whatever artist, Mike Kelley, who go, "These guys get me, and I don't have to wait around for you people who don't get me." Mike plays it in a weird way because people in LA got Mike and I think people—but it wasn't—it's just not that centered. And so there's this kind of love-hate relationship that people have with you, because when they think you're just too big for your breeches or it's all about Europe, or what have you. [00:14:08]

But what you're realizing is what I realized about some of these artists, they did not want New York to define them. They'd much rather have Europe define them, and then if New York wanted to put whatever they wanted to put on, that artist from LA, because that's what New York wants to do, which box you're going to fit in, then you go, "What? There's Europe. I'm going to Europe and having fun because I can make crazy books there or I can do, like—" And I always look at someone like Chris Wool, and he has this career here, and then we have this idea of Chris's work here. But we don't know about the photographs or the weird books or all this stuff that he does when he's sitting in Europe.

So anyway, that being said, I just think that the gallery started going, and then we're making shows with Sarah Seager and she's—but she's changing her work. It changes enormously, and Thad Strode is no longer making paintings. He's now making non-objects, and Meg is doing her thing, which is great. She's in Venice, the last Aperto in Venice in '93. We do this summer show because Sarah's in an exhibition that Cornelia Lauf, who was then with Joseph Kosuth, makes an exhibition in Poland. She makes a piece, which is a newspaper, and now it's been in the public newspaper in Poland, saying that something will be read in front of the ministry of culture or something like that. And so, that's her piece. But two other people are in this show. One is Rirkrit Tiravanija who sends luggage with potato chips, bags of potato chips to Poland, and this guy Lincoln Tobier who was starting to show with Pat Hearn, and Rirkrit was just about to show with 303. He had shown—was it Randy? It was Randy. [00:16:18]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Lincoln Tobier?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, T-O-B-I-E-R. Lincoln is incredible. He's a super smart guy, and he and Sarah hit it off. They become very good friends and they say, "We want to make an exhibition," and so, I'm like, "Sure, summer show, let's do it." So, we make this summer show of Lincoln, Jorge Pardo, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Sarah Seager. Sarah says she's moving forward more and more into this really conceptual place, which is a disaster financially. [They laugh.] "Brian, I want to make this work, and this also—" Because conceptualism, the problem with some conceptualism, if you don't fix it and you don't like really get it down very quickly in an aesthetic way, and so on, it lingers and so it doesn't know what it wants to do. So, Sarah says, "I want to make this work," and the work is speakerphone conversation, and the short history of Salvation Army, which was this band that her sister and then boyfriend had been part of. They were—Salvation Army was a band that came out of like the San Pedro area, and then they became The Three O'Clock, and this guy Louis wrote things for the Bangles and—anyhow. And they were Gretchen Seager, her sister was in a band called Mary's Danish, which was part of this whole thing with the Chili Peppers. [00:18:00]

But the thing was there were these posters, which is funny that—of this band, and so she made copies of the posters, and then we did the speakerphone conversation. Jorge Pardo and Pae White were then dating, and we sit in their house, and we have this conversation. Pae White, Jorge Pardo, Diana Thater and Brian Butler in Pasadena, and out of New York is Rirkrit Tiravanija and Lincoln. And it's this funny conversation about what's going to be on the show, and so—anyhow. Sarah makes these binders, ultimately, for the show, and they're placed on this Frank Gehry table that I own that I bought when I was working for Asher/Faure. When people used to do you favors and this crazy shipper Jim who had the black truck. We shipped enough with him, and I'm like, "Hey, I just bought this thing in New York down at East Village, can you pick it up?" He's like, "Sure."

So, she said, "I'm going to do this here," and then Rirkrit is like, "Well, I'm going to cook because that's what—" And so he's going to cook, and Jorge being Jorge said immediately, he's like, "I'm going to redo your kitchen because it's like this—you know, it's—" So, there's that, and then Lincoln says, "I'm going to put a radio station on top of your building, and it's going to broadcast on AM—" 1080 or something like that. "It's going to broadcast 100 percent Beach Boys from the Capitol years including this bootleg I have of *Smiley Smile* and all this sort of stuff that was—" You know? Like, the 22-minute version of "Good Vibrations." So, again, where do we go? I'm cooking, and Rirkrit's green curry, vegetable green curry, beef massaman, people are coming. Nobody really comes—[laughs]—except for the artists who don't have any money and know that I'm going to feed them. [They laugh.] And, you know, while David Pagel was scratching his head. They have no idea what this is about and really don't like it because it has nothing to do with the look of the eye. [00:20:00]

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, there's this whole sort of thing that's happening but they—he likes Pardo, and he used to like Sarah but doesn't know what this new thing is that's happening. Anyhow, so that's all going away, and that's great. But in that I say, "Okay, let's make an edition with Sarah," which never happens, and that was going to be



using thermal paper, because that's what—the kind of fax that we had is that you would use thermal paper. You would put it through a couple of times, and it would blacken itself, but there would be this text in it. And then Rirkrit made this apron with pork sausage and a recipe for northern Thai pork sausage, and then Lincoln made this poster because he was doing these radio stations. He was the one who was really taking off, even more so than Rirkrit or Jorge, because he had been asked to do what you would call a government center, to make a radio station that was of all the Margaret Thatcher protest songs. It was going to be broadcast from the ICA in London, right? And so, there—he was making a poster for that, and so all this stuff, and I think partly because of Pat Hearn, all this stuff is happening, but he's so persnickety a person, and he's so exacting. Rirkrit is so lovely and like, "Yeah, let's go buy some butcher paper, and let's do some iron-on and then we'll do this, and we'll use some paper tape and make these—we make this thing, and it's so easy." I'm thinking, "Well, okay," and Lincoln is like, "We're going to show now?" I think like, "Run, run for the hills. He's like Chris Williams. He's going to bankrupt you." [00:22:00]

Because that was always part of the joke at Luhring Augustine Hertzler is those cases with those books, which became the albatross. Chris had come to me after Luhring Augustine and said, "I want to do a project with the Parkers and Michael Asher and me, and there's a stool that Michael Asher made for Venice. It's a three-pointed stool, and I want this photographed." I don't know if it was a three-pointed. It was a square stool. "I want it to be photographed," and all I can see in my head having worked with the Parkers at Asher/Faure, and at Burnett Miller we worked with Daniel Martinez, the artist, which was really funny to think that he was our photographer. It was just like, *cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching*. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You're thinking how much it's going to cost?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah, and then it's going to have to be in a rosewood—I just was like, "Oh, my God, it's insane." So, I—I've always been slightly—to ask about how do you—I mean, I probably missed some really great opportunities. I just was like, I'm not going down in flames over this thing. I sometimes say to the artists, "What? I'll do it, but we're both in it. We're both in. We're taking money out of your pocket," because I'm not—which I think where the art world has come to in many cases—a bank that charges—you know, galleries are banks that charge no interest, so.

And the show is—it was great. It was a really good show. Meg had been in Venice, and things were all looking good and then this—these two little things happen at once. One thing that happens is that this asshole named Jason Rhoades comes on the scene and has a show at—in September. It must be like September, October. [00:24:00]

I guess that was—or yeah. Was that '94? I guess it was. It was something like that. Anyhow, has this show at Rosamund Felsen [*Swedish Erotica and Fiero Parts*] and takes all, I mean all the air out of the Meg Cranston moment that Meg was sort of—and she made this amazing Trans Portpanzer piece. It was really, really good, and —

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How so? Because that first piece is just so—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Because everybody turned and looked at it, looked at it and were like, "Oh, oh, my God, new shiny objects," or yellow objects.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yellow objects. These are the paper painted—paper pieces, cardboard pieces painted in yellow Ikea yellow.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. Ikea yellow, and he had the Fiero and he had the—and a lot of it was just—I mean, it was kind of—and it was handmade. It was very much like Meg, but it had—for no other thing—it had machismo. It had, I'm going somewhere, and I'm going hard, and you're coming with me or not. He had already done his first show with David Zwirner. It was the Makita show. I think there was just—it was just the right moment.

It's interesting when we think about that because his teacher and, I guess, mentor Paul McCarthy, was starting to get some stuff after *Helter Skelter*. But still when Rosamund Felsen showed—when Rosamund Felsen showed *Bossy Burger*, nobody cared. It was \$35,000, I think, at the time, and I stood there with Colin Gardner, and we were like, "Okay, this, you have to buy this for the museum. This is like dumb. How can you miss it?" I mean, the thing that's interesting is out of that, I—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean Paul McCarthy's *Bossy Burger*— [00:26:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Paul McCarthy's *Bossy Burger*. For Jason, I mean Jason comes at a time also, which is interesting, is that—one of the shows that I do is *Brain Multiples Plus*, and it includes people, because I've made a multiple with Paul called *Fake Shit*. It was supposed to be the fake leg, but then this guy named Patrick Painter shows up throwing around his money, goes and sees Paul. Paul has already okayed, like, he's going to make this fake leg and we're going to—it's going to come in a rose box and—with AstroTurf and the toe is going to be

weighted. So, you just put it there or you lay it flat, and it's this weird fake leg that's sort of like—it's an amputee leg, but I think it was—like he found them. It was something for people who are amputees, and it was like a fundraiser thing that you put it next to the train station. Like in the UK, they have it like a—like Damien Hirst ripped it off, or like the blind boy with the dog for a scene. It came out of the same thing, anyhow.

Paul calls me one day. He says, "Well, I'm sorry, Brian, but I can't do that with you anymore because Patrick is going to do it. He's already put the money, and he's already taken out ads in *Flash Art*." Anyhow, so Paul says, "But I've got another idea." He's drawing. He's like, "It's going to be fake shit. It's going to be cast aluminum fake shit, and we're going to spray paint them." We started to spray paint them, and it's a disaster because you scratch them and the paint comes off the aluminum, so then in the end, we go, and go to an auto body shop. They paint them, and it's great, and then they sit two layers, like hot shit in snow in this archival white foam. And then you take them out, and you put them around, and people like Daniel Buchholz love them. But sadly, people would steal them and then they'd say, "Can you have a replacement?" We're like, "No," and it's an edition of 10. There's 10 shits, edition of 10. So, there was like, again, this play. Paul loved the idea that they were hollow, so he would put them out in his yard and he said, "You could hide your keys." And I said, "No, I just think your dogs would take a big dump." [00:28:00]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, that's how, ultimately, I meet Jason, but to back up just slightly, so then there's *Pure Beauty*. So then in '94, there's *Pure Beauty* in Paris. It's the opening show at the American Center in Paris. Ann Goldstein curates the show. It has Richard Hawkins, Thad Strode, Sarah Seager, Jorge Pardo, Diana Thater. And things are like, from the outside, great. But there's this blowback that's happening, and it's like the Pagel blowback, and it's like Dave Hickey blowback a little bit. Ralph—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Rugoff.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And I don't quite see what's happening, but there's this blowback, and like that. Whatever is happening at 1301 is like, there's this competition, and I just think we're all in this thing together, but it's not going to happen. And the economy is kind of still sucking. With that—and we do this thing, and then—but Ann Goldstein never writes a definitive reason why she's made this show *Pure Beauty*. She's taken the title from Baldessari's piece. She's put these people together. People are asking me, like, "Why are they there together?" You know, my joke was, "Well, they're all couples except for Richard Hawkins."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now how were—who were—tell me about who was whom in a couple? [00:30:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, Thad Strode and Sarah Seager were a couple. Jorge Pardo and Pae White were a couple, but they didn't share the same galleries. At this point, Jorge Pardo was showing with Tom Solomon. Pae White was showing with Shoshana Wayne. Thad and Sarah were showing with me. Diana Thater was showing with me, and she was with [T.] Kelly Mason and still is. They've been together I think 28 years. Kelly Mason—I don't know. Oh, he was showing with Marc Foxx. Diana showed with me, and Richard Hawkins showed with Richard Telles. So, I just said, "Well, they've all slept with Richard."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Like that's the logic of it. But the one thing that should go into that—so, the reason why I brought up the Frank Gehry table was, so we had this show with Sarah and Rirkrit and everybody. There's a photograph that Fredrik Nilsen shot of the table with the Sarah Seager piece. So, there's—they're talking to Frank Gehry about this show that's going to be the opening show at the American Center in Paris, blah blah blah, curated by Ann Goldstein, California, yay.

And there also is this big California move that's afoot. There's—you know, Lars Nittve does *Sunshine & Noir* in Louisiana, and everything comes out of this *Helter Skelter* sort of thing that Paul Schimmel does, and there's things happening in Paris besides that. So, anyhow, my point is this is like the young and the hip and the beautiful, I guess. And they're showing the slides of the work, and they get to Sarah Seager, and then Frank sees that I have this 1973 table. I have the chairs, too, that was supposedly the floor table at Bloomingdale's. He's like, "Who owns that table? [They laugh.] Who is that?" And then they go, "Oh, it's in Brian Butler's gallery," and he's like, "How did he get that?" It was like—and Ann told me. She was like, "I just wanted him to understand what these artists were going to do," because they go and they see what Frank has done, and it's an impossible space. [00:32:07]

It has these soaring ceilings going up like chimneys, and so Diana is like, "Okay, well, I'm downstairs in the bunker," which is where she ends up with this window, which she can't tint because it's brand-new glass. If she puts tinting on the glass and it breaks, the insurance won't—the whatever—the insurance won't pay for it because she's—she's broken the guarantee, whatever the guarantee is, like the manufacturer's guarantee. So,

she's there and that's—anyhow, she makes this piece called *Wyoming Alogon*, which ultimately goes into the collection of Eileen Cohen. And then Richard has his chinoise Chinese things, and Pae White makes these chairs, she has these chairs, these Jacobsen chairs that have these Vera scarves that are—so it's like, that's outside, and makes these smoking stations. She's like, "I'm going to have them inside." Jorge makes—takes over the reading room. Kelly Mason has these Japanese flower arrangements, but they're in plaster, and it's all based on Los Angeles, this organizational whatever. So there's like—you know, it goes on. I can't remember what Sarah does but—oh, yeah, anyway.

And so, it opens, and it's like all the Europeans are freaking out and think it's amazing, and then we hear from Richard Koshalek that it's going to come back to Los Angeles. So, everyone's excited, and maybe there's going to be a catalogue. And, you know, this thing is there. Basically, the American Center is going like this because they never get the funding. They can't pay the city of Paris back. By the way, when the LVMH, or whatever, the Louis Vuitton museum opened, not once is it mentioned that there is this building that exists, that Frank Gehry built a building in Paris. And that building, I went by it. It's now the Cinematheque for the city of Paris. It's beautiful. It looks good because it was built in stone. [00:34:05]

Anyhow, so Sarah and everybody, we come back in September. That show is going to open, and it just gets thumped and thumped hard, and Ann I think ran for the hills. People like Martin, Tim Martin stands up and writes stuff, but the articles that are coming out are not even really about the artists. They're really about like Ann Goldstein, and whacking Ann Goldstein, and they became this personal—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is this when it's at MOCA?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, MOCA. But there literally is no—there's nothing that Ann is saying to say, this is the—the premise or this is what's happening. I think it's a really sad moment, also, just because. And I talked about making a catalogue 10 years on just as a thought process, like, "So what was this, and what happened and—?" Because I also think that there's this moment for so many younger artists and galleries alike, that you think this thing is going to happen, and really, quite the opposite happens. I think this is what happens, like if you talk to Baldessari about the 1990 show that he thought the whole career was going to go *pssh*, and instead he goes into total crisis. The—his market goes into crisis. Everyone hates the next body of work, which actually is really good, now that you look at it. He goes to India—you know, anyhow. [00:36:00]

So, this insane thing happens, and it's the election and the girlfriend I have at the time, Jennifer Bresnan, she and I split up, and the world starts imploding. Sarah Seager makes this—Thad Strode makes a show of nothing. Sarah Seager makes these proposal drawings and insisted that I build a wall, and then I got the notification I've got to move out. I think, "Okay, this is it. This is over," and I said, "I have to rethink." I had this conversation with Diana, and she's like, "But you need a gallery," and I have a conversation with—I just read the name, Mr. Regen.

[Side Conversation.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Stuart Regen?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Stuart Regen. Stuart Regen and I have this conversation because Stuart has basically scaled down completely. He now has a small, little space and it is no longer the Stuart Regen Gallery. It is now—and I think that officially really starts, like in '94, even though Shaun [Caley] keeps the whole story as one thing. But he and I are like, "Exhibitions are over. Galleries are over. Everyone is tired of it. They don't know what to do." He's like, "Brian, I've just got a house, and Richard Prince is going to do something," and I'm like, "That's incredible." "I just had been talking to Carol Reese at the MAK because I've just bought the Schindler House, and I'm making proposals to her," like this whole long list. Actually, a lot of Austrian artists from Franz West and Marcus Geiger and other—another—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's the economy's—the economy is also really in bad shape, and people are not really buying art that much? [00:38:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. It's that. Like, it's all that plus, the stock market, the bubble like went, but then it started heating up again. And so, I think really what happens is that people don't think of art as a place to put your work because you're going to make money. I think people think art is just art. So, you could buy On Kawara for not a lot of money. You could buy all those people now that we think of as these big, blue chip sort of things. The only blue chip, big things that people were trading in Minimalist, the Minimalist thing was like Judd, Flavin, not even really Flavin. That was with the intellectual group. It was like Judd, Serra, but other than that, it wasn't kind of there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So you've decided to—where did you move after 1301?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So then I moved to Silver Lake. I took Jorge Pardo's apartment because he had moved in with Pae White. It was up on Micheltorena, and it was in a very funny—like one of these apartments that's

underneath someone's house, but it was one of those houses that hangs off the cliff. It was very much "The Loved One," kind of.

One of—one of Diana's students was Jessica Bronson, and Jessica Bronson needed a job, super organized. She was the second employee that I had ever had. The first one was a woman named Leslie Lizotte, who had worked for Margo and got divorced and then needed it and she was—Leslie was like, yeah. She's now a librarian or I think she runs the historic society in Nantucket. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's back up a little bit and ask about the girlfriend. Like I lost the girl—how long were you with Jennifer Bresnan?

[. . . ][00:40:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: B-R-E-S-N-A-N?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. She lived in the apartment complex at 1301, and she was great. She's—I talked to her the other day. I mean, we didn't see each other for a long, long time. It was a very tough breakup. She was a journalism major at USC, and she was somebody who was super smart. She worked for Mike Feuer. I mean she was like—the job she took, and some of the stuff that happened to her, like—"me too" now, like with Bruce Karatz—I'm just saying.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Inappropriate. "You have to come in at six in the morning." He is a felon. But I just think that there was like—she was so smart and got it and understood somewhat what I was doing, in terms of like this love affair that I had with the art world and its commitment. She was on her path and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How long were you together?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: We were together like three years. And then she moved out of the complex, and moved into another apartment building. And then one day, I came to her place because we lived apart, and she's like—she was freaking out because she was like, "We just need to split up," and I was super immature and was like, "Well, I'm leaving then. I'm never coming back. Here's the key to the place." I never went back.

But I was also—what I realized, because there was a moment of trying to get back—like one always does in these relationships—is that she was like—she had a sister who worked at Sony, and was pretty high up there. I think she just was like, I have to—I have to be as successful as my sister. And that was—I think that really—like, that was the thing, and she was—I think she was also of that generation, which was like all in. I think the idea of having a kid was not part of it, and so she was like, "I have to get you out of the way." She by then was working for Burt Bacharach Music Group and really like, small world stories. Because Gil Friesen was friends with this, the guy who was running Burt Bacharach Music Group. [00:42:04]

But also, I should say this for the record. She was the brunt of the horribleness or the asocial—not antisocial, but asocial behavior of the art world, because she wasn't in. And so, she was working for the Burt Bacharach Music Group, and people would be like, "Eh, whatever," and I'll be like, "Yeah, but she's my girlfriend. She's great." Even now, if I talk to Uta Barth, she would say, like, "She was so beautiful, and her hair went down to her lower back." I'm like, "Yeah, but you never—you're one of these people that never talked to her." She was like, "She's great."

And so she was putting—she decided on her own that Burt Bacharach needed a comeback. The way that she was going to do it was that she was going to put together a four-set CD that she would give out to people. So, Jen is like, "Let's put it together, start at the very beginning, Perry Como, you know, like 'Unbelievable,' and then Ethyl Meatplow at the end." So, there's like thing—bands that were playing then playing. So, you could see it. So, we happened to go to the Cannes Film Festival, and she has like them. She was like handing them out. But it's only when the art world finds out what she's done, everyone wants a free one. [They laugh.] Everyone wants a free—and they're like, "Can I get one?" [00:44:04]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, at this point, where—at what point are you also, because—and we have to probably wrap up momentarily—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, we do.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —because it's been so—you're probably starving to death for one thing.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I—

[Crosstalk.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But also, at one point, you were involved with a chef whose name is escaping me.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Suzanne Goin, but that comes later.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And when does that happen?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Ninety-seven.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. So, we're moving into that area fairly soon here.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because now, we must be up to, you've closed the gallery, you've moved into the house, this place on Micheltorena. What year are we—do you think we're in?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So that's—that starts in '95.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You moved into Micheltorena in 1995?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay. So that's where we are now. And—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Why don't we stop there, because then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's pause—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —I'll start Brain Multiple. I mean, that will start 1301PE.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And 1301PE will be next then, and we'll do more of this—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Another day.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think so. Thank you, Brian Butler, for your extremely detailed and thoughtful account of the years so far.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Thanks. Thanks, Hunter.

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HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Brian Butler at his 1301PE Gallery on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles on August sixth [2018] for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc three. Hi, Brian.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Hi, Hunter.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We're up to 1995.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Woo-hoo, speeding along.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Speeding along, but it's a detailed—it's a detailed series of memories. We were in the transition period for you where you're—you were in the process of—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Moving.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —moving into your next phase as it were, you know?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, 1995 good times. [They laugh.] Good times. I think I—I was thinking about that the other day because it was really the moment that we became 1301PE, and Regen, he became Regen Projects.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Stuart Regen.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Stuart Regen. This idea of the end of the exhibition, the end of the gallery was very much prevalent. We were kind of thinking about that. I think the market, certainly, hadn't come back, but beyond that, the generation of artists that we were working with were really—they were wanting to be outside the space. I think that part of that was also due to the fact that—maybe we talked about it in the last one—was the show

called *Pure Beauty* that Ann Goldstein curated. It was originally for the American Center in Paris, which was actually Frank Gehry's first building but never noted, the first building in Paris. And when everyone got there, Jorge Pardo, Diana Thater, Sarah Seager, Thad Strobe, Richard Hawkins, Kelly Mason, Pae White—I think that's everybody—they realized that they had to deal with the architecture. For this generation, for the first time, instead of just making exhibitions in white cubes, they were really the architects who were making these museums, were really making spaces that they had to address. And it was interesting because the next show after the *Pure Beauty* show was Leon Golub and Nancy Spero, both who I knew from being at Burnett Miller's. Leon Golub looked horrible because he just looked like he was grounded by gravity, whereas Nancy could silkscreen up on the wall. [00:02:09]

Anyway, I think that all the younger artists were already addressing that, and at some point, they just said, "Well, why do we have to be inside this space? Let's go outside this space and let's challenge this space." And so with that we were looking for a new space, and there was lots of driving around. There was—I mean, now that I think back at it, like I was looking all over the place. Stuart was already talking about doing his Richard Prince project, and I had started by then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's the one where he has Richard Prince do the interior of a house in West Hollywood?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Exactly. Jason Rhoades, at the end of '94, had come to me said, "All right, let's make a multiple." So, we made the multiple *Blue Room and Love Seat* with the idea that we would drive it into every national park that had handicap access.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is that again? [00:04:03]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's called *Blue Room and Love Seat*. So, the idea was that you would—it comes in a footlocker that then has a blue tarp pad on it that has a little back and a bottom, it could be like a loveseat. Or you could throw it in the back of your car, and you open it up, and inside is a diagram of what you can do with this blue room. The blue room was, in some ways, a reference to James Turrell because of that little window, but really, it was a sex object sort of thing. What it was was a blue room that was, again, out of blue tarp that was hand-sewn, and you could climb in it once you inflated it. The way you inflated it is that you hooked up a leaf blower, so it was blowing, and it would fill up the thing. It was all zipped in and then you could turn the leaf blower around, so you could attach the sucking part and then there was an area that had a rabbit skin on that and that would vibrate you or suck you or whatever you want to do.

Jason had this idea that he would take it to these various national parks, you know, Sequoia—is it—Three Rivers, Santa Monica, so on, and so forth. We never got that far, but what came out of that when we were looking at locations to photograph in all these places, we came upon the Peter Strauss Ranch, which turned out, to Jason's total delight, that it had been owned by a guy named [Harry] Miller. I'm forgetting Miller's first name, but he was the inventor of the super carburetor, and in Jason's world of connect-the-dots, Miller was this super genius who was friends with Parsons and Aleister Crowley and all the—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Jack Parsons. [00:06:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, Jack Parsons, yeah. All the people, all the people who were living in Pasadena. Jason, at this time, was living in Walter Hopps' old house, which was that Craftsman house across from the Pasadena Art Museum, which became the Norton Simon—so all this kind of crazy coincidences are happening, and then he's married with Rachel Khedoori at the time. She and I had become friends when they had the studio that's down in Inglewood. And so, there were a couple of projects that are coming out of that including the *Blue Room* book, or the *Blue Book*, which is a big, fat flipbook of this film that she made where Toba Khedoori did the wallpaper for Rachel, and Rachel shot this film. It's all very convoluted.

But anyway, the point is, with Jason things started to move in a different way. Diana Thater was still very much—the two of us were very much involved in working on projects and things. She started to work on a work called *The Best Animals are the Flat Animals*. At the same time, I became friends with Peter Noever and Carol Reese and I started—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Peter Noever from MAK?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: MAK. Yeah, without Peter Noever—I have to say this for the record. Without Peter Noever, the Schindler House would be gone.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, the MAK—just for the record here, Peter Noever is from Vienna—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Vienna.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He was very—was instrumental in—exactly, having the Austrian government save and maintain the Rudolph Schindler House in West Hollywood, is what you're—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —you're talking about.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And buy the Mackey Apartments. He was the director of the MAK, the Museum of Aesthetic Kunst [Museum für angewandte Kunst]. He had revolutionized the idea of, what do you do with applied arts? And he had invited people from—who was it—Donald Judd, or I think Kosuth to do different rooms. I think he always fancied himself a bit of an artist himself, but anyway. Having said that, so all these things are happening at once. I've had to move out of Santa Monica. I moved to the beautiful dale of Silver Lake up on— [00:07:59]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's just—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Micheltorena.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —this is still on 1996?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Ninety-five, '96.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Ninety-five?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. But that starts pulling everything together of this idea of being really flexible. And then there's this show that Jorge Pardo and Jason Rhoades are in called *Traffic*, and that's in Bordeaux. They become friends, and so then Jason and Jorge start talking about this idea of, "Let's make a project together at the Peter Strauss Ranch," and that's how *Ranch* happens, which was, basically, a two-day event with minibikes and various other objects all in relationship to this property that had been originally owned by Miller. He had had a studio there, you know? Supposedly Henry Ford wanted to destroy him, but realized he was such a fuck-up, he didn't have to, where like, Ford really screwed up Tucker and other car people. Miller was so genius, but he could not handle the reality of commercial, but he liked this idea. So he had this studio there, and he has monkeys and he had this—and he would let them loose, so they would cause chaos in the studio. Jason was absolutely transfixed by this idea. He thought this was the most incredible way of thinking, like you would unleash these powers beyond you, and—anyhow. [00:10:08]

So the—before it became Peter Strauss Ranch, it was only—it became like this little Disneyland that was up there. There was a pool, and they had like ukulele nights and all this stuff sort of during the Second World War. It really hadn't been touched, and we convinced the state park that we should clear out the swimming pool. So, we dug as much of what we could out because it had been filled with dirt. And so, people could ride around this swimming pool that was circular that had a little concrete island in the middle on minibikes. And that was—that was interesting for many, many reasons, because you always knew who the fans were who came, and they did all this stuff. And then later it kind of—we had this weird, legendary thing. There were people who I know were definitely not there because they just rent there, and they were claiming to be there. And that was, I think, my first taste of this idea of—that idea of like, were you really there, or did you just see the pictures of it, and so on, and so forth.

So, we did that, and it was just during—there were actually crazy fires that were the week before, but it all kind of went off. And then what came out of that was this really beautiful collaboration with Jason and Jorge, which again, it was the kind of collectors like Clay Press and Greg Lynn, or—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know Clay Press.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They were living in New York. They, actually, used to live in LA. They used to live on Orange, and I think they showed Larry Johnson first, and then they kind of had been advisors. They did various things. Greg Lynn was David Zwirner's first employee and, I think, was the one who might have even suggested to David about Jason. They now live in Pennsylvania outside of Princeton, and they still have, probably, one of the most interesting collections. I think they have been a little bit priced out of things. [00:12:00]

And Eileen Cohen and, I mean, the people who bought the collaboration. It was still interesting because it was the first time I realized that there were these collectors who didn't really care if it was one artist or two artists. And that was interesting because—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wait, so let's pause for a second. When you say they're willing to buy something that was a collaboration, what exactly did they buy?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, what they bought was, they got a big box, and in that box was a minibike, a—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: How big is a minibike?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I'd say it's like three, maybe four-foot long by three-foot high. And then Jorge's mother had made—because she was doing a lot of sewing for Jorge, at that time, she made these various types of pajamas or robes or stuff out of polar fleece. And then there was these three—there are two wooden wheels like you see at those that are like go-kart race things, that they put tires around. This was just at the moment that Jason started to work on a project that was going to be an exhibition at David Zwirner. And his cousin through marriage, this guy V'ketah, he started doing everything that—he was doing numerology. And so, he was making these wheels and giving them birthdates, and because they were circular, he was dividing them for their life cycle and what their horoscope was. So, they all have like—and then he thought it was interesting because some were placed on the side and some were placed on the rink and got run into. And then he would look at them and say like, "Oh, well, of course, because—" [00:14:00]

Just like that's—it will also lead—this part of this whole V'ketah thing will lead to the fact that this is why 1301PE is called 1301PE. Because one night, we were having dinner in Silver Lake and Jason said, "I like 1301 Projects & Editions, but it's too much. You—" And V'ketah said, "The number isn't good. Like, 1301, it ends—it's a five. It's a very good number, but it's not a power number," and Jason is like, "Yeah, you need a power number." V'ketah is like, "Well, what if we take Projects and Editions and just go PE, and PE is like—" It all adds up to be a nine somehow. And I was like, "Okay. It's fine. It works graphically." So I think that—yes. So that—all of that sort of went along, but the crazy thing that happened was that it kind of—not having a space for you to start to do a whole bunch of things including curate this traveling show of Diana's—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's pause with the minibike thing for a second.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, did you actually sell these editions with the minibike in the box and the polar fleece?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: A few.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how many—well, how large was the edition?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: The edition, each one was unique, because what I didn't conclude my saying is that each one then came with a unique thing, and then a gift. So, like one might come with a pair of Jason's Ray-Ban sunglasses, and then it might have like the Ventura yellow pages or something, or another one came with 300 feet of linear rebar that you were supposed to spot weld together. That is still available.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: There is an institutional one, which has tables and the buckets that Jason, ultimately, used for his Flavin lamp that he really got into. So, the thing that I always think is interesting about these two projects that I do with Jason is that they were just at these moments of shifting for Jason. [00:16:05]

Like *Ranch* became the moment where Jason really was like, I would say, pre-shopping online, shopping online if you know what I mean. It's—like it's that moment that you could get on the computer, and you could order something. And so, he was doing something at Portikus where he needed to get a well drill, and he found it online. And I think—but that's also when you start seeing the evolution of the work like the porn that starts coming into it, and all that sort of aspect. It all comes with the internet. It all comes from the shift from the computer being freestanding and not connected to the world to, all of a sudden, connecting to the world and what happens. And what he starts doing with it is consuming. So all of a sudden, he'd say to me, "Oh, Brian, I found like 300 red, yellow, green, blue buckets." I'd be like, "Why would I need all these buckets?" He'll be like, "I have this idea." So, I think that that was very much—so, we sold some of them, and we still have a lot of them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And how much—and how much were they?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think they started—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —about more or less?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I think they started—I think they started, like, 3500.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So, that would have been a sizeable amount of money in 1995.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It wasn't that much. It was like—it was—I mean, I think that—I think it was kind of normal for that. Because already—well, that's a good question. Because we still had the Pardo lamps. I think the Pardo



lamps started at 900, but it wasn't—I mean I had to—we had to divide by three. [They laugh.] [00:18:03]

And like Paul, yeah—and like Paul—I had done this *Fake Shit* with Paul McCarthy. That started—I think that started at 2500, edition of 10. They were never very big editions, and it was good. It was a funny, weird project, and then I did some other things with Jason that kind of kept going, like *Speedball*, which was a collaboration with Peter Bonde from Denmark, and that was for the Venice—the Danish Pavilion. I think that was a little bit later, like '97, the beginning of '98. So, we kept working on various projects, but I think there was a moment where I just lost touch with where Jason was going, and people in the studio were spreading out as well. And then he split with Rachel, and that put a little bit of strain on our relationship too. I just was like, "Mm-mm [negative], not watching this one go down."

And then in the meantime, I kept working on projects with Pardo and Diana. Sadly, Meg Cranston started to work with Rosamund Felsen, which was I thought genius at the time. But little did she know, or any of us know, that Rosamund was moving out of Santa Monica and would begin the complete and utter dismantling of one of the greatest stable of artists this town has ever seen.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean by moving to West Hollywood?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. By moving to Bergamot Station.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: At Bergamot Station.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: As I think I've said before, as Margo Leavin said, the waiting room for gallery heaven—[they laugh]—where the great galleries were. So, I think like—you know. So that—so sadly, Meg took off, but we made a really sweet edition together, this plunger candlestick holder. And Sarah Seager and Thad Strode went their way. So, really, the gallery, in terms of the original people, were just Angela Bulloch and Diana Thater with Pardo and Rirkrit Tiravanija moving on, and then Jason, not interested in Rosamund when she moved to Bergamot at all, so we just did whatever we were doing. [00:20:00]

By the time I got the new space at the end of '97, that's when we signed. The lease we signed in like end of August '97, and I had looked at everything. I nearly took—you know on Wilshire Boulevard, there's that old camera—that there's a camera façade?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I nearly took that space.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That was the studio of that woman who, really a well-known photographer. I know exactly what you mean, but yes. It then became this—okay, go ahead.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. But I mean, we—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, I've got it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —I looked at everything, because there are things that I thought, "Oh, we could be here." I tried to get Sharon Johnson and Mark Lee to move in where Karyn Lovegrove was, and then in the end, they moved across from LACMA. I looked upstairs at Fred Fisher's space, and I thought that would be really fantastic. People like Diana Thater were like, "I love it," because it had ribbon windows, and for painters, they were all like, "Brian, the walls are like eight feet high. It's insane." [They laugh.] But I like this idea for a long time—I still like it. Like, you put a gallery right next to architects, or you be somewhere. It would be something that would be bumping up against it. And—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, how did you find that—this is—this little house space that you're in now?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Here?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is this the one you're—you moved from—you moved to here?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah. To 1301—to 6150.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Sixty-One Fifty.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Excuse me, you've moved here to 6150 Wilshire Boulevard, which is—I would say, and we talked about this last time. It's interesting because it's kind of a slightly domestic space, and Asher/Faure was always a domestic space. And by that, I mean small, and a place where—you know, not an

overwhelming warehouse kind of environment if you know what I'm saying. [00:22:04]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think with Asher/Faure, there was the little house in the front and then John Fernandez did the—had the back space, and it was kind of proportioned. It wasn't a very big space, but I think—I mean this was two-fold. One, so Jorge and I were looking at spaces, and I was like, "You know what, I just want to make one-room exhibitions. I want people to focus. I want—" It was a time when I thought, "Okay, if exhibitions are dead, then let's just focus people on what we're doing and what the artists are doing." And so, my thinking was instead of taking Mark's space, which he had actually already claimed.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which Marc? Marc Foxx?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Marc Foxx. So, Marc Foxx was in the corner. Christine Nichols was going in, and she was going to have works on paper. She had left Tom Solomon. ACME had one slice. Brent [Petersen]—I forgot what Brent's last name was. He had come from Hippodrome where he was showing people like Mark Grotjahn and Evan Holloway and, who else was there? Jason Meadows, and he had this little space at the front, and then Dan Bernier. So that all the Santa Monica from Baby Bergamot, if that's what you wanted to call it, but from that space had left. They had to leave. [00:24:00]

To go back just one second, I became friends with Marc. I knew Marc when he was at Angles, but I had this idea that we would do a series of exhibitions called 1301 Presents *blah, blah, blah* at a different gallery. So, I had gone to Margo and said, "Margo, you're not using the Hillsdale space anymore, why don't I just take it for a month a year? I'll—" "Ho ho, Brian, why would I possibly—are you smoking these days, Brian?" [They laugh.] And so Marc Foxx said—I said to Mark, "Oh, I want to do this Angela Bulloch show," and he was like, "Sure." So, I did this Angela Bulloch show there, which—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In his space?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: In his old space in Santa Monica. And the reason why this is also slightly important is because it turns out—so we did this great show. It was fantastic. Nobody really cared about it. I sold most of the things back to New York, and had a very funny time with Angela. We came up with this thing, which is whatever, which became Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's sort of buzzword, and that became the name of this show at the Guggenheim of all those artists. Because Angela would be like, "We need to do this. We need to do this," and I would be like, "Whatever." Meaning, whatever, I don't care. "Whatever you want to do Angela," because Angela and her brains, she's one of these people that works backwards. So, she always is breaking everything apart from its form to where you get to the beginning as opposed—so, we'd go see an electrician, and they would nearly come to fisticuffs because the electrician is like, "You're doing a stepdown in your electrical power," and she'd be like, "I'm doing a step-up," and I'd just be like, "Whatever." [00:26:02]

So, and we do this show, and then Paul McCarthy, because I was hanging out with Paul and Jason, so, asked me to be in *Painter*. That's kind of funny because that ends up with the Einsteins being very angry with me, because they hated Paul's video *Painter*. They thought it was being particularly mean to Willem de Kooning. Paul is like, "It wasn't about Willem de Kooning. It was about every buffoonish painter," so. I was supposed to be—I was supposed to be somebody else with my nose up Paul's ass and, thank God, Mark showed up late to take over the role of sitting at his gallery, and so I became the guy who interviews Fredrik Nilsen who's supposedly a curator who has a foundation in East Los Angeles. It's kind of funny now that we see where LA is happening and—so.

So all these things were happening, and it's, for me, like a super fascinating, freewheeling time. And then I find the space, and so Jorge and I designed the space upstairs, and so the room is 19 by 21 feet. It has like—it has these two windows—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Were you—were you upstairs first in this room? I can't remember that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And then the one person who was here was Roy McMakin—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, that's right. Now, it's coming back to me, okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Roy was here for a while, and in fact, there was a door that went through into Mark's space. And then they seemed to have come—their friendship seems to have broken apart. It was a really interesting group of people that were here and then Karyn came in. I had this idea with Jorge that we would have no storage. We would have a library, my Frank Gehry table, and that would be it, and it would be really just like a headquarter office, and so—yeah. [00:28:04]

So, we did that, and that was—we opened in December—I think it was December 1997 with Fiona Banner, who—I had seen Fiona's work in a couple of places, and then I saw it in a place called Guelph, Canada outside of Toronto. I was like, "Wow, she's amazing," and then it turns out that she had done like a little project room space at Luhring Augustine, but they somehow decided not to represent her, which I never up to this day have

understood. Because Roland, they always kind of come back into the studio, and they do like a dig-around sort of thing, and they don't ever. And then she started showing with Janice Guy, Murray Guy in New York.

Our first show was these polystyrene *Full Stops*, which were blown up from like little, tiny period, punctuations to these big sort of modernist sculptures. The windows that they were supposed to put in were steel casement windows, which were part of our, actually, our lease agreement. The contractor was going to put in those cheap —[they laugh]—vinyl, and I literally saw them come on the truck. It was a week before the install of Fiona's show, and I was like, "Don't take them off the truck," because I knew if they took them off the truck, there was going to be some legal thing like they had been delivered, and I was like, "Get out of here." Anyhow, so we—so if you look at the early photographs of the gallery, we had these, basically, two-by-four with glass, but they were so cheap. They put very thin, thin panes of glass in, and I was so scared at the opening that someone is going to lean in and get that window and go flying out. [Laughs] Like, "Wha—?" Oh, there was that. So, that ran for a while, and we did a whole bunch of, I think, really interesting exhibitions. And that's when I started dating Suzanne Goin, and since they're on their 20th anniversary— [00:30:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now tell us about your relationship with Suzanne Goin because she goes on to be quite a figure as well.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I met her through Sharon Johnson and Mark Lee. Strangely, the first time we met was kind of a setup, and we went to this restaurant. It's called the—I don't know. It's over—Suzanne Tracht was the chef of it. She now has the restaurant Jar, but I always forget what the other one was called. It's on Melrose. It was right across from Gemini. And but it—the crazy thing is, the day I met Suzanne was the day that she actually had her first meeting with Caroline Styne, who becomes her long-term business partner at Lucques and a.o.c. and then Tavern and everything else. So, it was rather a funny, funny thing. It was a very fortuitous day, and so we were together up until just about 2000.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, three years?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. It was very busy, and I helped her with putting Lucques together and she was—that was everything. That's everything. But it was kind of great because out of that, I can just work. That was also very fortuitous, and I would then go to the bar and eat and drink and on Fridays, I would go in and I'd work in the kitchen doing the hot apps, the hot appetizers.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, that's what I remembered. That was when we—I remember you having great kitchen skills, and so this is where—is this is where you develop your kitchen skills, or did you have—? [00:32:07]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They came before, but I think they were pressurized. They came from the Sizzler. No. No, and I think that that was always—and there's a lot of writing about this now of partners of chefs. Everyone thinks like, "Oh, my gosh, you must eat so well at home." But I was kind of the one cooking if she had the day off, or we might cook together a little bit, but that was not—you know, there were other things and—or we'd go out to eat somewhere and try something.

So, that was—I guess it would have been right about now, 20 years ago in 1998, that they took control of the lease of where they are now on Melrose near La Cienega. And they had—it had been a gay bar, and it was very funny. I remember saying something to Blake Byrne, and Blake was like, "Oh, I know that place." [They laugh.] But originally, it had been like, Harold Lloyd's carriage house or something. I think we forget this now, because just everything is so—had been turned into subdivisions. But there were big swathes of property where these little things that still exist once were like a carriage house, or—so, yeah, we dated and traveled together and worked hard and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Did you live together? [00:34:10]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: We never moved in. I mean, she had a place over in Silver Lake and by then, I had been trying to move back to Santa Monica. The original 1301 had survived the earthquake, but I couldn't move back there because it had gone—turned into condominiums. So, I kept looking in Santa Monica and then I moved to 330 California Avenue, which is on the corner of Fourth and California, and it's better known as the Charmont Apartments. That had had significant damage to it, and so I was kind of waiting and waiting while they were fixing it, and I wrote a letter, and I got a really beautiful apartment. All the apartments were like one bedroom.

Originally, what I found out later is they're—because they had one bedrooms, bachelors and studios. But they were really places for people to come who lived further downtown in Los Angeles and come to the beach. They would just sort of camp out there. So, yeah, that was great, and kept that apartment, actually, I even passed—we finally gave it up because it wasn't totally rent controlled, but it was certainly rent—yeah. It was—the rent had been very much stabilized until 2008, so. But anyway, so, I lived there, Suzanne lived there, and we just crossed over, or if it was Wednesday, market days, then she would stay in Santa Monica. So it was this going

back and forth all the time, and that was fine. It was good.

I think we finally split up when—and then we got back together again, but it was really I think that—I don't think she really wanted to torture me—[they laugh]—in that she wasn't changing, you know? And then she had married David [Lentz], who's fantastic, and was also a chef and has Hungry Cat and I think that—[00:36:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's David's last name?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Lutz? Is that right? L-U-T-Z or something—there is something else in there. That was kind of—it was kind of one of these things, which was like it was great because, I mean, being together was great because we were so focused on what we wanted to accomplish. But I think that—with that downtime that was like—there was a whole bunch of other things personally that had gone on with her before I had met her that, all of a sudden, we're like, "Oh, I'm not working. I'm not working every hour."

Before she started the restaurant, she was at Campanile, and so a lot of people knew her from there, and so. But yeah—so, there were a lot of dinners. We had a lot of dinners at Lucques, not because—I mean, and I just was looking through some archives where we had NAOC and stuff like that—mostly just because I just like the food. But we did try this idea of having these Sunday suppers for the gallery.

So when we opened AA Bronson's exhibition, which was a big, gigantic billboard that was 16-foot long and nine-foot high of his—one of the members of General Idea, which was Felix Partz, who was on his deathbed. He had died of wastings from AIDS, and he was under covers that were Marimekko covers and he was wearing a black-and-white Opie, Versace shirt. He had his pack of cigarettes and his tape deck and then he had these hands and his face, which were just skeletal. We showed that and people were really angry about it. People who loved General Idea were angry about it because they thought he had been exploitive a little bit, or they didn't know. They didn't quite understand what AA was—like, it was a memorial. It was also interesting because Ingrid Calame had her show next door. And so, I think the difference between Ingrid's work and AA's work was very different. [00:38:04]

The crazy thing is I just met a kid—well, somebody who's a collector, and she's in her 20s and just saw the piece, because the Whitney owns it and was like, "I saw this piece today. It was the most remarkable piece." This was literally three months ago in Boston when I was back for Diana Thater's opening at the ICA. She's like, "It's the most powerful piece I've ever seen." I was like, "Wow, that's so crazy."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Somebody got it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: We showed it, and people were really angry. Gianna Carotenuto was particularly angry with me, and I then talked to her. I said, "But you know, the history of death portraiture, there's this history in America in the Midwest about—in the prairie." And then I said, "You know, in India—" and then we started talking about it and then she wrote her dissertation on 19th-century Mogul portraiture. She, years later, said, "I get it now. I totally get it. He was with all the things he loved," and I'm like, "Yeah, I mean, but there's also—"

The other thing that was little known is that there was supposed to be—so that was Felix Partz. So, there were three members. There was AA Bronson, Felix Partz, and Jorge Zontal, which of course, when you say them, there's "horizontal," and Felix Partz and AA Bronson, which was like some porn name or something.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] [00:40:06]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But AA tried to take a photograph of Jorge, and he told me that all there is is some crazy, mystic cloud in front of the photograph. So, he couldn't—he would have had both. They would have both been there. So, there's something that's also mystic, and so there are these other photographs that we never showed, which were Jorge on a drip, an IV drip walking, looking completely emaciated. He was Yugoslavian, and his father had been in a concentration camp, so there are these photographs of his father coming out of the concentration camp. So, there's all this sort of moment of AA trying to deal with that. At the same time, he's finishing a book called *Negative Man*, which was about the upside-down world of AIDS. Because the positive, what you wanted to hear from the doctor was that you were negative, in a world where we're always talking about being positive. [They laugh.] So, that was—so we did that show, and then we—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you're just starting this gallery, you have the rent to pay, how are you selling art? I mean, to make a 16-foot billboard of a man, you had a General Idea participant dying of AIDS, it's not a great—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, we sold it to Harald Falckenberg—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm delighted to hear this.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: What was saving—what was saving us was Europe. Wilhelm Schürmann, Harald Falckenberg

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Could you tell me about this Wilhelm?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, like Wilhelm, W-I-L—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Schürmann?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: S-C-H-U-R-M-A-N-N, Wilhelm Schürmann. I first came across Wilhelm Schürmann because he was a photographer, Burnett Miller bought a photograph of his of the train station in Cologne. I was like, okay, this Wilhelm Schürmann guy, and then one day I was sitting in Burnett's, and this guy comes in and he's Wilhelm Schürmann. "Hello, this is fantastic. I love this piece. What is this piece of Charlie Ray's?" And it's the bowed wall piece. [00:42:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, just describe that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, it's a—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's the one that sticks out, and what's—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. It goes from floor to ceiling, and there's a curvature to it, and that piece really—sadly, because I don't think—Burnett's walls weren't so high. They must have been 10 feet. So, that room always should be with a 10-foot-high wall and then there's a curvature, and then in the middle of the wall is a photograph of Charlie. The photograph was actually taken, if I remember it correctly, by Daniel Martinez. Charlie, supposedly, is on LSD. That is—I think he was, and I think he was coming down, but they had to pick like the right time and—anyhow. So, it's all perceptual. So, you walk in and you have these flat walls on the side and behind you, and in front of you have this curve, and so it's like this weird sort of thing, and there's Charlie with his arms crossed looking like Charlie. Ultimately, he then makes a mannequin and then takes a photograph of it, of that sort of same weird thing that comes later.

So that's when I met Wilhelm, and Wilhelm buys it and then there's this other guy who's kind of toodling along behind him who's Max Hetzler, the gallerist. Max is like, "Oh, did you meet my friend Wilhelm?" "Yeah, yeah." "Yeah, I told him to come here and look at Charlie Ray. Give me 10 percent." [They laugh.] I think Burnett was like, "What?"

So, that was my first meeting with Wilhelm and then over the years, I kept talking to him and so when we did this exhibition in 1994, which was Rirkrit, Jorge, Sarah Seager, and Lincoln Tobier, Wilhelm bought the radio station, which was Southern California Community Radio, 1610 on the AM dial. That's supposed to go on your roof, and it's 100 percent Beach Boys during the Capitol Record years. And so that was kind of great. I mean, he loved Pardo. He loved Rirkrit. He loved, like, all these people. He bought Sarah Seager's work, and he was buying Steve Prina's work and Chris Williams' work and Mike Kelley's work, like unbelievable. Like— [00:44:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So but—was he a photographer, or was he a businessperson?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, what it turns out is that he was a schoolteacher. He was a professor.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, my God.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And he was—and he had had a little photo gallery with a guy named [Rudolf] Kicken who ultimately goes to Berlin. They were these amazing photo dealers in Aachen, Germany. Not only were they showing a lot of the Americans, but they were showing the Czechs. They had this vintage collection of Czech's photographs, which they sold to the Getty. And so, where he got his money was this sale that he split with Kicken. I think it was for like a million dollars. So, I don't know how much they made in the end, each one, but—so he had this little thing. So, he bought—you know, there was that show that—I think it was Cindy Bernard did at Margo Leavin's that was called—I want to say it was called *Salad Days* or something like that. But that Mike Kelley *Chest Of Drawers*, he had that. He bought Jeff Koons' *Bob Hope*. [00:46:04]

He was—and then he was taking photographs. So, he'd take photographs of all of Max Hetzler's shows, and he'd say to Max, "I'm not going to charge you. Let me just get some Kippenberger. Let get some Albert Oehlen, let me get some—" Right? Then he goes to the next generation, and he's like, you know? I mean it's unbelievable, and he kind of deals a little bit because he can do that, and he's like, "Oh, can I trade this for that?" He's fun. His brain is thinking. He's buying up Raymond Pettibons right and left, and he's picking the best ones, and he's not caring about if it's a baseball player or a *Vavoom*, or. But, of course, he's totally fascinated with Lee Harvey Oswald, so he gets the *Lee Harvey Oswald* Pettibon and, yeah. He's friends with Colin de Land and Pat Hearn, and it's just—but he's very specific. He's not like a messy collector. Like, I don't think he ever bought—he never

bought Jessica Stockholder. He kind of liked Jessica, but it wasn't—you know, even though Colin showed it, it wasn't conceptual enough. And then there were all these other people like Christian Philipp Müller who—so there's the Christian Nagel, Mark Dion, Renee Green, all that sort of work. But he keeps buying, and he keeps looking and then he comes back to painting early, and then he's buying Meg Cranston. He buys from Albert Oehlen. Albert Oehlen bought Meg Cranston's piece that Tony Greenwich showed called—that was shown at—was it shown at—? No, it wasn't shown at *Helter Skelter*. It was called *The Complete Works of Jane Austen*, and Meg had calculated how much air it would take to read Jane Austen and made a big gigantic fleshy balloon, flesh-colored balloon because she's like, "Jane Austen would never show skin." [They laugh.] She and Paul Schimmel wanted to show it in *Helter Skelter*, and she said, "Paul, there are too many balls in this show." [They laugh.] Because Chris Burden had his *Medusa's Head* and—I can't remember what else was there. [00:48:00]

Anyway, so Albert had that piece and then Wilhelm was like, "Oh, I'll buy that from you." So, he bought that and then he bought this other piece that was actually in the *Helter Skelter* catalogue called *Somebody Else With My Fingerprints*, or something like that. And so, he just was—and he would come to LA and then he would stay up at the Highland Terrace, and he would wander around, and he came to the galleries and absolutely, totally fantastic guy.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Where is he now?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He lives between Berlin and Aachen. He's retired from teaching, and his wife was a school—they were both, University of Aachen professors. I mean, it also speaks of another time when people who were intellectuals could—they could buy. So, and he—but he would come, and because he knew about photos, the thing that was also fascinating about Wilhelm is he would go through those bins of promotion photographs in Hollywood, and he'd take all the ones that were silver print. He was just genius, and he'd be like—if nothing else, just for the cost of the paper. He'd be like—so all of a sudden, he has every single photo test of Marilyn Monroe as she's like—for "The Misfits" or something, and he just had all these photographs. There's like photograph after photograph, and then he was the first person I know who was really digging around finding out all those NASA photographs that were coming out. He would just—he's like one of those guys. [00:50:06]

He's also the first person, I have to say, that when I finally got online—I didn't have this space yet so it must have been in like '95, '96. Pae White was always, "You've got to get online, Brian." I'm like, "No, it's just going to corrupt my computer." She was super into eBay, and she was buying up all this Vera material and other things. Wilhelm is like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." He's also now into it because Pae is doing it, so there's like this—and then this Kourosh Larizadeh who's another character in all this stuff, and his fascination with Mike Kelly. Anyhow, and so, he then is over at the apartment in Santa Monica, and he says, "Brian, I've got to show you something, what you can see, and now you can do it for free." He goes, "You know, there's a Dutch website." He goes—and the first time I've ever seen porn on the internet is with Wilhelm Schürmann—[they laugh]—and he's like, "It's amazing. And the photographs—I mean, what they're photographing, it's amazing, what they're doing." I'm like —

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Yeah, the door opens to the new world.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, who else kept you alive during those years?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I would say like that was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He bought a lot of work from you?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He bought a lot of work, then I met this guy Harald Falckenberg. He was buying work. There were people like Doug English who were buying things, Eileen Cohen, the Stones, Donna Stone and Howard from Chicago. Then there were institutions that were buying Diana Thater's work beginning, a guy named—what was his name?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Any LA institutions? [00:52:03]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I mean, yeah. I think that MOCA bought things from time to time, as did—LACMA not so much. I mean, acquisition with LACMA has always been weird. They have no endowment. They have no—I think once the Hammer—Annie Philbin got to the Hammer, there was certainly support. But no, one couldn't be able to survive within Los Angeles institutions. And also, sadly, a lot of the institutions would buy from New York. They didn't—I've always said this. I said it to Michael Govan when he arrived here years ago. Like, "You know, it is an ecosystem. It's not just artists and institutions," and so I think all those—there were all those things, but the Whitney was incredibly supportive of us, MOMA, and then there were just new people showing up. Rosa de la Cruz was supportive of Jorge Pardo, and then I met José Noé Suro from Guadalajara and Jaime Ashida and Patrick Charpenel, and all those guys in Guadalajara, they were buying. They were so adventurous in the way that they

were thinking. So, all these things were happening, and then they were also trying to get other people involved.

So there's these two brothers who went bankrupt, and then maybe they're back. They—Diego and Carlos Valenzuela, and they were building really cheap houses all over Mexico, but they were doing kind of crafty loans in the end. That, of course, they were—it's kind of like subprime lending, but to really poor people like you—I think the houses were maybe tiny, but the way they talked about it was really euphoric. Because the idea was that there are all these people who are moving into the city that didn't have any real homes, and they make homes. So, they did projects, and out of that, there is—when you went into one of them, there was the first bronze pieces by Fiona Banner of the *Full Stops*, and they bought Judy Ledgerwood. I mean, Carlos has two of the best works, one by Judy Ledgerwood and one by Jorge Pardo, and then—but they were also taking risks. We did a wall painting with Angela Bulloch that was pixelated called—it was based on a rule. It's called *Headless with Legs*. No, oh, *Tripping and Headless with Legs*. It was the rules of taking LSD, which I don't think they read and then—[laughs]—this guy was supposed to sit up next to this big gigantic pixel thing and— [00:54:06]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But did they have these in their home in Guadalajara?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, in their office, in their home, and they got super—everyone got super excited about it. So, all these things were happening, and I was traveling and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, what was your rent here when you started, if you don't mind my asking?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's a good question. I think it was something like 3500.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, again, it's like not dirt cheap at all.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It wasn't dirt cheap at all, no.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Am I correct in thinking that Alan Sieroty owned the building?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, he does. He's still does.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Former councilman—well, then he was a councilman, or was he not?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. He was—well, he had been a state senator.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: State senator, excuse me.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And he's the one who put in the resale law. That's Alan.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which is now defeated.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And, yeah. He's great. He's one of those people who is just like, as a landlord, at some point, you have enough, and everything is getting paid for, and so he—I think he just wanted art people around. So, yeah. So Alan was our landlord and still is, and—you know? So, slowly, we take things over and—but I think with that—so we're in '99, and then there's a show that I had started working with Martin Kippenberger before he died, and that was to do a poster show of all his posters and Michael Asher. I had this idea that I always think about, is this—that at a moment in that—in like the late '90s, early 2000s, everyone was talking about process art. I said, "Well, process is just process unless it has content." Process doesn't make content. That's like a false notion, and I think Mark was particularly involved in that, and Mark was really good at like the long story of the process art. So, I thought, "Oh, well, what if—?" And that was even back at the other space. So, I had this idea with Martin and Michael. It was like they were both all about content. They just went about it different. One was completely diuretic in what he put out, but everything—like Basquiat, every mark he made he knew exactly what that mark was. Martin Kippenberger never made a mark he did not intend. And for the same way Michael Asher, everything was deliberate almost to the point that, I think, Michael just was really interested in whatever the mythology was more than the work, but that's up for debate. [00:56:07]

So, I decided to do the show, and then Martin sadly died. So when I had the new space, I called Michael and said, "Look, I want to do this show, and Martin has died, and blah, blah, blah." He's like, "No, I don't want to do that show, and—"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which Michael?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Michael Asher.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Michael Asher, yeah, okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And then I had dinner with Chris Williams and Chris said, "Oh, you know, there's a

reproduction of the only poster Michael Asher ever did for documenta, and it was turned down." It was these two figures, a man and a woman and documenta thought that it was too sexualized or something. They're just porkers. It's like the most dumb sort of image, anyway. So, I called Michael up again and said, "Look, I'd love for you to be in it, but if you're not, it's okay. I'm still going to do this show. I'm going to show *October* magazine number 22 because the poster that you told me is the only poster, and it was confirmed by Chris Williams. I'm just going to show that." Michael just goes like this, "Well, okay. You know Kippenberger was always making these posters and asking artists to do it. Why don't I make the poster?" [00:58:01]

So, I'm still dating Suzanne, and through July and August, Michael Asher would come over almost every night, and we'd sit and play with these posters. So, we have all these posters that were rejected. At that time, I didn't have much money, and this—I think this goes to your point earlier about, like, it would be like this—[errrrr]—and you're like—[errrrr]—you know—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He'd make money, he'd lose money—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He'd make some money, and then he'd be like—and he is like, "I want to do this one poster," and it was a faux wood print, and it was so expensive. It was also this long, thin, and I calculated how much it was going to be to just send this in the mail, that poster. So, in the end the poster he made is a very thin poster that when you walked up the original stairs, there's a little cove that when you come up, it's that space and the length is based on the door. It's classic Asher. And then it says, "Together again like never before, the complete poster works of Martin Kippenberger," and he removes his name from it and then it has all the rest of the stuff. And so that's this poster, and so we do the show and the widow of Martin, Elfie Semotan comes, and as does these people Anton and Annick Herbert from Belgium. They came from Ghent. They're also like the most incredible collectors.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I'm sorry. Anton—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Annick.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Annick.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: A-N-N-I-C-K. [01:00:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the last name now.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Herbert.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Herbert, okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And the Herberts are—I mean, like when people collected. I think—you know, and he made this great quote to me which was, "You can only collect the generation before you—your generation and the generation after that." He said, "After that, all bets are off." Particularly if you're going younger and younger because you're looking for something and whatever that is, it's generally completely off. So, his collection really ends with Kippenberger, Franz West, and Mike Kelley. He really loved Pardo and Thater, but he just was like, "I can't do it. I can't go there, Brian." So he was great and their—but their collection of Andre and Flavin and like *Color Chart* paintings, the Richter and like—you name it, it's unbelievable.

They come—they came very late for some reason to Baldessari, and they never got Michael Asher, except for I put together a little collection for them of poster works and things. And Michael—I said to Michael, "Michael they want to—like do it. They've got everybody else," and he was like, "I don't know what I'd do for them. I don't know." I'm like, "Well, just charge them your \$20,000, Michael, and then go to Belgium and then—" So at this time all these people, these kind of collectors who are now very elderly, were really—they were independent thinkers doing whatever they wanted to do. I think that was something that was just like perfect for my time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now Kippenberger had already been living in Los Angeles and had the restaurant, didn't he, in Venice?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. He lived here in '89.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But how long was he here?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Only a year. [01:02:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I thought it was longer than that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, it seemed longer. He hated it. [They laugh.]



HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But the restaurant he had—

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HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —was legendary.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah, and Alana Hamilton. Yeah, she was.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What is—can—is it Capri? What was it called?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's called—it was called Capri—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Capri.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —which was based on this very funny joke about Capri cars, these type of Fords, which a bogon kind of guy would drive. They're all these early paintings that there's the *Crashed Capris*. But it had this double thing and then he and Alana had gone to some thrift store or some—you know maybe out in Pasadena, and that's where they bought that painting. And then there was one of his paintings in the back, which he stupidly put it at auction at the wrong time, and it did very, very badly. But it was—you know, it really was, again, another center. And he—his comment was, "You can't get a decent Bolognese in Los Angeles."

[They laugh.]

And that's why they opened that restaurant. Also again, you know, like Abbot Kinney, like if you think back, there was Hal's and that was kind of it. There was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And Rebecca's.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And Rebecca's—well, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's later. That's a little bit later. But the thing about in the west beach of Malibu is—but the thing about that restaurant Capri is that he was—he hung—my memory of it is he hung out there. People didn't really know who Kippenberger was in—here at least, not in 1989, [19]90.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. No, he at least—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They didn't know how legendary he was going to be.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, and then—and then Albert moved here.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Albert Oehlen.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I mean there was this very famous party at Martin's that got way out of control, this fight that happened with Liz Larner, and glasses were being thrown and, you know? I mean, there was also this moment. There were a lot of Europeans that were coming into Los Angeles. Peter Kogler who was friends with [Hubert] Schmalix, you know? There were this whole group of Austrians, because there was this crazy exchange that was happening in Vienna with Ursula Krinzinger. She was very good friends with Burnett Miller, and he did the Rudolf Schwarzkogler show. [00:02:05]

So, all that stuff was happening in the late '80s, early '90s, and so it just continued on. And that—those friendships that were based and built up over there, I think it slowly died out as there was—I think it died out for two reasons: One, the advent of the art fair, because then you didn't have to find a gallery where you would share with somebody. You would just do this thing. I think the other thing that happened was the beginnings of the mega-gallery, which was like, we're going to open up into other cities. That happened, and it happened before with Marlborough, but it was going to happen again.

So, I think that—so we did the show, and at the same time, I was curating the show of Kippenberger at the MAK, which got taken over by Peter Noever, sadly, because it would have been better—but anyway. But I—my proposal was to put in the airshaft that was there, and you'd hear this train come by. I thought it was particularly humorous because there is no train that's ever going to go through West Hollywood—[they laugh]—at least not that kind of train, and so—[they laugh.] A whole another train of Congo lines, but yes. But they installed it wrong, and they didn't listen to Gisela Capitain's husband at the time who was an architect. He said, "Look, there are these little micro fans," and they put these big fans on that kept tripping the—yeah, the fuse, and so it was like [vooooo]. Anyhow, but it was good. I was trying to get Joel Wachs to convince the city of West Hollywood to buy it. It never happened, and now it was—they built it so like a bunker that they couldn't break it up, so it's just in the garden in the front there, just covered over. [00:04:04]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In the Schindler House?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: In the Schindler House, yeah. And that—so that—all it was supposed to be was that. and then I wanted to remake as a way of raising money for the Schindler House because—I wanted to remake all the original furniture that was there. I didn't realize that the furniture that's actually there is copies, but then I found out later from the Friends of the Schindler guy, Bob, who's just such a pill. And my idea was, just turn the Schindler House into a reading room with some hotel drawings, and mostly just like all the Kippenberger books and stuff. And then what happened was that Peter Noever was like, "No, no, no," and brought all these latex paintings that were there, and they kind of—it didn't really make sense, because I wanted this idea, kind of like the one room gallery. It's like, to focus you, to give you space to think and to be in repose as it were, and then you go and then you're like, "Oh, there's this thing. Now let's look at this thing."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, a lot has changed. I mean, the whole—I mean, and that's—it's just the idea that you would sit and look at art seems to be an idea that's fading from popularity. How did that affect—how did your program evolve from this point forward in terms, coming to terms—well, come to terms with the changing nature of the way people look at art and purchase art?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think that—you know—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Because it changes a lot in the late '90s and early 2000s. [00:06:08]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I mean, I think that there are painters like Paul Winstanley, who I start working with. Or John Baldessari tells me about a woman who's graduating from UCLA who's Kirsten Everberg, and I start working with her in early 2003. I think—you know, so there's an introduction to those people, and I think a lot of people thought I always hated painting, but I just have a high, high expectation of what a painting is supposed to do, and like, why are you doing it, and are you—I always had this argument with Albert Oehlen, which was like, okay, if you're making anti-painting, if you're making really bad painting, how come it looks like—oh, no, I just forgot his name, a Danish artist—Per Kirkeby. Is Per Kirkeby like a bad painter, or are you making really good paintings? And I—so I always thought about how that that functioned, and the artists are always—they're always changing, and so I just followed along with them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, as I say, did you feel there's actually—at this point, like. as we go into the next level, it seems like there is much more awareness of—yeah. And well, for one thing by this time, the art world is so much more diverse. It's becoming increasingly, increasingly diverse in terms of what's accepted as a way of working, and as in terms of whether object orientation—I mean, it just seems like it's becoming what it is now, which is that there is no right, there is no—like, there's no moment where this is what's happening and you can focus on it. So, you're saying that affected your development of your program? I'm asking.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, I think I'm too stupid. I just think I kind of go along, you know? I think that the things that interest me—I mean, I guess I was thinking about this the other day. It's like the worst thing that can happen to me is being bored. I get an email from the Hammer Museum about, like, kid movement, in the—is it the Murray sculpture garden out at UCLA, I mean, on the camp? [00:08:07]

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Like, here's the movement. You sit and you look and you walk around it. Why do we need—like, why do we need movement—why do we need games to walk through museums? So, for me, the more I read about it, the more I get less and less interested in that, so I just go, "Well, I just care about art, so let me—like, how do I tie it back into looking at art?" And so, there's people—like, it happened, it just happened that I met Jack Goldstein in '87, and I was at a luncheon in Luxembourg with Helene Winer who has Metro Pictures. It was for the Herberts' collection, and I said, "You know who is ripe for a revival, is Jack Goldstein," and she was like—because they had actually dated as well. She's like, "Good fucking luck." Like, that's a—you know. "But you know who might know where he is, is Morgan Fisher." So, when I got back here—yeah. So by '99, 2000, it's like I kind of reconnected with Jack, which my thinking about Jack was like, was he going to be like an amazing blues musician who you can pull out and is ready to go and has got another 50 years of incredible playing to go? Or is it all going to go south? It kind of all went south, but it didn't really. It was just—you know? So there was—like that had already—and then 9/11 happened. Like we had—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Was he at your—so you were showing Jack Goldstein? [00:10:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, we kind of—I rediscovered Jack, so did Daniel Buchholz. He had a show with Daniel first and then he had a show with us. We showed all these films, which nobody had really ever seen the films. We also made a portfolio of prints that were photographs of his performances with a text that he had written. He had been carrying this around since 1987, and nobody had wanted to make it, but he thought it was so important. So, we went and worked with Jeff Wasserman in Santa Monica who did the silkscreens and then we went to Walden and they did—they hot-pressed, or hot-tinted the photographs. So that was in 2000, and then we

were—Diana Thater had her show at Dia. And just as all this stuff is happening, and we're putting together this three-part show with Diana, so now it's 2001, September 11th happens and it's like—

So, I basically had about four months, but certainly the first month of just making an exhibition for myself, because the show was supposed to change every two weeks. So, I had to do a whole new installation. Diana had decided that she and Kelly Mason, her partner, the two of them were going to drive across country, that they planned, and they decided to keep doing it. And so that was kind of crazy because they were driving a BMW, and they were driving into the South in a BMW. It was like—people were like, "Why are you driving a foreign car?"

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, dear.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Kelly, that summer, had made a t-shirt that said, "I Heart the Future," unbeknownst to us that that one was being planned. So, it went from being like, "I Heart the Future," to like, is it cynical, is it fucked up? Like, are you an asshole? Because I had done a show called *Stuffed* that included Mike Kelley's *Garbage Drawings*, and one of my favorite Al Ruppersberg pieces, the one he had made for a Münster sculpture that was outside of Margo's for many years, which was—it was all based on *Candide*, as it was called like *The Candide Travel Agency*, or something like that. [They laugh.] That's like totally ridiculous. [00:12:11]

And then all of a sudden people like Aurelio—no, not Aurelio, Eugenio Lopez started showing up. I mean, there was this guy Aurelio Lopez Rocha, whose parents or his father had started Canada Shoes, which was the largest shoe company in the world, which now is gone. The kid screwed it up. But all those Mexicans had started to come, and so they were also involved. So, they were kind of saving me from the horrors of post-9/11, and again, Wilhelm Schürmann came and he bought the Jack Goldstein film. He could have bought it from Daniel Buchholz, but I traded him. I traded him a Kippenberger painting, which sadly I've sold, of—it was a three-part. One had a text. It had an image of a crashed Capri, and at the bottom was Joseph Beuys' mother on a train platform. It was not very big, and I traded him a General Idea piece, which was not called *Nazi Milk*—it's a good German-looking guy with a white milk mustache and a glass of milk—and the Goldstein film and something else, you know? It was my 40th birthday, and I thought, "Oh, like a birthday present to myself." [00:14:04]

Anyway, so, but there are people—all these people were doing stuff still, and it didn't stop. I think the advent of like the computer, and sending people images, or there was a joke for a long time. There was a TV station in Germany called Vox, and they would go live to Venice Beach. So, Wilhelm was always joking with me that I should take the art down to where the camera was. He would call me and say, "Oh, the cameras," and I would hold the artwork. [They laugh.] And color Xeroxing came in. I mean, I think that—I mean, that's—it's right. I mean, and it's funny, you should like—you know?

So, Diana had a show at Dia, and actually, one of the most amazing dinners I—I don't know if I ever had. But we had gone to see Charlemagne Palestine at Sonnabend. She had moved to Chelsea and Lynne Cooke—I was with Lynne Cooke, and Lynne Cooke said to me, "Oh, why don't we have dinner with David Sylvester?" I thought she said David Sylvian, who was the lead singer of a band called Japan. [They laugh.] You can ask David about—anyway, and I was like, "Wow, that's so cool." We take this taxi, and we stopped out in front of this brownstone that actually turns out to be Jeff Koons' brownstone. Out comes this very overweight guy, and I'm like, "Wow, what happened to David?" And she looked at me, like, what are you taking about?

And he is David Sylvester, who turns out to be Cecily Brown's father. But he is best known for all his writing on Matisse. So we have this dinner, and he's in and out of consciousness, I would say. His—he has diabetes, and he's not well, and we're in this pan-Asian restaurant. Anyhow, and he—in this very Orson Welles' voice, he says, "Where did it all go wrong?" [They laugh.] Lynne and I become like fumbling, second-year students. The thing that's so incredible about this is we're like, "Oh, Chelsea." You know, everyone at this point is already—I mean, think about this. Already—in the early 2000s, they're—we're already blaming Chelsea for the downfall of the art world, which I think, so. So, he pauses as we're fumbling around, and he goes, "Color reproduction." He said, "When I started writing about Matisse, everybody knew you put a Tipton illustration, and it was never the thing. It was just a reference. And now, reproduction is so good that everybody thinks it's it." Now, think about this. This is before Instagram. When we're talking about Instagram now, it's like he's talking about that then, and he says, "And it's very expensive, so art is going to be very expensive." [00:16:04]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Interesting.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And that was kind of it. I mean, kind of fascinating, and jump to, yeah, 15 years later, and you're thinking, "Wow, okay, that's unbelievable that he was so correct about it." But it also had this thing that changed as well. It's like the idea of making catalogues and what catalogues were doing and how—so, already by then, Jorge Pardo is making catalogues, but the catalogues he's making, or Pae White is making, are really antithetical to what Marlborough would have made if they had a show, or a museum had a show. Jorge's playing with Photoshop, or Pae is playing with Photoshop and making images that are completely brand new. And only when you look in the index in the back are there little thumbnails of black-and-white images of the work that

starts. Or she makes a book for Wilhelm Schürmann of his collection for the Hypo bank in Munich, and that's changed. I mean, again, everything is color in it, except for all the reproductions are black and white, but she [used -BB] blocks of color. [00:18:05]

So, every artist—Renee Green has her color, and Jorge has color, and then she drops in a crazy portrait of Jorge that—because they had been dating—was taken of him on a—like, a cruise that they had gone on together. Like, it's not—there's not a—it's not an artist book, and it's not like that straight-ahead catalogue that has two essays and then reproductions and then plates. So, I think all this stuff is exploding. It's exploded through the '90s because nobody cared, and then it starts exploding because now there's a little bit of money. And so that, I think, starts happening.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And the internet, of course, and, you know, the whole evolution of that just changes everything. But so, were you—when you're doing these things that are—I want to know at this point, when you're doing the—are you doing editions every year, every—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It all depends.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —six months?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You know, what, sort of, destroyed the editions were—I mean, Jason began to do it, but really, it was Pae White. I would say it was Pae White and Andrea Bowers, because there was always—with the editions, there had always been a very clear budget and with them, and it also speaks of the time. Before, you just say no because you could—had to say no. But all of a sudden, it's like they're creeping up in the production cost to \$10,000 or whatever. I'm doing a lot of running around, and there's a place that was down on the backside of Culver City who would print stuff for us or if we had a whole bunch of color reproductions that we had to make to send out in packets. Because people weren't shooting digital then. They were shooting four-by-fives, and then what you would do, and we had—and I gave it to Jim Welling, but I had for many years a Heidelberg scanner, which was like \$4000—I mean, at the time it was like, "Oh, four K," and, yeah, that was—and so— [00:20:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Right at the beginning of the computer scanning, for one thing—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So then you would scan and then you would fix it and then they were—then we had the early—all the early posters were all done with layouts, and then they're made into—there were internegs that were done. All of a sudden now, you're like—you're saving these on a disc, and then you're taking the disc. Now, I just make a—I just convert my Illustrator file into a PDF. So, I mean—all that is—it's all running parallel to the idea of what it means to make an exhibition.

So then there's an exhibition that we do called *One Work, One Room*, and it's like every two weeks, we're changing the show. It goes from Katy Schimert to Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, which we made the last edition posthumously, because Kate had died of a brain tumor. And so, that was—I'm trying to think when she died. I think she died maybe in 2003, maybe that—no, that's too late. She died in the '90s. And so, there were all these things that we're doing and then there's the Angela Bulloch piece, and that actually—that piece actually stayed up for probably, I would say, a good 10, 15 weeks, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, also, what about—how does that play into the decision to do more? Well, it's like prints and editions, but you also start doing, what I would call, multiples, or do you always just think of it all as the same thing? Do you think of—because its PE, but it's PEM. I mean, did—how did you—how do you think of things like the Jorge Pardo lamps, or the John Baldessari urinals, or things like that? [00:22:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Those were just multiples, but the multiple, that word was created by Marian Goodman.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I know.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, nobody understands what that means by the way. That's also—[laughs]. It's like editions, multiples, I mean, people get confused by it. Part of the reason why we got rid of 1301PE, Projects & Editions was, literally, I did a Paul Winstanley exhibition of paintings, and people were asking what's the edition size, so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, when did you start going to three-dimensional objects? Has that always been something—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It was always the thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It was always in three dimensions?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Always, yeah. Yeah, I mean, the *Fake Shit* was three dimensions.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's true. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: The *Blue Room and Love Seat* was three dimensions.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Just for the record, *Fake Shit* is literally that, by Paul McCarthy. It's literally a—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Cast aluminum. It's that—it's that crazy foam that you go [makes sounds] insulation foam, and then originally—the crazy thing is originally, he did it. He thought we could just paint them ourselves. And then they were all chipping, so we had to take them to an auto body shop, but the crazy thing about that was that was not the edition I was supposed to make with him. What I was supposed to make with him—he had this crazy, fake—this fake, little leg that looked like something with a shoe, and so we had talked. It was going to come in a rose box, and the bottom of the foot was going to be weighted. And then it would have this covering over that leg would be this AstroTurf, and then you would take the AstroTurf out and then you put the leg there. Well, I went away and started doing research on how much it cost to make the rose boxes because I met somebody in New York who did customized rose boxes. Unbeknownst to me, Patrick Painter made his way into Paul's studio and said, "It's a beautiful day, but—blah blah blah. We're going to do that, that's great. We're going to do this and blah blah blah. And I've already taken two ads out. One in *Flash Art* and—it's great." Then Paul calls me incredibly sheepishly, "Hi, Brian." "Hello, Paul, it's—like he's—sorry we're going to make something else. I've got something new. Come up and see me." And Paul's drawing [different things. -BB] And I should have said to him, "Oh, Paul, what I want is all your drawings and no—" But the *Fake Shit*—we sold the *Fake Shit* out. I think there's one left that we held on to it, but the—you know. [00:24:45]

We were always making objects, and then they kind of got flat, and then different people did different things, and then Rirkrit made—in the '90s, he made the lunchbox. We went to Thailand, and I met with these guys who make those rocket lunch boxes, those four-tier lunch boxes. It's supposed to come to your house with a menu of pork sate, green papaya salad, chicken yellow curry and rice with a daily newspaper, Thai newspaper from the day that you order it, which has gone very well. The edition size is about a hundred and eight. It's not a hundred and eight because we gave some to people. And now, what's so difficult is to get Thai newspapers here, because people will just read it online, so I used to go to the Thai market on Hollywood. And now, they're making those ones that are like photocopies. I was like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] [00:26:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —so that's becoming—and I think we're—I think we've sold 65 of them. It's really interesting, because institutions own them, and so it becomes a fascinating conversation, because they're like, "Well, we're going to activate it, but can we change the menu?" And I'm like, "No." And then they're like, "What if they're vegan?" I'm like, "No." "What if they don't—they're allergic to—?" And I'm like, "Then they—" You know, it's like art. [They laugh.] I'm like, "You know, *The Raft of the Medusa*, I love that painting so much, but it—I know the ending. It's not going to end well for these people. Can we just change it a little bit, and paint the ship back in there?"

[They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I want to ask you one more thing, which is, okay, you've ended your relationship with Suzanne Goin in 2000-ish.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So what happens after that for you personally? Because you've been married to your—who's the next woman in your life in this point? Who's the post-9/11 woman?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, there are a couple. There are a couple, but the one that I end up marrying is Katie Cerio, or Katrina Cerio.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Tell me about meeting her and—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I met her—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —I actually don't know how to spell her last name.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: C-E-R-I-O. That's why her acting name is Butler. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is it K-A-T-R-I-N-A?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. But she—yeah, everyone calls her Katie. I met her through Angela Choon, who was the director of Zwirner at the time, and her partner Spencer Leigh, I think spelled like Mike Leigh's way of spelling Leigh. They were like, "Oh, you should meet this woman." I was like, "Okay, fine," and so, I met her at—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And what year is this? [00:28:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: This is 2003. I met her at the Juan Muñoz, Yutaka Sone opening at MOCA at the TC, the Temporary Contemporary, and yeah. So, we met, and that was fine, and then Jason was doing something with Yutaka, so I left. And then Angela and Spencer were still in town and then they said, "Oh, why don't we have a drink at the Viceroy?" They were late, and they came, and it was fine. We then slowly started dating and I then—two things happened. I then went to Europe for a month, because that must have been in March or something like that of 2003, right after the opening of the—oh, yeah, oh my gosh, that all happened at the same time. It was March, because on the 14th of March, Jack Goldstein committed suicide. It was like right then. It was like really, really freakishly weird. There was that. The Gulf War started. You might remember that Jack Goldstein's obit was on the cover of the *L.A. Times* with the "Shock and Awe" image? So that was happening, and then I went to Europe for a month, because I always did in June, to just like—and there was Venice that year.

And then I went and we started dating, but I wasn't kind of around, and then I went to New Zealand for the first time in 2003. I gave a series of lectures there with Amada Cruz, and that was in August. I had wanted to go with Diana Thater or Jorge, or somebody else, but they were all like, "Are you crazy? It's the dead of winter there, Brian. Why would we leave the summer?" So, it happened that Amada Cruz, who was—who was the director of Bard at the time, the art space there, walked in. I'm like, "You want to go to New Zealand?" And she's like, "Yeah." So, we curated a show of ephemera that was called *From the Flat Files*. The guiding principal was everything had to be posted, and you couldn't care too much if it got lost. And she—because she was such good friends with Felix Gonzales Torres, she had all this incredible material, and she's like, "Okay, I'll send that. I'll send that." You know, like we—and I had all this General Idea material and Kippenberger and stuff, and then it was great. But I met all these people there, and we traveled around the country giving this—a series of lectures. So that started my relationship with New Zealand that culminates in 2005. So Katie and I started dating, and then I guess— [00:30:05]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Now, she's an—was an actress, was she—?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't know her acting career. What does she do?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She's an actor. She's been in—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Actor?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She's an actress, act—I mean, they like to call themselves actors now, and so.

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: She had been in *Hero*, which was a film with Dustin Hoffman, and then she had been in a relationship with somebody, so I think it took her away from acting. She had been in some theater groups and stuff like that. When I met her, she was working on the acting thing. But I would say that she was doing a lot of styling, and that was working out, that she was—had motion pictures insurance, and it pays well. And then she was doing TV commercials. It was really the thing, and she was trying to get more movies. There had been a couple of other movies, but small parts, and then, yeah, it really starts when we move to New Zealand in terms of her acting career and writing career that begin to take off, with her being cast in *Bridge to Terabithia*, and then *30 Days of Night*, and then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What's it's called, *Bridge* what?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: *Bridge to Terabithia*. It's like a—it's a young adult film, but it's a book that won the Newbery Award. It's a story of a—I think it takes place in West Virginia or something, where it's kind of an awkward boy, lives in poverty, and has a—kind of comes from a big family, and meets a really incredible girl, a friend, and they make this make-believe place. It gets a bit Disney-fied in the movie, and in— [00:32:13]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She's in the movie?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, she's in the movie. She plays the mother with Patrick—Patrick, Patrick, Patrick. Jason—not Jason Patrick. What's the other one? The guy who played in *Terminator* and—anyway, he's her husband and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So that—so you're—it seems you're in New Zealand and her career takes off here in LA

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, no, that's—so, I haven't quite gone us to leaving for New Zealand, but yeah. So we start dating, and then her—we move in together in 2004, I would say. We move up on to Hillside to that house, but that house is being renovated, so we're living in the little Fred Fisher house at the front of—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this is a—this is a—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's a mid-century house.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I want to say—I want to say Sunset Plaza, is that what it is?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's not really.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It's above. It's on one of the fingers that overlooks the Chateau Marmont. If you look to the east, you see the Koenig house, and if you look to the right, it's kind of got airline views.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, you were in the guesthouse, and her mother and father were in the bigger house?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, they were living in Baltimore at the time, and they were just renovating that house. There is nobody living there. So it was kind of a job site, and I guess our responsibility is to oversee some of the construction and stuff, and—yeah. And that little house was always known as the "karma cottage." [00:34:00]

The thing that was interesting is that we had a lot of dinners there,, and stuff like down below. We would go to Phillips Bar-B-Que, and then we'd drive to Honey—what was it? Honey's Kettle Fried Chicken in South Central. Alexis Johnson was working for me then, and she was incredible. She had worked for me at the very beginning. And this crazy thing about the whole Suzanne Goin Lucques thing is that Alexis Johnson was a waitress, was the first group of people to work for Suzanne. One night, Suzanne said, "You know, Alexis need more hours, but I can't give her any more hours. Maybe she wants to work for you during the day." And so, Alexis comes to work for me during the day, and would leave early and then work at Lucques. And then she quit to go move to New York because she was doing Summer Stock. And that—the African American guy who's in *This is Us*, she was in just like a whole bunch of plays with him. Anyhow, so she does that, and then she goes to work for Rirkrit Tiravanija, then that all ends, and she's selling wine.

She comes back to Los Angeles, and I've gone through two other directors. One, Liz Marchioli who was great, and sadly, she wanted to go back to school and become a lawyer and work with nonprofits, but—you know? So there is—like, Alexis comes back, and the gallery just starts humming along doing things. At this point also, you have to remember that Frieze is happening, and we've applied for Art Basel, and in 2004, we get into Art Basel, into the main fair, not a—and not—I never did list—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's sort of a big compliment to you. [00:36:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. But—so I find out about that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But very expensive if I remember correctly.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, it's not. It's—let's just say this. You're not having any fun because you're shitting yourself all the time, that you've got to make it. But what happened that I think is somewhat important is that that fall of 2004, so we're doing Frieze in November, and then there's an election for George Bush, and I'm working very hard on Mr. Kerry's desire to lose. And then—then there's Artissima, which is another fair that's in Torino, and we had done that for a little bit, and we had done Frieze from the very beginning. I'm like super burnt out, and I get this email just after George Bush wins. I'm sitting in Torino, and in fact, when he won the first time, I was sitting in Cologne doing the Cologne Art Fair. Amy Fontana turns to me and says, "Oh, my God, Brian, this is horrible. What is happening? Horrible. What a bunch of buffoons you are." I'm like, "You can't say anything. You have Berlusconi."

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But as I fly back, there's an email sitting there from this artist Peter Robinson from New Zealand who I've known, because Wilhelm Schurmann has—he was living—Peter Robinson was living in Berlin, and Wilhelm introduced me to Peter's work. He sends me this email, "Hey, Tobias Berger is leaving Artspace, you should apply for the job," and I was like, "Fuck America." [They laugh.] I thought, "Well that's kind of interesting." I'm now, I think, 45 years old? I'm like, "I wonder if I'm employable?" [They laugh.] So, I applied for the job, and I got a very sweet letter back saying, "It'd be nice if you might want to do a few other things to your —[they laugh.] Other than a letter saying, "Hey, I want the job." [00:38:01]

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, anyhow, I get this letter saying that, "Hey, we want to interview you. Can you call us, or we'll call you?" And so, they do, and I'm sitting downstairs at the little karma cottage, and it's pouring with rain,

and it's a Sunday night, which is a Monday for them. The rain is literally—because it came in on that point. It would come in horizontal, and it was casement windows, and it was like leaking. So, we'd been all night like, shoving towels around, and—

But I'm sitting there slightly drunk, and they're asking me about what's my relationship to Maori culture, and I'm like, "I love it." They said, "Well, how many Maori shows are you going to do?" I'm like, "If it's good art, I'll show it. Otherwise, I don't care." I said, "Otherwise, it's a slippery slope." I had made this decision, which I still think was like—I said, "You know what, you're an art center, you're an art space, and you're not a community center. The second I turn you into a community center, we are going to have a shitload of problems. So anyway, that's—so then, "I don't care, well, that's that," and then I was down at this Korean restaurant with some friends, and I get this phone call. They are like, "Yeah, we want you to have the job," and I was like, "Holy shit." Now, we were getting all prepared for Basel, and I said, "Okay, here's the deal. My girlfriend, at the time, has never been to New Zealand, so you have to bring her to New Zealand. And I'm doing Basel, and so I have to do Basel, and then—so I'll start in September." "Sure, yes," "And last, but not the least, I'm not closing the gallery, but I'll put it in holding." "Sure, no problem." So, oh, my God, and now I have to find a director, and I'm thinking like, "Yeah, fuck. Who's competent enough?" [00:40:00]

So, we go to Basel, and it's great until somebody tells somebody that I'm going to New Zealand, and then the shit hits the fan. And what is the biggest lie of all the art fairs that the public doesn't know, is that it's a little mafia of people who are vetting if you're in or out, and the politic of it. Sadly, that year, a guy named Philip Nelson had died over a massive—I think it was a brain tumor, but it had been brought on by a hemorrhage. His gallery was still in the fair because he was in. And so anyhow, they find out that I'm going to New Zealand, and they say to me—Claes Nordenhake put it—who's a dealer from Sweden, puts his arm around me, and then another time there's Victor Gisler who's the gallerist from Zurich, and they're all like, "This cannot be, Brian. This is a disaster. You can't be—" I said, "It doesn't matter. It's a three-year contract. I'm gone, I come back, I need to do this. It's a healthy thing for me to do, and it's only going to make the gallery better." "No, no, we going to have to throw you out."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, what was the—what is their perception of that conflict?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, there's no conflict. The conflict is that you can't be doing anything other than being a slave to the art world. [00:42:02]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You have to be a fulltime dealer?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think they—I think the thing is—what I realized having gone through this now is, one, I would have never told anybody I was leaving. I would have just—I mean, there are still people who think I never left, and by the way, there are people 10 years on who still think I live in New Zealand. [They laugh.] It's just like, "How's New—Australia?" "No, New Zealand."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So anyway, that's insane, but yeah, it was this very weird thing. The crazy thing is so they threw us out. We reapplied. We got thrown out of Frieze and so, but to go back slightly, so Alexis turns to me during the fair, which was really great. I mean, we did such a beautiful booth, and we did a little bit better than breaking even. She's like, "I want to be the director. I want to run the joint." I'm like, "Oh, okay, that's cool. That's good."

And I wanted this other guy, Dan Gunn, who had worked for—he has a gallery of his own in Berlin now, but he had worked for Maureen Paley at Interim Art, and he was great. He had such good energy, but he didn't drive, and so pre-Uber days, he was flipped out. I think the two—but the two of them did work together. They did a fair, or the first Gulf Fair or whatever it was. They do Abu—no, Dubai, and as John Baldessari said to me, "Shouldn't that fair be called 'Don't Buy'?" [They laugh.] So, I think that's where they set up shop. They're supposed to go to Dubai, and they went to the wrong—it was a disaster. [00:44:04]

So, we get thrown out of these fairs, and we're about ready to get thrown out of Art Basel Miami. Alexis writes to the De la Cruzes and to Thea Westreich and all the big players and is like, fuck you. I, by the way, had started to write my Johnnie Cochran letter that this was a—because she was the first and only solo African American to be running the gallery. So, I was like, "Are we pulling out the race card here?" Because I have no idea. She's the most competent individual. She was like so on top of the whole thing. The collectors loved her, and it was just other gallerists that were kinda like— They were like, "Well, you're waitlisted," and so.

This is after she had done the—so we had done—because we were in those fairs in 2005, we got to do them. So, she was in Frieze, and she wanted more space and Eva Presenhuber threw her out. And then the next one, we did *Social Pudding* with Rirkrit and SUPERFLEX, and the lines were out the booth because there are people who are making this pudding. It was on the cover of *The Art Newspaper*. So, she with her father, who's a lawyer, a



pretty well-known lawyer in LA, they wrote this incredible letter that was just like full-on. They had everybody sign it, and then she said, "Look, here are the documents. There's no reason why you should be able to throw us out. We are actually on the cover of *The Art Newspaper* on the front page." So, from then on we were always in Art Basel Miami, but they always put us in the one where you could only show three people. They would—they—and it was always—and then—and when I came back from New Zealand.

So, that was the beginning of New Zealand, and then I—we went to New Zealand, Katie loved it. I think they paid the gods an enormous amount of money to have the most perfect weather, and met all these incredible people. We met people because it was *Lord of the Rings* year. Because of that, it was—it was kind of crazy, and I got invited to this *Lord of the Rings* party. It was not because of that, but because of Pippa Cohen and Michael—what was his name, the two guys that produced it? Anyhow, and so yeah, it just—it was like this magical moment, and by September I was there, and by October she was there and then I just hit the ground running. [00:46:05]

The first show I did at Artspace was Francis Elise. The shows were a really incredible mix between trying to pull some Europeans and people, or things that made sense there, or that people were asking to see. In one case, I did a retrospective of Meg Cranston because, one, I still think it's the most idiotic thing that no institution here has done a retrospective of her. The publisher from JRP|Ringier, Lionel Bovier was like, "I love the work. I want JRP to make a book." So then I was like, "Great," and then we traveled the show in New Zealand. But it was also—like, it made sense because it was super do-it-yourself. She's kind of like super literate, do-it-yourself, and so many of the artists who were younger coming up at that point were also very literate, do-it-yourself. So, I thought, "Oh, like what happens when—?" And that was always the construct of the exhibitions, and then we put into place a curatorial internship program where you came in for one year. You started by painting walls, and by the end, you curated your own show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, this is all in Auckland?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: This was all in Auckland.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And this nonprofit space, is it connected to anything else, like a school or anything else? [00:48:04]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. It had been started by artists, and I was there starting with, like the—I guess it was the 19th—I was the 19th, 20th, and 21st year. It had moved from down by the harbor, and this was in an old post building. We were upstairs, and it was a really interesting building. They were always like—and one of the things I was inspired by is, like they were always talking about using people who are up and coming in thinking. And then going back and talking about somebody else, and then all of a sudden like, "Oh, we should do a show with Billie Apple who got famous because of Warhol." But before that, he was British and Pop and was famous for these—you know, showed at Mayor Gallery and stuff.

And the idea was, for me, I went there and I said, "I love Auckland. New Zealand is like a second-city mentality. I know that, you know. Auckland is the—we can say that Artspace is the contemporary art beacon in the Pacific. What is the Pacific name? We need to throw away these adages of Pacific Rim. Destroy it. That was given to us by our European slave masters. [They laugh.] Let's talk about Trans-Pacific. What is Trans-Pacific? Because it's moving all the time. It's moving faster than any of us think about. And you show up in Guadalajara, Mexico, and all of a sudden, there are a whole bunch of Japanese there, and you're like, "Wait." Because the American monoculture thing is that only—anybody only leaves their country to come to America. [They laugh.] Right? [00:50:03]

So, all of a sudden, you're hanging out with a whole bunch of Dalmatian Yugoslavs in New Zealand. You're like, "How did you get here?" And then I met this crazy Belgian guy who had this pro—so, and it's really small. We're working, and Katie gets *Bridge to Terabithia*, and that's going pretty well. And there's all these other things because, she's also American accent, so, like *30 Days of Night*, which is a vampire film, was shot there, then she's in a whole bunch of other stuff. And so, that's all—it's all clicking along, and then we need to make a decision after three years, what are we going to do? And I had said to them, "Look, we're holding for three years. If you had wanted me to stay, you should have asked me in the first year because otherwise, it's the board just being lazy," because they wanted me to stay.

And then Katie got pregnant in the, I guess, their summer, about January of 2008. There was this guy Barack Obama who was lighting up this sky, and I thought, it might be safe to go home. And so, we made this decision that we would start coming back, because she wanted to be closer to her family, and by then her parents were living up at the house on Hillside. And so, we moved back in November after the election with a little baby, a little baby boy named Thomas Butler, which was very funny because, wow, I'm so glad we had a child in New Zealand. He doesn't get citizenship, but if he goes back at 18, supposedly he can get it. No. But—because it cost us \$300 New Zealand, to have a baby—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Wow. [00:52:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —in New Zealand. And the—if you—even if you take a pro-life position, pro-life isn't just conception. It's pro-life, is like, "Oh, what happens when you have a child? What happens when the breastfeeding is not going well? What happens when—?" They have Plunket there, and we put a deposit of \$75 down for a car seat, and when I returned it, we got the money back. Like, I know that sounds socialist, crazy, but it was like, it's something so humane. They have a midwife that would come and weigh Thomas, and whatever. So, yeah, that was early and good, but then we caught a flight back from New Zealand to Los Angeles, and we lived back in my little apartment, which had been basically the apartment where artists would stay, which was great. I mean, it was sad that you have to give it up at some point, because people like Charline von Heyl and stuff, they were like, "Oh, my God, this is the most fantastic thing. It's not staying in a hotel, I can just—"

When we left, it was funny. They had to redo the linoleum floor because Fiona Banner, at one point, had an X-Acto knife and was cutting posters on the floor. She didn't put anything down underneath it, so it's—it had a lot of fantastic history, including meeting the guys from SUPERFLEX when they first came to Los Angeles when they were still part of—they were still students with Olafur Eliasson. And they—I forgot until recently that they came to that apartment and hung out there, and I talked to them about multiples and what have you, so—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I want to say—so did you—at one point, did you get married in New Zealand?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, we got married. Officially, we're married in New Zealand, but our wedding took place in a little town called Verduno, which is just outside of Bra and Alba and the Piemonte. It's a—it's this crazy castle that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In Italy? [00:54:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —in Italy, yeah. Katie had always wanted to get married in Italy, and I love—I still think that the Piedmont is—the Piemonte is, for me, the most interesting in many respects, and nobody cares about it. It's like all the Germans and the British, they all go straight to Tuscany, and the Americans, and then there's this place. Sadly, the price of their wines, their barolos and stuff can become very expensive. But it's where slow food originated, so I was always interested in that, and so. And Katie was looking at it someplace. She comes from Emilia-Romagna, her family, her father's side of the family, and so it was like that. But that's like—that literally is wedding hell. And so I said, "Well, why don't we go to this crazy place that this guy who's Gregorio Magnani, who comes from Luca. He had a gallery called Robert Prime in London, and I was sitting with him in Torino, and I'm like, "Oh, where should we go? My girlfriend is coming." He's like, "Brian, you have to go to Verduno. I tell you about it. The House of Savoy," and he tells me this crazy story that supposedly, like, the king of the House in Savoy had an erection problem. But he would drink the—he would go and stay at this place. He drank the wine and he—he was like, "Viagra." [They laugh.] And so he's like, "You should go there with your girlfriend, the wine," anyway. But I guess he impregnated somebody, and that he liked it so much that he bought the house, and ultimately it was sold. So, it was this mother and these two daughters that owned it, and like incredible, incredible chefs. [00:56:03]

So, we had gone there on our way to Genoa, and then on to like—I don't know where we drove around in. I think we went to Via—where did we go? Anyway, so when I—when we were going to get married, I'm like, "Katie, just do that. It's like—it's like a quarter of the price, and we know how amazing the food is, and we can start in Bra and then we can drive around. And also, there—" It's really funny, because I think Jerry Saltz just posted this. There is a chapel that has—the outside is a Sol LeWitt, super colorful, primary colors, and so we had this really lovely wedding that was there. It was during the time of the World Cup. And there was a moment that the US was playing Italy, and it looked like Italy might lose, and I'm like, "Oh, that's going to be a disaster." And then Philippe Parreno was there, and he showed up late to some event because he was watching France play. I think that was like—so anyway, it was very nice, and then I went back to work, and that was that. [They laugh.] And then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's put this on pause for a second, because now we're at 2008, we're getting closer, Brian.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah we're at 2000—we're actually at 2006. So in 2006, 2008, it's all kind of the same.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: 2006.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, let's put this on pause for a moment.

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So, Brian, we've taken a little break here, and we've been talking about the newest news in Los Angeles, which is that we have yet another director of the Museum of Contemporary Art

here, at Klaus Biesenbach. But what I want to—we were talking about is how museums have evolved in Los Angeles since you've been here. And the perspective that you have, you know, this is—it's—we're just talking about how museums, there's a new—seems to be a new movement afoot to make museums the same everywhere, with the same sort of, quote, contemporary art inside of them. Maybe I'm misstating what you're thinking. [00:58:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, I would wholeheartedly agree. And I—what I was saying was that, if you go back and you look, since Klaus Biesenbach comes from New York, as does Michael Govan, as does—but if you look at that model, the model was there, were—besides the Met, because the Met—even now the Met has to get itself involved in contemporary art. I was like, "Really?" But that—besides that, the MoMA had—its point of view was the School of Paris. Everything went through the School of Paris filter, and then you had the Guggenheim, which had the Russians and the Blaue Reiter. And then you had the Whitney, which was just American art. And it was—started with the Ashcan School, and so, you know?

But one of my—my professor Peter Selz, who was the 20th-century curator of painting and sculpture at MoMA, and wrote the book on Max Beckmann and stuff, he also was involved in the Jean Tinguely *Destruction of New York [Homage to New York]*, I think that's what it was called. I always think that that was the perfect moment of the crisis that happened. I mean, it took a long time for us to be able to see it, but MoMA could digest the Abstract Expressionists through the School of Paris. It could digest Johns and Rauschenberg and Larry Rivers. It could keep going the School of Paris with the Nouveau Réalisme and Dubuffet and all those people all fit in, and the Cobra. They all fit the canon. [01:00:04]

But what it couldn't do—and that's because Peter Selz wrote this article called "The Flaccid Art," which was about Warhol and Rosenquist and Lichtenstein, and all of a sudden that flipped it out. They couldn't consume that. They couldn't go through the School of Paris. And it couldn't handle Minimalism, because Minimalism was just as low in this material as the comics, or the Pop, or whatever. I always think like, that's so interesting, because then it takes a long time. They then have like that—there's the *New Spirit in Painting* show that happens at the Royal Academy, but then when they build their tower, they try and do that big international show. It's like, how are we going to—? You can see them trying to get back and then it sort of—then they just go like, fuck it, and there is no school anymore. They just start collecting, and they have to go back and go, "Oh, my gosh, we've got to get rid of—we've got to—" Not get rid of. "We have to get Duchamp. How do we make this story? Oh, we love Duchamp," all of a sudden, and—but meanwhile, the Whitney is buying the Pop artists, and the—you know?

So anyhow, that—I think when MOCA opens, MOCA has its point of view, and it had its point of view for a long time. I would say it started to lose its point of view, probably by the end of Jeremy Strick's sort of thing. But certainly, it loses its point of view because the market starts coming back into play.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, it's also true that it had two very strong curators, Paul Schimmel and Anne Goldstein at MOCA, and they both had very strong points of view. They had other curators as well, but, I mean, you know, that's—it was a very specific point of view.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And I think with—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that—mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —Richard as well, I mean, Richard Koshalek. And they did things, which maybe because they were younger and the way that Paul saw and they—Anne was from Los Angeles, and certainly Paul had come to Los Angeles with total love and adoration in his heart. It was never—it wasn't like as we were talking about earlier. He didn't come—

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BRIAN D. BUTLER: —to Los Angeles and say, "Maybe I've got to spend more time in New York." He was like, "Holy moly, this is great. Here's this Chris Burden character, and here's Paul McCarthy," and so. And then, I think the County had Rusty Powell, and however boring you want to say Rusty was, he ran a tight ship. And then they invented this thing called the Hammer, and that was not until Annie Philbin took it over, but, you know, that she came with her ideas, but it was a much more international thing that she was thinking about.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And younger.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And younger, and—yeah. I mean, it was good, but I think now—what—everybody seems to be running after the same thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But because—but that's because it's collector driven to some extent, do you think, or—?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I would say that the collector—well, I think what's happened is that there were people who were collectors, and they were competitive with each other. I think that's—that has not gone away. But I also think there are people who are collectors who had some money, but they just gave the money, and they just went on their merry way. They weren't particularly interested in what anybody else was doing because they were on their own—they were on their own journey, so to speak. I think that has changed. I think now, sadly more than ever, you get a board together, and the first person says, "Oh, have you seen this new artist? They're amazing." And then another person says they're amazing, and then by the third one, everyone's buying it. That seems, to me, to have never been really always the ongoing thing. There's always cases where it's taken place. I would say with Jason Rhoades' first show at Rosamund Felsen, there was a little bit of a snowball, of people jumping on board of the greatest thing that's ever happened since sliced bread. But having said that, I think the question is, who's leading? I know for a fact that there was a lot of pressure on the last director of MOCA to do a Damien Hirst, or a Jeff Koons show, and— [00:02:04]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that's Philippe Vergne.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: That's Philippe Vergne, and he told Eli Broad two weeks before he was let go, "No." [They laugh.] So, if that's the reason or not. But I think the thing is that I think that everybody expects—I think there's a few things that happened in museums. One, everyone expects that the curators are now their personal art advisors. They're not—like, to go back, because we had mentioned Aggie Gund, it's like if somebody said to her, "I think you need to buy a Twombly," they did that because she was going to buy a Twombly and give it to the museum. If they—and you knew there was a fifty-fifty chance that that work might not actually even show up in the retrospective of Twombly, and that was okay with her. It didn't have to also be in there. So, I think—she's like, "Oh, there are better ones," but, you know—and they want this one, and it fills a different gap. So, I think those—I think that is something, which has changed enormously as we move on. And that fluidity has changed, but there are days that I also think, I wonder if that fluidity is changing because I'm old.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, what you're saying here—and we took a break around 2008, which a decade. We only have a decade between our last time before the break and now. And the art world has had a seismic shift in just 10 years. As you and I both know, many galleries have gone out of business just this year, especially the galleries in your demographic—your particular position, which is, you're not huge galleries but also not apartment-level galleries. You're in that little, mid-level, which just seems to be the most problematic area for galleries now. So, let's talk about the past 10 years, and what's changed, and how you're thinking about it now. [00:04:10]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I think—well, I came from New Zealand, and I brought with me a guy named Isha Welsh. Isha had worked at a gallery called Sue Crockford.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Sue Crawford?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Crockford.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Crockford.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: C-R-O-K-F-O-R-D [sic]. I think one of the things that I loved about New Zealand was like, it was a little bit of that moment, going back to Los Angeles in the early '90s when I started the gallery, where it was a bit pot luck. But pot luck can have a negative connotation when you're around a bunch of rich people, as opposed to pot luck meaning everyone comes with their talent and we can make something extraordinary.

My illustration of this was, there's a really interesting artist Judy Darragh, who is married to Grant Major. Grant Major got an Academy Award for *Lord of the Rings*. He's a production designer—anyhow. They have this house, and there—they always have these potlucks. And so, we had, that day had gone out—it was summertime, and we got a big lug of strawberries and everyone brings everything. And it's like this and that and smoked fish and whatever and booze. Somehow, this lug of strawberries was put to the side, and nobody ate them. A week later, Judy comes into—she was a board member. She comes into the Artspace and brings me a pot of jam. I was like, "Wow, what's that?" She's like, "Whoa, what happened is the strawberries blah, blah, blah, then I decided I should make some strawberry jam with all these strawberries. I don't want get them to waste, and I thought that would be really good, and I've given them to some people." [00:06:02]

I always thought, like, that to me is where the art world can be, in the art world, art of our time. This contemporary art thing to me is like the pop business. I tell people all the time, "If you want to understand what's going to happen with the art world, there are many books you can read. But I think Keith Richards' *Life* autobiography is the best because he tells you, one, how to play an open G. Two, he tells you how to properly take drugs and survive." By the way, pharmaceutical, pharmaceutical, pharmaceutical with a minder. It would have worked out so much better for Gram Parsons—you know? I mean, Gram Parsons would shoot up a bunch of heroin with him in the South of France. It's all good. He comes back here and he has crappy, Mexican shit and ODs. It's like, lesson learned. And last, he describes what happens as a small, little business, which is the record

business. And you're playing clubs like small, little galleries, and the next thing they start blowing up, and what happens, and what people's expectations are? And then there's a little bit of a downturn, and then the next thing that—the next incarnation is stadiums. There are a whole bunch of people who then rebel against it, the punks.

I think for a big generation here, that—I think they misread what punk was. I think punk just wanted them out of the way. They wanted to move into their house. People who think that punks —like us thinking that artisans want to live in garrisons, is like—so there—for me, there was that whole duration of like, that Thad Strode or— [00:08:10]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Thanks. It just popped out of my bag.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Thad Strode, or Richie Lee, or all those guys. They thought being punk was like, being anti-capitalist. That's not really what punk was. Punk was like, "Out of my way, I'm moving in, you suck, and give me the money." And so all those guys were selling stuff—remember that—in the like—not to go back too far but in—like the late '80s. As soon as they started selling stuff, they took out a gun and they shot themselves in the foot immediately. You will go, like, "Why did you just do that?" "Oh, I have to be, like—my peers have to love what I do." It's like—it became this sort of—so to—I think. So that as part of this whole thing. People just—if we go back to the Keith Richards thing, it's like people just want to play and play and play. I always thought the thing that was interesting—I thought about this recently looking at Anselm Kiefer, who I'm not a big fan of. But the thing about Anselm Kiefer is, he knows how to play a small venue, or if he has to blow it up big. There are other people that you see, and you're like, "Oh, boy, that's horrible." Like, you just can't scale up. Why are you scaling up? There's no reason to—you know? But the market drives them to scale up. And so, I think that this is all part of it.

Now the lawyers are here, and there are people I know who are like—you know? Could you imagine, like—I just forgot her name, shoot. She's—the lawyer. Her husband was a lawyer. She always had purple hair. Joanne Quinn. [They laugh.] Could you imagine if, like, the Quinns were part of the law firms of today dealing with artists? They would be like, "That's not fun." So, I just—you know? So, everybody is like—I have a friend who does a lot of secondary-market stuff. It's like, every last thing goes through a lawyer. I have people that want certificates for works that are signed, so, and then you say, "Well, you know what, the statement of payment is receipt-ment of authenticity." So, there's all this sort of thing. But then all the ciphers come on board, and that's what really I would say—and then the speculation comes on board. And then everyone has to be everywhere.

"Where's the next market," I jokingly say for years. If we really want to start a new—like, another art fair where we'd get people there, it's like the law goes, art fair. I hear there are three amazing oil executives that are buying up art like crazy, and I'm telling you, I could get everybody to show up in Nigeria at a drop of a hat. I mean, that was the whole, "Dubai, don't buy," joke. It's like—and literally to this day, this is what happens in Dubai. You do the fair, you don't sell anything. At the last minute of the last hour, the crown prince comes through and they look. You have to be there as the principal. So, there literally truly was a case that they came in to Hauser & Wirth, and they basically said, "If Ivan's not here, then we're not—we want to talk to Ivan." Ivan got on a plane from Switzerland and immediately showed up. [00:12:01]

But then they come and the prince comes and then there's this minor guy who's, "Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]" And then you're on your way to the airport, and you might get a phone call, "Yes, can you keep those last—the crate with the da da da, and the thing? And then we'd let you know in six months." And you go, "Okay, fine, I'll do it." So I—

[They laugh.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So I think all—you just add all these things in. I think the whole rating by Dean Valentine and all his buddies of art schools and the Horts and their creepiness of the, you know, their thing, of their young—they could come up with \$20,000 and give the prize themselves. But everybody is figuring a different angle. What's the best angle? And so, in doing that—and the other thing that was the worst thing that ever happened was when Cliff Einstein coined, and it stuck, "Brian, we're all in the creative business," and I'm like, "No, I was in advertising. Advertising can be really good and it can be brilliant, but it's—we're not in the same business. You know, we're not in the same business, and we're not creatives together." I think that's the battle that has to be fought now. That to me is like what's happened in the last 10 years, is like there's a battle that's being waged, and it'll work out.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You mean, it's like the idea that now everything is quote, curated, unquote. That, you know—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —that restaurants are curated, the stores are curated, that—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: KCRW is curated.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yes, I'm afraid that is, in fact, the case. But—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —it's become the—it's weakened this perspective that this is a finite thing the art world unto itself.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Or bespoke. God, you were—you—the destruction of a perfectly good word, right? Yeah and— [they laugh.] Nobody is going to walk around and say—what's the French word for—couture, like, couture?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, couture. [00:14:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, why don't we just say like, "It's couture." Like, it's—so I think that's—I think that's part of the problem. I think there's so much wealth at the moment that so many people are—they're just—they could look at a work and love it, but they're not demanded that that's what they have to take. That everybody has opened up. Everyone's desperate to keep going. You know, it's not—I can't—let's—yeah. But it's like, Elton John if he—if you asked him to rewrite "Candle in the Wind," again, he would for the right amount of money. I think every artist is kind of whoring it out. Supposedly, you can get Ed Ruscha to make a mountain painting for you.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You can.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Right. So like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: They're all—they can be personalized. They're customized, I'm sorry to say, and I'm a huge—as you know, we're both huge Ed Ruscha fans, but it has to do with the—that's the whole idea unto him—you know? Well, Andy Warhol did that, correct?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it's—what I'm asking for as a gallerist, did it change your perspective over what you showed over the last 10 years? I would say knowing your gallery, it doesn't seem to be that case but—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, I think what it's done is it's bifurcated the business model. At one point, it was actually turned into some sort of triad of art fair and commission work and then exhibitions. What I have found is that that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: When you say commission work, you mean commissioning artists to do things for you?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. That means that somebody comes in and says, "Oh, I love Jorge Pardo, can I have nine lamps? I love that Pae White tapestry, it needs to be five foot by seven foot." I mean, there's a history to that, but I think the thing is just like, "Well, why don't you take that one because that work is nine foot by seven foot?" [00:16:03]

And that's one of the reasons, like, I love people like Paul Winstanley or Kirsten Everberg, artists who just go, "I just make—I just go in the studio I just make whatever I make. That's it. I'm not—I don't make commissions. Or if I did make a commission, it would probably be like, this is what I'm going to make." Like somebody wanted Kirsten to make something, and she's like, "I make, like, the four seasons. I try to make this painting that would be the largest painting I could possibly make." Because she can only—her paintings don't get any—they're six foot by eight foot because she has to lay them flat, and she's so small, unless she has some device like trapeze that she can hang over. So, I think that that has changed. I think that then you go like, "What shows?"

Also, after a long time, it's like, "So what's the next show going to be?" And someone like Pae White is like, "Well, can I have a new space?" So, we're working on finding new space for that, or what that means. And, again, I think we're all waiting for a museum to give her a major retrospective here. It hasn't happened. [Laughs.] And then that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She has had a lot of public work showing here including LAX, right?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: She showed a huge piece at LAX.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. She's got that big piece at LAX, and she had a piece at Dior and she's working on some other things. And it's—and that—I mean it's all there. In fact, to go back to our Amada Cruz conversation, I said

to Philippe Vergne, "If you want to get the Pasadena people back on track with MOCA, you do a Pae White show. And then you go announce it at the California Club. And then—" Because she grew up in Pasadena. I said, you know, "It's a win-win for everybody, and she would be really interesting, and she's a woman." Right now, you just have lined up Matthew Barney and Doug Aitken and so on and so forth, in terms of taking over the TC. By the way which I keep calling the TC because I'm old and I refuse to call it the Geffen. He didn't pay enough money. [00:18:04]

[They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: In retrospect, that's really true.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And it's very true, and also, he didn't fix it up.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So, I think that—yeah, I think we're seeing what's happening. But as I was saying before, it's like I'm really interested in the exhibitions we make and what they do and how they're done. I think the other problem that is to find time. I mean, for me, the thing about LA as our rent has increased and increased and increased, what LA had was time. You know, Mungo Thomson always said, "Look, in LA, you get three shows before they kick you out."

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Who said that?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Mungo Thomson.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh. [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And he said, "My first year at Margo's is—and then—" And I think that is kind of—you know, we work really very hard to make sure we can do that, we can have those three shows or four shows. But you know what happens when we have this space, and Philippe Parreno is like, "I want to have a big, gigantic thing." And you're like, "Well, I would say, like, why? Why have a big, gigantic thing in Los Angeles? Let's do it somewhere else and or let's do it—" Not because—because I think the other thing that I fight for is that sometimes intimacy is an important thing in our lives. My concern is as we get more mega, mega, mega and more consumption of Instagram or disposable. Like everything is disposable. If you're not feeding yourself all—with the new, the next new, the next new, the next new, then at some point, it's like it's all dead, and then it really is, I'm just selling shit. [00:20:00]

And then you just go like, okay, what's price point? How do we run the sales force, and I don't care who I'm selling to. It doesn't matter, and I burn through this thing as fast as I can and then we blow it up, and we leave. Because when those people want to go sell the work and they're not going to get their monies, their value back, I'm nowhere to be seen. I mean, that's—that's the—unless you have such deep pockets that you can say, "Well, we believe in it, so we're going to keep amassing it and amassing it and amassing it." So I think that coming back from New Zealand was great, because it gave me a complete energy boost. And with Isha that was—it was really kind of fun.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He worked for her for a long time, and then, of course, you would have to—at one point, he went to Regen Projects. I don't know what happened with that.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: He's still there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Okay.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, what was supposed to happen was, he needed a break. He was burnt. I mean, he basically left, having worked for 10 years, Sue Crockford. He left there and came here, actually, before I had hired this very nice woman from Zwirner, Amy Davila. Amy was trying to, like, put our staircase in. The staircase is designed by a guy named Nicholas Stevens who is a New Zealand architect. He and I figured that—we're trying to figure out a way that we can put in a staircase that did not require any steel. So that staircase has no steel in it. It's all those two-by-fours that carry the load. And so, anyhow, I was like working, and Katie is pregnant, and Isha came to be because we made this incredible portfolio. Again, it's like, what do you need? [00:22:01]

So, I had this idea, because I was part of the Project Angel Food, that we're going to have like a trip of a lifetime for the 25th—21st birthday of Artspace. I was like, "Great." I had become friends with the Air New Zealand people, which I loved and adored. And then I was like, "Okay, we're going to do that." We'll fly to LA, and then backstage tour of LA, and then fly them all to London," and then at the time, Chris Dercon was there. I was like, "That's great. He can do the Tate thing and all that sort of stuff." I asked Jenny Gibbs, Dame Jenny Gibbs now,

"How did you pay for that?" And she's like, "Oh, Brian, \$7500," and I was like, "Oh, my God." Because a tour that—I don't know who exactly bought it, but they did two of them, which was to see, like Kerry Broucher was involved with, so maybe it was to—it was going to go to Tokyo and then go to the islands, for Project Angel Food. Both of them sold for like \$32,000, because I thought the same thing, and then there was the under-bidder. I'm like, "If the under-bidder bids like the same amount, then—" You know? So I thought this was going to happen. No.

So, what we did is we went to the artist, and we said, "Okay, we're going to make a portfolio." We made a portfolio of 21 prints. There's 50. It's an edition of 50. They're all stamped and numbered, and it included Francis Lee, Sir Rirkrit Tiravanija, but also John Armleder, people who had worked through, and then a whole bunch of New Zealander artists. And so then we had these portfolios, and then we went and made one—took one special one, and this guy Michael Parekowhai, who was once in a Connie Butler show at MOCA, put a photograph in it, and then we had a raffle. So, the raffle is for the kids as it were, the kids, and, oh, by the way, we're selling them for \$100 each. So, the raffle was great. Some art school kid got the whole portfolio, and this amazing couple who are kind of like Wilhelm Schürmann, Jim and Mary Barr who have curated, but also have this collection there, they bought for \$7500—[they laugh]—this portfolio. They were just in town. Their son lives in Canada. [00:24:13]

But my point is, like, it was the right thing for the right place, and understanding that. So coming back here, it was like, "Okay, what's the right thing for LA? What am I doing? What do we want to do? What do we want to become? What's better for the artists if we're still trying to work with them in the way that was started, and how do we make these exhibitions? And how do we make this exhibition of Philippe Parreno," which I totally loved and adored. Because we turn it into this lightbox where the lights went on, the lights went off, you know, and Darius Khondji who's this incredible DP came and was like, "Wow." To me, that's it. That's all I need in the universe is that one person. This is where I think the failure of neoliberalism is, and the failure of conservatism is, that we keep talking about all this accountability and keeping track of something. It's like, they've just—in New Zealand, they're just closing the art and the architecture library and consolidating it into the main library. I've been having this funny dialogue with somebody, and they are like, "How do you expect us to make more money?" And I'm like, "I don't know, make the class size bigger. Make them fight a little harder." But I'm like, "You know what, access to a library that's in the building where the art students are is like seminal." "Oh, they'll have access to them." What does that mean?" "Well, they could go on the computer, and they can request it, and it'll come in two days." I'm like, "Whatever," so. [00:26:00]

And it's all—and I think it's the same—it goes the same with the art gallery in that, you know what, if everybody hates this show, but there's one person who likes it, and let's say I sell it to them, that's even better. But sometimes it takes time, and I think that's the other thing that art has forgotten and that's what I'm really concerned about, is that we're making vacuous pop music. What I'm finding are the nine-year-old going to 10-year-old kid, which is fascinating. It's like, we went to see the 50th anniversary of *Yellow Submarine*. Two things blew my mind away on this. One, that it was—what was it? It was 13 years after the end of the Second World War they made that movie.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Isn't that amazing?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Isn't that amazing?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: So that's how fast time has gone, because you think like, whoa. You think there's a long time between the Second World War and the late '60s? No. Like that was, like—just think about the last 15 years from 2000 or 2003. So that kind of blew my mind, but the other thing is, like, all those songs are totally—maybe they're in our conscious mind, but they're all memorable. And now, so much of what is produced, and I think this is the same thing with art, they might sell for a lot, but it's completely forgettable.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: A lot of it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. So that's my other—I would say the other thing like coming back from New Zealand it's like, okay. How do we do this, what are we going to do, what shows, what New Zealand artists can I work with? I mean, Fiona Connor is one. I think at some point I'll do something with this artist Peter Robinson, but, you know—and John Reynolds was one. There are a whole bunch of super interesting people, but also then looking to Europe and looking at Asia, but also, not wanting to become something that isn't like a natural evolution. [00:28:02]

I see too many people—like, there was a moment that everybody ran to the Middle East and started picking up artists in the Middle East, and then they all ran to China and then they all ran—and it's like, so what are those—which artists are really good, and which artists are the artists that the market has made? Are they really that good? Are they not? Are we really thinking about it? And so I think that to me is something that we keep looking at, like—including people, women artists who are like Ana Prvački, who in a way is so antithetical to the gallery



system, but she fits into this gallery, you know? And then also artists are getting older. People I have worked with for years, like John Baldessari, he's getting older. But also I would say the tight, clenching hand of New York isn't interested in creativity. They're interested in production of the market, just like we are talking about with Ed.

It's like—I mean, they're all complicit. Artists are—we can't say the artists are victims in any way, but it's—but Ed has done that for years. I mean, I remember Stephen Lieber flipping out in Toronto because Patrick Painter made those first photographs—groups of photographs of the Sunset Strip book. He was like, "How dare you. Like, the book was a thing. The book changed the universe. It's so seminal to shifting the way that we think, and now you're just putting it out like nostalgic crap." I think if we were concerned—and that was in '99, '98. If we're thinking about that then, and we're upset, now it's just ubiquitous, and that's the other thing. It's like I'm interested in art of our times. I have no idea if it's good, bad, or in the future. I'm not predicting it. But this thing called contemporary art, everyone is predicting it to be the most important thing that's happened. And then you start walking around museums and you go—you walk through the Whitney, and you look at, and you're like, "Wow, what a bunch of crap. Really, this is what I fought for?" [They laugh.] "You mean, I really like that?" [00:30:00]

And I think that's the other question, is like in that show that Helen Molesworth did, the '90s show [*Don't Look Back: The 1990s at MOCA*], I was with Eileen Cohen and Jessica Stockholder. We are all, you know, old enough now. We're like, "Wow, what a dead show. How did they kill the '90s so fast?" And I said, "You know why? Because the '90s always wanted you to kick it." Everything was supposed to be like, yeah, that's good. I need a little bit more elbow grease now. And now it's valuable, and then all of sudden, there's Matthew Barney or whatever. But it's the same thing with like, a Joseph Beuys. Like a Joseph Beuys, you kind of like drop the lard there and there. There's too many people who are like the priest, who go like, "No, it's supposed to be two inches away from that wall, and seven inches," and then all of a sudden, it's just—it's a prop for an idea. So that becomes this sort of question as well, like, what happens, but also now I'm old enough, there's things that are coming back that are in really bad condition. People are like, "I need to send my kids through college," and you go, "Good. Should have taken a little better care of that," it fell off the hinges and, you know, so.

I think that, like putting all these things together and then going back, and constantly going back and looking at the art. And then we have now decided, I would say, in the last five years to reduce and reduce the art fairs. I think there should be a massive movement that we are the holders of the content, and that we should do the fairs for free and get paid. That's what—that's what bands do, unless they're in a pay-to-play world. [00:32:03]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: What did you—? So you know, I think in February here upcoming, we have—excuse me just a little bit. I'm just going to pause for just a second.

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: We're talking about the fact that in the new—there's so much contemporary art of today around that it's hard for artists to find a way in where they quote, rupture a paradigm, as you say, or just change things so drastically. You walk into someplace and say, "What is going on with that? I don't know what that is."

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. But also, I think there's a—there's a digging around of like B-rate, C-rate, color field paintings or whatever, and they kind of look fresh and good, some part of it. But then you spend more time with it, and you're like, is it—why am I really liking it? Is it because it is like me pulling out my vinyl, and like—or, you know what I'm saying? It's like, I'm fascinated by that.

I was just trying to go back and listen to a whole bunch of The Fall, the Peel Sessions, and there's some that's—I can really, like I—that is stuff that I just like—I'm too fragile now, or something. I can't go through the whole thing. I can't be as dedicated as I once was. And so that becomes this question as well, of like, what—as you get older as a gallery, what are you showing, and are you just pulling out nostalgia and going back in that? But that's what the market's doing right now. The market is absolutely digging back in. We're going through the '70s, which we've been doing for a while. We're going to start into the '80s, you know. And even with, like, early someone like Jessica Stockholder, I mean, people are all of a sudden going nuts. The interesting thing is she made a small body of work, then she was invited to start making big installations, which all ended up in the dustbin of history because nobody saved any part of it. [00:34:07]

Because everybody—as she said, "I was a migrant worker." [They laugh.] They would say, "Hey Jessica, you want to make a show?" She's like, "Sure, I'll do something," and she would take like four weeks to make this amazing thing. And then at the end, they would say, "Well, what are we going to do with this? Throw it in the bin." So, there's this—you know, whereas someone like—I just forgot. Anyhow, there are other artists who always made work, and I think that for Jessica Stockholder, made it more difficult for there to be like that late '80s, early '90s thing. But that's part of also why Paul Schimmel included her in the opening show of Hauser & Wirth

Schimmel. So, I think that, for the gallery, we just kept going and doing certain art fairs, and we tried out Hong Kong and you know, fine. I think I also woke up one day and said, "Look, on my deathbed, reliving Basel, Miami Basel 2008 is not my goal." And so, that's to me kind of this early on. Like somebody said to me, "If you don't do *Artforum* ads, you'll be out of business. If you don't art fairs, you'll be out of business." And my feeling is like, "Okay, let's see what happened." Not that I wanted to say I don't want to do it, but it's like, where else can I put those—that money? You know, we did ads in *Parkett*. I love *Parkett* until they started having three artists, and then it all lost its focus in a way. But I love that, because it was always on your table if you had *Parkett*, and they were very simple. They were just black and white and it was just like—it was just a marker for history. [00:36:00]

I think the same is true now. So, it's like so we did—we're doing Hong Kong and then Armory, and then one day I woke up, and I was standing there at the Armory. They're trying to get 65,000 people in the fair, and not one of those people have the capacity or the mindset to buy a work of art. And that's when I said what I was saying earlier. It's like galleries have the content. We should be saying, "Do you want us to be here? Then you either give us—we'll pay. We'll rent to be here, but then I get a cut of your door, and I get your bar," or something like that. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: You know, the galleries that rebelled against the art fair quite—so—or the art fairs—and I can name several right now, but I'm not going to—are out of business. I mean, there are several LA galleries who decided they wouldn't participate, and you know who they are, in the art fair madness. They've all slowly disappeared, in part because they—and the art fair's where the recognition seems to now go, and also everyone says—well, people keep saying the same thing. That's the only place people will actually go. They won't go to galleries. They don't have time or the inclination. It's hard to get people to go.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, but again—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is that true or not?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: I don't think that's totally true. I think it's partly true, and I think it's very hard, particularly in this fickle town, with people saying they're coming to something and then they don't show up. It doesn't matter, a dinner or—whatever the appointment is, it's like change, change, change. I think that's only getting worse, and in terms of a moneyed class. But having said that, I also think we've done little to nothing to bring people into the galleries. And even if you look at the—The Cultivist, which is this group of very smart young women, they are taking people to museums, they are taking people to studios, but do they ever take them to galleries? No. This is this thing that I throw right into the face of the museums. It's their fault. [00:38:01]

And sadly, we have to capitulate because we have a dream, and the artist has a dream, for one day to be shown in the museum, so. But they don't understand, as I was saying, that there's this ecosystem, and the ecosystem is artists, galleries, writers, museums, and collectors. If those five things aren't working in some sort of concert, everything goes off. So, when the Horts run around and say, "You don't need to go to a gallery, Brian. We can go straight to the—the artist and get a 70 percent discount," to which I always say, "Well, good luck, because the artist—you've now devalued the artist's work, so much." But also, it sets up this parameter and this space.

And so if people come to the gallery or not, I'm going to make something happen because I believe there's this—there needs to be a space. But when museums are like, "We have a tour of people going around to artists' studios," I say to them this very simple thing, "Tell me where an artists wants you to see their work. Where is their dream?" If you're so interested in looking behind the curtain, seeing what God's up to, like, God doesn't want you to come to his house. God wants you to see, like planet Earth or something, like, "I made this, seven days, was it good? If you had given me a couple more, I would have got around these pesky humans." [00:40:01]

I said this to Annie Fielder recently. I'm like, "Annie, you go to all these places all over the world." I see my friend Bill Hair and Bill is like, "Oh, it's amazing, and we went to SUPERFLEX, and that was great." I'm like, and—but they go to the museums, and they also go to the galleries when they're on those tours. I'm like, "Have you taken any of your people to the galleries of Los Angeles?" "No." "Why not?" "Well, they can go on their own." I'm like, "No, they don't know how to go on their own in this town. They don't know." Gil Friesen told me once he didn't know how to buy underwear in Los Angeles. He knew how to buy it in New York because that's—he would go to New York, and have free time. He once sent me a really sweet gift from Maxfield's. I'm like, "Why are you sending that from Maxfield? It's so expensive." He's like, "Well, my assistant says that—" You know.

So be that as it all may, I think there is a reason to have a gallery because that's where the artist wants to show. Kirsten Everberg said to me the other day, "You know, I don't ever want to go to a collector's house. I don't want to go to, whether it's a South Beverly bar, and see my painting there. I want to see it in the gallery, in a museum. I see it in there. I say goodbye. Otherwise, if I have to worry about it, it's like worrying about your children. Like what's going to happen? it's like if somebody puts their knee through it, I'll be like, that's too bad." And I kind of—so I think that, try and put that in, that it's about us educating them. It's part of that other thing,

which is, you know, what LACMA needs to do, more exhibitions of works on paper. They need to do more exhibitions of editions. They need to do more exhibitions of photography. They need to make that it's not just about the spectacle, you know? It's not. It is about the complexity of the thing. And therefore, the collectors will then behave, unless they're just big money people who don't have a brain, but they're just like, "Hunter—I hear Hunter got the new SUV Rolls-Royce." Like, ridiculous to begin with, but then five other people get it, and you go like, "Well, why'd you buy it? That was like the dumbest car to buy." And they're like, "Well, Hunter bought one and we—" So— [00:42:00]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And for the record, I didn't buy one—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, you didn't—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He's just using me as an example, right?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But it's an interesting—so, yeah. What I hear you saying is that, you know? And in a way, that world has changed because, as you and I both remember, art advisors used to take their clients to galleries. In fact, educators used to take their galleries—their groups to the galleries. And there's a long tradition of that where someone has a group of upcoming collectors, or people who want to know more about art, and they would—people—would—in—and now that's just not a thing that has—seems to be—have the kind of appeal it used to have. But what was nice about that, and you can talk about this, is that you—people developed personal relationships with dealers. And that is something that also is hard now, because you're here in your gallery, but a lot of the galleries, the bigger galleries, you never even see the people who are running the—or own the gallery.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, I think that, and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I don't run into Iwan Wirth sitting around Hauser & Wirth taking—kind of racing out from the back room and saying, "Hey."

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. No, I mean, Leo Castelli, you would see Leo in the back. You would see Andrea Rosen in the back. You'd see Luhring—I mean, it didn't matter. People were all—but that's also because this was our home. Like that—I think if it's a domestic space or not a domestic space, I don't think many galleries really wanted to be on a booth. I always figure out I should hire somebody from like, Louis Vuitton or something, like go to Beverly Hills and say, "Hey, can I take you for a week? We're going to go to like such-and-such art fair, and you're just going to do whatever you do." Because that's really where we're at this moment. We're at event-driven, yeah, event—and we just talked about it earlier, about like the Hammer and having all these activities. It has to be driven by event, even, event, Instagrammable, of course, and then it's not about just sitting. [00:44:10]

I had a girlfriend between Suzanne and Katie who was an art historian, quattrocento, and she was moving. She had started to write a really amazing dissertation. She was German and after September 11th, I think that we either thought the world was going to end or something, because we decided to split up, but we hadn't really been dating, we just sort of had like a very long-distance relationship. But anyhow, she was starting to write on Hitler's use of architecture as meaning. So, the reason why the Bauhaus continued as long as it did is because all things that were factory and industrial were built with Bauhaus style, and then there was—there was Albert Speer, who had the grand style, and then the house had to look like a house, anyhow.

So she was going to Paris, and I said to her, "I'll pay for you to stay an extra day if you sit for a day in front of one painting. You can pick whatever painting it is, I just wanted to like do this experiment." Like, what happens? What—like, what happens if you sit in front of *The Raft of the Medusa* for a day? You know, it's part of like, Hockney's always saying, "Why are there no benches?" I think that's like this—part of the role of the institution should be exactly the counter of what the culture is wanting it to do. There's a reason why they're called curators. They take care of the objects that are there and how they organize them and what they do with them. It's not like—they don't go like, "Here's the bone of Saint John, needs some LED. Hey, let's do some body movement around it." They might do something once a year, where they hold it up. [00:46:02]

So, I think that's the critical thing. And if we don't put that into the cultural mix of people just coming and sitting, or hanging out, and I think there are galleries that are—that think about that like, "Let's just have a luncheon, let's just sit and have a dinner upstairs," or wherever. That that will—or why people like time-based, why galleries like time-based medium is because it actually—if [presented -BB] as narrative, then people, at least stay, for more than two-point-two seconds.

I mean, I did a thing when I was at New Zealand. I literally timed people. I was recently at the National Gallery in London. I was sitting across from Velasquez's *The Venus*. I thought, great, cute derriere, nice back, look at her

face—you know, like a little bit of sexiness to it. Literally, the longest anybody ever stood in front of that was 18 seconds, and half that time was reading the—that little, didactic panel. So then—I mean, this is what we're saying is like there is the competition of what we're against, but that should just mean that you should just figure out more interesting ways to do it, you know? I mean, Jonathan Gold, who just passed away, he used to take his kids to LACMA, and they would just sit and look at one painting. So, here is somebody we celebrate, right, and he's doing the thing that we all—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: The—you're talking about the food critic?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: The food critic. Here, you know, he's saying to his kids about art, like, just sit, like just sit and look at something. I used to take my niece and nephew, and I would say—we'd go through like the big National Gallery book for London. I'm like, "Pick one painting that you want to go see," and then they'd have to—it would be like a scavenger hunt or something. [00:48:02]

But here is the other thing. Sometimes those paintings weren't there, and we could call it a total crisis, right? You're like, I'm going to see them, you know? My point is then the kids, that's something they want to see then they go to search for it. In searching for it, they see other things. It's like the library, why the library is important. And then if it's not there then there's heartache, and it's happened to me. My favorite Velazquez painting is *The Boar Hunt*, which is also at the National Gallery in London, and one day it was gone. I, literally, thought it was part of this *Velazquez to Manet* show that was at the Musée d'Orsay, I was with Diana Thater, and we're standing in line to see this show, and the line was so crazy long, and I was like, "No, I have to see it, Diana." She's like, "Okay, there's—[whispers]." "My painting, they've taken my painting," and it wasn't in the show. I think they had just given it a rest, but I went back because I had to go back through London—by the way, that show was really good. But I went back to London, and I said to the guard, "So what happened to *The Boar Hunt*?" He's like, "Oh, we're just going to move—we're just moving some things around," and I was like, "Can you send me like a fax or something next time?" [They laugh.] "Give me a little heads up that you're moving my painting around?"

But that if—if the institutions—I think this goes back to like, the uniqueness of institutions, just the uniqueness of galleries. When galleries just become ubiquitous, we're all—it's like restaurants. It's like the whole world becomes this—this thing, and that idea of curiosity and bumping into stuff. And I realize this week, I need to spend a day going to all these new galleries that are along Washington Boulevard that are all popping up. Some are good, and some are bad, and some are whatever, but it's like, to get out and look and use your brain, and then sit there for a little bit and go, like, "Yeah, whatever." Or what Paul's doing, Paul Soto. I think, you know, or the guys at The Pit, who I really—like I totally love their energy. I don't love everything they do, but it's like, you know what, they're as dedicated as I was 26 years ago, and that's great. Those are the people that you go, "Okay, how do we do something fun together?" And that's what I don't—that's actually why I like people like Blum & Poe, and Regen Project to me is like it's—there's too much white-knuckling going on. There's too much fear of losing artists, and artists have come and gone. [00:50:06]

I don't work with AA Bronson and General Idea anymore, really, because we sat across from LACMA, and we're like, "Well, what are we going to do next?" And I wasn't particularly interested in his butt massage works,, and—because I thought he's better than—like, he got super into shaman. And Esther Schipper had taken over the General Idea estate, and quite honestly, nobody in America likes General Idea. They don't like them for various reasons. The Act Up people hate them because they saw the world a different way. They saw that AIDS was a health issue and not a political malfeasance upon a group of people, which it was in this country, but if you're Canadian—so. And Charline von Heyl and I may be able to do another show in 20 years, but that's because New York is like, "Ours, must keep our—" And that's why I have arguments with Russel Ferguson who would say, "Isn't it great there's a Fischli and Weiss show coming into Matthew Marks?" And I'm like, "Yeah, but I wanted to do a Fischli and Weiss show from the very beginning," and I should have.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] [00:52:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No. But Matthew and the people that controlled it were like, "No, they wanted museum shows or not—" And that's why I—like, I've done a Francis Lee show in New Zealand but not here. And maybe that will change, because I think what's happening is, you see the Zwirner galleries. You see these big galleries all of a sudden saying—like, Zwirner now lets Stan Douglas show with Victoria Miro in London. He has a gallery in London, so he understands that with some sort of biodiversity, it's a little bit better for the market, because not everybody walks into David Zwirner. Not everybody has had a good experience with David Zwirner. We might believe that they have but I can give you a whole handful of people who have bought Diana Thaters from me who are like, "No, no I don't go to Zwirner." I'm like, "Really? Why not?" And then I hear the story and then it's like, "Just keep the story to yourself," and so. But it was the same thing like with Margo Leavin when I did the Baldessari show. I mean, Margo was ridiculous. That's half the reason why John let me do this show, is because it so incensed her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And do you look for—do you—now if you—are you going back into the fray, so to speak, to look for the younger art generation of artists, given what we said earlier about we can only relate to, sort of, so much generationally? I mean, do you ever go to studios now and look for new people?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. I mean, I'm showing Petra Cortright who is younger—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: That's right.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: —and I love Petra, and I have the same feeling with Petra that I had with—was really how you responded and David Pagel. [They laugh.] I knew I was on—I was a little worried when Chris Knight liked the show. I mean, Christopher, that was like, "Oh, boy, maybe I made a mistake." No, I'm just joking. No. I mean, I get that feeling, because when you, and particularly David were saying, like, you can't do that, or that, like, we don't know. This was the response that people were giving about Pae White and Jorge Pardo in particular, or even Carole Ann Klonarides, who was like—who loved Diana Thater. I mean, but she was so angry and called me, and I was sitting in my steps at 1301, yelling at me saying, "You can't—you can't have her make a video that's unique," because Diana's first works were all unique. She saw them like a painting. And Carole Ann was like, "You can't do that. It has to be edited. Do you not understand about the distribution?" And then she—the whole thing about distribution and that, you know, "There is an electronic Intermedium [Electronic Arts Intermix] in New York, blah, blah, blah." She was—because we were doing that show called *Into the Lapse*, and it was fascinating. [00:54:07]

So, with Petra, I mean, Petra's—I just think I have such joy in looking at the work and thinking about, and it confuses me. It's not looking like somebody else, or Fiona Connor is another person who sort of fits within a certain sort of conceptual idea. But they're all free to do whatever they want to do, or where they're going to go. Or Ana Prvački, you know? Like, Ana kind of didn't fit—there were a couple of artists who were like, really? I don't like that. I mean, I think that's also good, because I was never interested in the family, family. Sort of—if I had, I would have been part of the Christian Nagel, who's a gallerist from Cologne who showed Michael Krebber and Cosima von Bonin—and all that. They always wanted me to show exactly what they showed. So that was to me—and I think that comes out of the Burnett Miller thing, like being just kind of—I don't know. If somebody wants to make a show of what 1301 PE was, it would be very confusing. Maybe not, but I'm just saying like from afar, there's a guy who wanted to do a Burnett Miller show, and I said, "You know what Burnett ultimately was about, was he was about the shaman." He totally believed in art as the shaman and it didn't matter—even Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler, who were Michael Asher, John Baldessari devotees, particularly Michael, they kind of had this—they had this thing. Ulay and Marina—what was his name—the guy from Texas who he was really into. Anyhow, Wolfgang Laib, all the Arte Povera guys that particularly like— [00:56:07]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: James Lee Byars.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: James Lee Byars, he loved—I mean, and even like Polke, or they're into the idea of the—of some magical sort of way that something happened, and it—you know? I mean, even Charlie Ray in a weird way was about the cult of the artist. So maybe I think, somehow, he and I—what we agreed on was like, it's about the art. If you look long enough at the art then, wow, that's kind of like—and I'm a little bit further along because for me it wasn't about the hand of the artist. He still believed in the hand of the artist, you know, even though it might be really minimal with somebody like Gunter Umberg. I was always like, "Sure, you want to get somebody to make a set of lamps for you? Fine, it's the lamps that—" Or somebody writing on a wall. [00:58:01]

Those things keep coming up today, and there are some things that are happening in terms of expanding how we expand the gallery and what—how's that look. But also, as I said, for me it's about time, and how do we give ourselves time and the artist time. Because the biggest problem, I think, everybody has, and that's why you see these smaller galleries go out to Hudson River Valley, or you see that Joel Mason, like, do one show a year in the Hamptons, is that—that it is the pushback. It is the pushback from—in the record business, somebody saying, "You know what, wait, we've got to get back to a place where it's about the music." It's not, you know, seeing Peter Frampton at the Forum, and it sounds—the sound of the concert is exactly what it sounded like when you listen to the LP. Like, there had—there has to be some. I mean, I always under—like, there was this article. I'm not sure if it's Jori Finkel who wrote this interview with Eli Broads' wife.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Edy.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Edy. She was saying that she had bought this, and I think it was probably one of the first things they bought, but it's a Matisse work on paper, and that Eli keeps wanting to sell it. I thought, yeah, Eli has always had a problem with intimacy, and that to me is like exactly about the collectors, you know? Like when—if you went to the Factors, it was like, crazy collectors. It was like—but it was—it was always about intimacy, and that's what I find. If I go to people who collect today, I'm going to tell you, nine times out of 10, they're the most vacuous things, beautiful, you know? It matches up with kids who tattoo their forearms with logos. It's like, I saw

some kid the other day that said Emily Dickinson. I was like—you know? [01:00:13]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, dear, oh, dear. You know, it's—the thing is that the art world getting—and we wrap this—and we wrap it up with this because—you know? You should be congratulated just for being in business at all in a contracting art world, because it is a contracting art world. I mean, it's an expanding art world—excuse me. I should—being in business in an expanding art world, it's also contracting galleries, or reducing the number of galleries, and or—or at least galleries that offer what you call an intimate experience. Because really, from the art world that you and I both remember, everyone knew the artists. You knew personally, you knew, you go to an art opening, you would know everybody. I mean, that was also true in New York. It wasn't just in LA. If you were in New York in the 1980s, you'd go to the galleries in—you'd go to Leo Castelli and know a bunch of people. You would always—and the levels of knowing the artists and knowing their histories and knowing about them was a factor in how you felt—if it's not by their biography, at least, you felt like you had a sense of them as people and where they were going and why they were doing it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And that definitely seems to have just evaporated to some extent, except maybe the—as you said, these little galleries that are coming up around the edges and things. Maybe they're trying to recreate what was there before.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, it's a little scary when you're—when I—I mean, I guess, officially, I'm older than Regen Project, but Stuart did start Regen Gallery first, so. But that's scary to me. That's scary that now, this gallery is like an old gallery.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Let's see. That would be—how many years have you been in business?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Twenty-six.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Twenty-six years? [01:02:05]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And so I think—well, Shoshana Wayne has been around longer. I mean, Rosamund's reopening her gallery, and we'll see how that looks. But it's also just like—you know, the question is like—and I asked this of Suzanne Goin a couple of years ago.

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BRIAN D. BUTLER: Like, because I was very much involved and thinking about and hearing from her vision of what Lucques was going to look like. You know, it was very—she was a Francophile, her father was a Francophile. She had worked at Arpège. She worked in the town of Poe in a bakery, and she was like, "This is what's it's going to be." When they found that space, it was like too magical. It was like that, and why it's called Lucques after this all, of which actually originally came from Lucca. There was a blight. And now it's in the Languedoc, but—you know.

By the way, and there is a print of Pae White that's by the bathroom that was supposed to be their logo and everything, but Pae wanted too much money, and they had no money. So, that was my gift to Suzanne. But the thing was, I asked her, like, "How has it changed?" Now she has—it was just before they started doing the food at the Hollywood Bowl, so they had their four restaurants, plus they had The Larder, and then they were getting into LAX. She is like, "You know what, I've kept pretty much everything except for—Caroline convinced me that we had to be open on Mondays, and we couldn't close the month of August," because she wanted to do that. "And that we should put—" And that was right because they won't allow you to smoke anymore in the courtyard —"—put a cover over, because then we wouldn't have to lose people." Because her idea was, hey, if it rained in LA, they would just move the tables and crowd everybody, it was a really French idea. She said, "But you know what, without Lucques, I couldn't have done a.o.c., the first a.o.c. And without a.o.c., I couldn't keep doing Lucques." And then she was—and this was—I don't know how long Tavern has been around. But she's like, "You know what, just this month, Tavern, I'm happy with." For all the Westside people, they all go there and they have lunch there and whatever. It hasn't replaced Ascona or Vicente, but there are people—

So, it's like this thing that we all think as history goes on, that there's—you know, there are these changes, and you have to make certain adjustments, but without losing like whatever makes you get up in the morning and stand on that line again and keep cooking. And that was also part of the question. It's like, how do you—after 26 years of this, I really don't want to be Annely Juda, who is 90 years old, hunched back over my thing as they're having a brunch out there. That's no fun either, unless—so, and that's going to come one day, so like, how long do you want it, and what do you want to turn it into, and what do we want to do, and would the artists want to do that we work with? Like that becomes part of it as well. It's like—and you know, Jorge Pardo had just finished this hotel in Arles, which is part of the Maja Hoffmann craziness. There's these other projects that are like really—because the world's also scaling up, so there's, like, how do you work with them and scale up, but at the same

time—so, I think, like, "Oh, it would be good to have this as a headquarter." We're going to take—we have taken Marc Foxx's space with Bruno and René. For nine months, we're going to do a little test run on a project that we want to see.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Oh, so you're both—got your—you're expand—and you mean Bruno and René, but René-Julien Praz and Bruno Delavallade, the gallerists next door. [00:04:01]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yes. And so, we just signed that letter of agreement, that I'm just trying to work on a new model. Like, you know, we pay enough rent already, so what do we do if we don't pay rent? We activate it, but we pay them if we make sales. Sometimes there will be and sometimes there won't be, and so, you know? But there are also artists that I don't want to bring into the gallery. I don't want to work with them full time, but I want to do something with them, or I think they need to be seen, or—you know, so that's going to happen. Or invite a gallery that we love from Europe or from Asia or I don't know, anywhere, to make an exhibition. Like there has to be this catalyst that's not just about this power lead that runs around, like it's always the same. And if you don't behave with them—you know? I'm kind of like one of those people that everybody knows and they like, but I don't get invited to the dinners all the time. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: I think that's a good thing.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: No, it's fine. It's just the way it is, but it is like Kurimanzutto. I love them. I've known them forever. But because they're in the Basel clique, they're going to do something with Shaun [Caley] before they do something with me, even though we share Rirkrit Tiravanija. They're not happy that I work with Jorge Mendez Blake and OMR. Like, it's all—it's all this sort of baloney mafia. It's always—the world is always like that. The thing is, how do you upend it, and how do you have a good laugh? And then you kind of expand it and you say, "Oh, that's interesting, and yeah, we should look at that artist." Like, they haven't—we haven't seen their work in 15 years, you know? And so, one of the people I actually am going to ask and see if they want to do something is Chris Williams. I think it's been 20 years since Chris showed here, you know?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Probably despite his acceleration to the heights at the Museum of Modern Art.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah. And isn't it funny that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Which we're happy about. [00:06:02]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, yeah. And it's not that I want to work with Chris every day of the year, or what. But I think it's like—again, it's like, how do we examine something? Should we examine it? How do we examine it? Do I have enough space here to do it? But I have this long list of artists that I need to work with here. It's like, I need to do a show with Judy Ledgerwood. I need to do a show with—you know, I want to do shows with these people. I want to let Blake Rayne make a crazy group show called *The Wobblies*. If it's going to be wobbly or not, I don't know, but, you know? So, all those things as well as trying to work with people like John, who's not going to be with us much longer.

So what does that mean? Because wouldn't it be fun to throw one little monkey wrench into the whole system before it gets taken over and cleaned up? [They laugh.] And I want to do a show of, like—it'll 20 years since Kippenberger was here. Is that right, 20—? Yeah, 20 years, '89—no, 30 years. Wouldn't it be great to do, like, Kippenberger in Los Angeles to examine what really happened here? Because it really is just a crazy, mythological sort of thing about Martin, you know? She was like—I like her, but she—he could not have partnered with a more crazy person. Alana was—I was thinking about it the other day, because I watched that documentary that Kim Davis did on Basquiat. It's on Netflix now, which is great, because I know Kim Davis through her sister, and her sister's husband, who is a bass player for this band that was called Mary's Danish that Gretchen Seager was in. That's Sarah Seager's sister. Like, there's this crazy—but that—but she was really good friends with Basquiat. I remember Chris Wilder saying to me, "Oh, Jean-Michel, was like trying to find pot in the middle of the night and was banging on my window, he's like living in Venice," one of these sort of things. [00:08:08]

But you realize, all the pressures we're talking about, all the creepiness—or not creepiness, we don't know, of, was it people like Fred Hoffman and Larry Gagosian and all the people back east who were like, "Make more, make more, make more?" I mean, I totally forgot that he had a show with Vrej Baghoomian, his last show before he died. Vrej Baghoomian was like an arms dealer. [They laugh.] So, my point is, like there was the same insanity and the same corporate insanity in a way, like market, and squeezing the artist, and if the artist is equipped or not equipped. I think people now—there's a whole bunch of artists who are very equipped. You know, I think the Mark Grotjahns of the world, or the Jonas Woods of the world, they're incredibly equipped to understand and scale up. And someone like Jonas Woods for me is exactly that question. It's like, "Why? You don't need to scale up. Your work kind of looks crappy scaled up. It's like—" But that, I think, is the thing that's—that with all this more pressure that's being put on the market, and the artists that perform is, are we training all these people? And so, what happens to the weirdoes of the world like Mike Kelley, the misfits that he saw

himself? And then, I think Mike really thought by going to Gagosian he was going to bring with him the misfits. And it's like that, you know, whatever, that Misfit Island, and that Christmas thing, where Rudolph goes to, and like, "It's the land of misfit toys." I think Mike really was like, Jim, Marnie, you go through all of them, Bruce and Norman Yonemoto, General Idea, whoever it was, they were coming. And I think he was confounded by the fact that Larry wasn't calling him every day. [They laugh.] And Larry's like, "Get me more *Memory Ware*." So I think that's the thing that just probably never changes. Like our question at 1301PE is like, "Okay, another 10 years, let's just see how like healthy—to be healthy about it." Another 10 years, what do we do? What do we—like, what can we do, where do we go? Where, if this building is going to go away, if LA is going to do it what it's going to do? We're with, also, a bunch of artists whose prices are going up, so in honesty, we should be moving west to be with the rich people. [00:10:08]

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But nobody is there anymore.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Except for Christopher Grimes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: He went out of business.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Did he?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, he just declared that he's closing shop as of this month.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Oh, no!

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Yeah, that's the end of it, the last of the West Side galleries to go, except for L.A. Louver, which is also relocating, so.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Well, yeah, he's going to go do his thing. He's I think selling the gallery. No, it's like, towards —

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: So like, it's an end of an era. There won't be any West Side galleries in about like five years, probably.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: But don't you think that says—I mean, that says something. Dagny was saying to me that she might be taking a space that's near Motor, where Ed's studio is. I was like, "Oh, that's—" [Laughs.] I was like, I like Motor, I like that little area.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Well, I wish she'd stay in the museum, but I guess she can't. But let's wrap this up before we do—go back to that. Is there anything you want to add to this really fantastic, comprehensive oral history? Is there anything you'd like to say that I haven't asked you over the course of the last three sessions? [00:12:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: They're all assholes! No. [They laugh.] No. I think that in terms of the art history of Los Angeles, the failure—one of the failures that I see coming our way is that we're so—the canon is being told—and I know lots of people are probably complaining about this, but it's being told by the market. I'm not saying that the market hasn't always played some role, but I think it's playing an overt role. And it's also—again, I think the other thing is that we are so New York-fixated, and God hopes that the *New York*, the *Times*—no, God hopes that the *L.A. Times* or somewhere, somehow, we actually stop. And maybe it's because there's so many New Yorkers that move into LA and then complain about it, but it's like it's such a blessed city in so many ways, in terms of the arts. The thing that always, for me, was that LA was a horizontal hierarchy. And I could see you, and we could have a relationship and—you know, and Paul McCarthy and Chris Williams could have a relationship. It seems to me that the hierarchy that's coming in —the bullshit hierarchy, which maybe comes from somewhere else—but even in Hollywood, there were A-listers and B-listers. But in the end, all the people would work together. They all worked together and when they came into the art world, when Hollywood came into the art world, they were like freaks. And so, those people that wanted to get into it, I mean, it's only people like Mike Ovitz who I—there's an amazing article in the *LA Weekly* years ago, that really—where it, like, put the finger right on him. Like, "You fucked the whole thing, Mike. You and your—" You know? And Mary Boone—and Leo told Mary, "Don't touch him. Don't sell him that Eric Fischl." But this constant refrain of that we're not good enough. That LA—you know, and I always say that. Like, there needs to be a little thing that's sent out to all these people who keep thinking that we need to buy in New York. Where was the first Campbell Soup can? Like, you can go through the whole—it's so boring for anyone from LA. But it's kind of like, do we have to say it every year? I was saying to Tim from Art Los Angeles Contemporary, do we need to do that, to say like, "Here's a reason to come to ALAC?" Because this is where it happens. These galleries that you might think are not the New York show, well, they're the originators of so much of these things. They're the places where you find those things before the market has taken off. [00:14:02]

The only last thing I would say is, there are many questions that I would ask God, but I've decided that if I was



only to get one chance of one question, I want God to point out and finger the asshole who decided to tell the world that the art world was fun. It's like that really good party that you've gone to, and then there's somebody—or a club?

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

BRIAN D. BUTLER: You know, like, "This is such a fun club, we're having such a good time here, and maybe we're all working hard or we have no money," but then somebody leaves and goes, "Oh, my God, it's an amazing time," and then all the idiots show up. I always said like, the art world for me was—you know. And I dress rather conservatively because I also think like, the revolution should always come with the people that you don't think are going to overthrow you. But it was always to me like, that it was okay not to be—you know, we were all okay not being the jocks, or whatever. Or it was the jocks, or one or two jocks who went like, "Yeah, you know what, that's more interesting. I don't have to live high school the rest of my life, or I'm going to get interested in that," and that's—I think that's gone. It's like there's so many people that just have no clue. They have no passion. They wouldn't know what to do with it if they had it, you know? [00:16:00]

And if you said, "Oh, but like this—" Like, I want to make a show about hubris, and then we kind of—there was a series of shows that had Fiona Banner in it, and then who else was in it? But I just think that it would be really beautiful to do a show about human hubris, and like how we're just so idiotic, and that we don't ever change in that. I think that's kind of—that's the hope of the art world is that we'll flip it and there will be a whole bunch of people that would go like, "Huh—stop." And or, there'll be a major economic downturn, or somebody will sit on their hands and say, "We're not paying 25 million." But having said that, you know, there's as long—as there are and as long as there are new markets to conquer, for the moment I think there's going to be this bifurcation, you know?

It's also like the—did you read this thing recently, like there are all these people who are getting into tween writing? So, they write for—they write for it because there's such a big market. So my question is, well, why don't they just write a serious book that anybody can pick up and read?

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Why does it have to be for a certain age group? That's the same thing, it's like about art.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: But they can't sell it.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Is there anything? I have—we have to wrap up now because we're running out of space I think, here. But I wanted to thank you again so much for all of your time, because we could do another four hours probably. It's all so interesting.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Thanks. Well, it's been a pleasure.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: And we'll come—we'll come back and do another one in five years and see where you are then, or 10 years, right? You're doing it for 10 more years?

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Ten more years, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: Until Thomas is on his way to college. [00:18:00]

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Yeah, that would be good. I'll go to college with him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Thank you so much for your time, Brian.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Thank you, Hunter.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: It's been wonderful and—

BRIAN D. BUTLER: It has been—

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: —I want to thank Brian Butler for his extensive interview about everything to do with art, art dealing, his gallery, the art market, Los Angeles, and many other topics.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: And that we only mentioned Donald Trump, none.

HUNTER DROHOJOWSKA-PHILP: [Laughs.] Until now. Thank you.

BRIAN D. BUTLER: Thank you.

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