

NOTE TO USERS:

THE PROCESS OF CREATING THIS PDF ALTERED THE ORIGINAL PAGINATION OF THE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT. CONSEQUENTLY, THE PAGE NUMBERS LISTED IN THE TABLE OF CONTENTS AND INDEX GIVE AN APPROXIMATE INDICATION OF WHERE THE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND BUT ARE NOT STRICTLY ACCURATE.

SUSAN MOGUL: AN ORAL HISTORY

Interviewed by Jane Collings

Completed under the auspices
of the
Oral History Program
University of California
Los Angeles

Copyright © 2004
The Regents of the University of California

COPYRIGHT LAW

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

RESTRICTIONS ON THIS INTERVIEW

None.

LITERARY RIGHTS AND QUOTATION

This manuscript is hereby made available for research purposes only. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publication, are reserved to the University Library of the University of California, Los Angeles. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the University Librarian of the University of California, Los Angeles.

CONTENTS

Biographical Summary.....	viii
Interview History	xxi
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (February 12, 2003)	1
Family background—The neighborhood—Mother’s taste in architecture and furnishings—Parents’ educational background—Mother’s interest in photography—Early schooling—High school friends—The relatively few Jewish students at Mogul’s high school.	
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (February 12, 2003).....	21
A liberal home environment—Enjoys the arts—Religious upbringing—Extended family—Siblings	
TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (February 25, 2003)	36
Architectural style of home Mogul grew up in—Mother’s career aspirations—More on religious background—More on mother’s taste in architecture and furnishings—A mentor in Aunt Leah—Aunt Leah’s influence on Mogul’s work—Early work at CalArts [California Institute of the Arts] in the Feminist Art Program [FAP]—Begins to do comedy with video—Television shows that the Mogul family watched together—Occasional trips into New York City to see films, dance, plays—Attends the University of Wisconsin at Madison—Plans to be a reporter.	
TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (February 25, 2003).....	57
Birth control—Women’s dorms at college—Social protest at Madison in the sixties—Mogul’s lack of interest in politics—Involvement in a black students strike at Madison—The death of Mogul’s boyfriend in a car accident—Some instances of racial tension with regard to Mogul’s mixed-race relationship—The black nationalism movement at Madison—Leaves Madison to concentrate on art studies—Attends the Museum School at Tufts University.	

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (February 25, 2003)	74
--	----

Discovers the women's movement while in Boston in 1970—More on social protest at Madison in the sixties—Attends the Feminist Art Program [FAP] at CalArts [California Institute of the Arts]—Colleagues at CalArts—Low regard for FAP by others at CalArts—Judy Chicago as a mentor—*Womanhouse*—Differences between Chicago and Miriam Shapiro—Students at the Woman's Building as compared with those at CalArts.

TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (February 25, 2003)	93
--	----

More on *Womanhouse*—A memorable talk by Vaughn Kaprow—A performance piece by Ilene Segalove—*The White Papers*—A memorable performance by Nancy Buchanan and Barbara Smith—Makes the *Mogul Classics: Dressing Up* and *Take-Off*—A photography series on beauty parlors—Makes *Mogul is Mobile*.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side One (March 4, 2003)	101
---	-----

Mogul's developing social consciousness—Meets several social activists on a trip to Mexico—Decides to become an artist—A formative semester at CalArts—Participates in a consciousness-raising group at the Woman's Building—The purpose of a consciousness-raising group—Discussion of artwork in the context of the consciousness-raising group—More on participating in a consciousness-raising group at the Woman's Building—The structure and organization of the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, Side Two (March 4, 2003)	120
---	-----

More on the structure and organization of the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building—Mentored by Judy Chicago—Sheila de Bretteville—The influence behind *Take Off*—The influences behind *Dressing Up*—Making *Take Off*—Making *Dressing Up*—The Implications of the two pieces—Their reception.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side One (March 4, 2003)	136
--	-----

Working with Judy Chicago—A performance piece at Columbia Coffee Shop—Starts doing collage with *Mogul is Mobile*—More on a performance piece at Columbia Coffee Shop—Attends graduate school at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD)—A thesis piece, *Design for Living*—The social commentary embedded in *Design for Living*.

TAPE NUMBER: V, Side Two (March 4, 2003) 157

More on the social commentary embedded in *Design for Living*—Mogul's work in documentary photography—*Mogul's August Clearance*—Contrasts between the documentary photography work and Mogul's other work in other media.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side One (March 18, 2003) 164

Returns to Los Angeles after finishing graduate school at UCSD—The changing climate of the art scene in the eighties—Shifts from an emphasis on performance to filmmaking—The background of the piece *News from Home*.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, Side Two (March 18, 2003) 180

More on the background of the piece *News from Home*—Teaching art—Travels to Eastern Europe—*Prosaic Portraits: Ironies and Other Intimacies*—Early video work—Shooting ratios in Mogul's work—Editing—Mogul's current piece on Michael, a young man.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, Side One (March 18, 2003) 194

The making of *Everyday Echo Street*—Mogul's proclivity for making connections in the neighborhoods in which she lives—The impetus for making *Sing O Barren Woman*—Reactions to the piece—Makes *Home Safe Home*—Mogul's Highland Park neighborhood.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side One (April 1, 2003) 210

The making of *I Stare at You and Dream*—The relationship of *Everyday Echo Street* to the Los Angeles Theater Festival—The sociology study that was conducted around the making of *Everyday Echo Street*—The compensation that the film's participants received—

<p>More on the making of <i>I Stare at You and Dream</i>—The film’s intimacy—More on the making of <i>I Stare at You and Dream</i>.</p>	
TAPE NUMBER: VIII, Side Two (April 1, 2003)	232
<p>More on the making of <i>I Stare at You and Dream</i>—The motif of a dollhouse for bracketing the film—The editing process—The scenes with Ray—The title of the film—The genesis of the plot of <i>I Stare at You and Dream</i>.</p>	
TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side One (April 1, 2003)	247
<p>The making of <i>Prosaic Portraits</i>—The experience of being a Jew in Poland—A work in progress, <i>Please Return my Flag</i>—The difficulties with shooting the main character—The idea behind <i>Please Return My Flag</i>.</p>	
TAPE NUMBER: IX, Side Two (April 1, 2003).....	267
<p>More on the idea behind <i>Please Return My Flag</i>—Mogul’s exploration of her relationship with main character Michael Mayer in the film—The parameters of the feminist themes of Mogul’s work—The theme of family in Mogul’s work—The theme of connections between people as central to Mogul’s work.</p>	
TAPE NUMBER: X, Side One (April 1, 2003).....	283
<p>The period of the seventies as a context for making art.</p>	
Proper Names List.....	288

Video/Filmography

"Susan Mogul has the uncanny ability to humanize technology and use it to capture extremely telling and often intimate insights into the world of her subjects. Her technique is not unlike that of a strong writer with an extremely sophisticated narrative style, alternating voices from first to third person. A truly unusual and innovative voice."

- Thomas Rhoads, Former Director, Santa Monica Museum of Art

- **SING, O BARREN WOMAN** (2000, 11 min.)

"Giving voice to ten women who chose not to have children, Mogul's video simultaneously offers a hilarious and poignant meditation on all manner of life choices and the necessity of living with their consequences." - David Pagel, Los Angeles Times

Part documentary, part music video, *Barren Woman*, satirizes and celebrates a taboo subject - voluntary childlessness. Mogul along with a chorus of her friends and colleagues come out as non-mothers "singing", "Never mentioned in public or given a voice, we're invisible women who made a provocative choice." **Funded by a COLA Fellowship, a grant that honors Los Angeles mid-career artists.**

Videozone Interantional Video Festival, Tel Aviv, Israel, 2004

Black Maria Film/Video Festival, Honorable Mention, 2004

Stefan Stux Gallery, New York, New York, 2003

Nyon International Documentary Festival, Switzerland, 2001

Amascultura International Documentary Film Festival, Portugal, 2001

Life and Times, KCET, Los Angeles PBS, 2001

"COLA 2000", Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2000

- **I STARE AT YOU AND DREAM** (1997, 60 min.)

"Mogul has a talent for swiftly getting you interested in people about whom you know nothing - so interested that the hour you spend with them zooms by."

- Howard Rosenberg, Los Angeles Times

Tender and unflinching, four characters' struggles, wounds and romantic entanglements are gradually revealed in the context of their everyday lives. Filmed in Mogul's Highland Park neighborhood, a predominantly Latino area of Los Angeles.

Produced in association with the Independent Television Service for public television with major funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, 1999

National Public Television, 1998

Nyon International Documentary Festival, 1998

"Eye and Thou: Jewish Autobiography in Film and Video,"

University of Southern California, 1998

NY Expo of Short Film and Video, 1998: **Bronze Medal**

International Women in the Director's Chair Film Festival, 1998: **Opening Night Film**

KCET, Los Angeles PBS, 1997

Louisville Film and Video Festival, 1997: **Juror's Prize**

Southern Circuit tour: a tour thru the South of exceptional filmmakers, 1997

- **EVERYDAY ECHO STREET; A SUMMER DIARY** (1993, 30 min.)

"..Something to cheer, at once loads of fun and the kind of intimate insider's journey through a Los Angeles neighborhood that you seldom see on television.. A highly personalized film threaded by the filmmaker's self-effacing wit and candid introspection about her life ." - Howard Rosenberg, Los Angeles Times

An intimate insider's view of how home and neighborhood are constructed in everyday relations. This diary/documentary redefines "family" in a modern urban setting. **Funded by the Ford Foundation and commissioned by Peter Sellar's Los Angeles Festival.**

KCET, Los Angeles PBS, 1994- 2000
43rd Melbourne International Film Festival, 1994.
AFI National Video Festival, 1994
LACE Videoannuale, 1994
Peter Sellar's Los Angeles Festival, 1993

- **PROSAIC PORTRAITS, IRONIES AND OTHER INTIMACIES**, (1991, 46 min.)

A personal and idiosyncratic diary of Mogul's eight week Eastern European journey in 1990. *Prosaic Portraits* anticipated *Everyday Echo Street* in its quest for home. **Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Santa Monica Museum's "Artist's Projects Series"**

Presented at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, 1991.

- **THE LAST JEW IN AMERICA**, (1984, 22 min.)

"Susan Mogul in 'The Last Jew in America' is giving Barbra Streisand - appearing in Yentl - some competition." — L.A. Weekly

Part professor, part stand-up comic, Mogul gives a "history lesson" on the conflicts, contradictions, and often resulting absurdities of Jewish American assimilation.

Broadcast on Group W Cable Network/Jewish Television Network Los Angeles, 1984
Hammer Museum, Too Jewish

- **DEAR DENNIS**, (4 min., 1988)

A videoletter to Dennis Hopper inspired by the fact that both Mogul and Hopper have the same dentist.

"Sunshine & Noir", Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 1998

Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy, 1998

Louisiana Museum for moderne kunst, Humleboek, Denmark, '97

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, '97

David Zwirner Gallery, New York City, '93

Studio Guenzani, Milan, Italy, '93

LACE, "Annuale", Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, '89

- **TAKE OFF**, (1974, 10 min.)

"In 'Take Off' Mogul has struck a fine balance between the tellable and the untellable. Her most remarkable action, the use of her vibrator "in public" borders on being taboo (yet) is so ridiculous that ultimately "women's polite language" is mocked as incisively as is Vito Acconci." - Afterimage ('85)

"As bad as bad girl art today with the druggy stream of consciousness narrative that was so popular in post hippy post Vietnam art." - Artweek ('94)

"Made in California: Art, Image and Identity, 1900-2000",
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2000
Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy, 1998
"Sunshine & Noir", Hammer Museum, Los Angeles 1998
Louisiana Museum for moderne kunst, Humleboek, Denmark, 1997
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, 1997
National Video Festival, American Film Institute, Los Angeles 1985
David Zwirner Gallery, New York City, 1993
Studio Guenzani, Milan, Italy, 1993
Anthology Film Archive, New York City, 1976
de Appel Gallery, Amsterdam, 1976
"Scratching the Belly of the Beast: Cutting Edge Media in Los Angeles 1922-94", 1994
Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA., 1975

- **DRESSING UP**, (1973, 7 min.)

"(Dressing Up is one of) Susan Mogul's very funny video stories, in which she proceeds from disrobed to robed, reminiscing about the history of each item of clothing."
- Lucy Lippard, MS.Magazine

Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy, 1998
Le Magasin Centre National d'art Contemporain de Grenoble, France, 1997
Louisiana Museum for moderne kunst, Humleboek, Denmark, 1997
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany, 1997
"Scratching the Belly of the Beast: Cutting Edge Media in Los Angeles 1922-94", 1994
"Lost and Found: Twenty Years of Video Art at the Long Beach Museum of Art", 1994
David Zwirner Gallery, New York City, 1993
Studio Guenzani, Milan, Italy, 1993
Anthology Film Archive, New York City, 1976
The Kitchen, New York City, 1973

ADDITIONAL WORKS (1980 – 2001)

- **A PIECE OF WORK** (2001, 6 min.)

Ken Mate, a 56 year old solipsistic individual, recites *Finnegan's Wake* while doing sit-ups, talks about talking, and kvetches when a neighbor "steals" the first tomato from his hand-cultivated garden. Drawn from the inside out, this portrait describes who Ken is rather than describing what he does. **Commissioned by and presented at the Second Annual Silver Lake Film Festival, 2001.**

- **HOME SAFE HOME** (1997, 6 min.)

Ensnconced in her urban Los Angeles bed, Mogul recounts growing up "safe" on suburban Long Island. **Commissioned by and co-produced with KCET, Los Angeles PBS station, for their daily magazine program *Life and Times*.**

Also presented at The Jewish Museum, "Moving Portraits" NYC, NY, 2000

- **WE DRAW - YOU VIDEO**, (1991, 26 min.)

"These images steadfastly resist our habitual - and dangerously comforting - sentimentalization of childhood. And for this, for her insistence upon these children's idiosyncratic responses (black humor, desperate rage, deadpan acceptance) to the often brute facts of their existence, Mogul is to be commended." - Los Angeles Times

Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, Inter- Arts Program.

Presented at LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 1991

- **WAITING AT THE SODA FOUNTAIN**, (1980, 28 min.)

"Mogul's success is due to her ability to combine message, mirth and myth." — Artweek
Women are given screen tests at Columbia Drugs in Hollywood. A feminist parody on "getting discovered." **Funded by the Louis B. Mayer Foundation.**
Presented at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art and Columbia Drugs, Hollywood, CA., 1980

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, and COMMISSIONS

2002	<u>Guggenheim Fellowship: Film/Video</u>
2000	Nominee, Alpert Award in the Arts: Film/Video
1999	City of Los Angeles (COLA) Individual Artist Fellowship
1998	California Council for the Humanities, Script Development Award
1997	KCET, "The Works": to produce a new work for "Life and Times".
95-97	ITVS & Corporation for Public Broadcasting
1994	Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowship
1993	Ford Foundation and Peter Sellar's Los Angeles Festival
1992	California Arts Council, Individual Fellowship Anaheim Arena Public Art Program, Anaheim, CA.
1991	Central Library Integrated Arts Program, Los Angeles Ucross Foundation, Ucross, Wyoming: Artist-in-Residence, August.
1991	National Endowment for the Arts, Inter-Arts Program
90/91	Santa Monica Museum of Art, <i>Artists Project Series</i>.
1990	City of Los Angeles, Endowment for the Arts
1989	National Endowment for the Arts, Individual Artist Fellowship
1988	Brody Arts Fund Fellowship
87/88	California Arts Council, Artist-in-Residence Grant

EDUCATION

1980	M.F.A., University of California at San Diego
1973	California Institute of the Arts
'73 -'75	Feminist Studio Workshop, Los Angeles
1972	B.F.A., Tufts University/Boston Museum School of Fine Arts
1967-69	University of Wisconsin, Madison

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2002 **"Art/Women/California 1950/2000"**
University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London
- 2001 **Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film & Video**,
University of Minnesota Press, Editor, Alexandra Juhasz.
- **Los Angeles Times**, May 3, "COLA 2000", Art Review by David Pagel
- "Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties"**,
University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, London
- 1999 **Wide Angle**, Volume 20 #3, "*Susan Mogul: At Home in Los Angeles*"
- 1997 **Los Angeles Times**, May 2, " *'I Stare at You' an Intimate Fresh Journey*"
Howard Rosenberg TV review of *I Stare at You and Dream*.
- 1994 **Los Angeles Times**, October 3, "A Peaceful Existence on Echo Street"
Howard Rosenberg TV review of *Everyday Echo Street*.
- Filmforum Festival Catalog** Scratching the Belly of the Beast: cutting edge media in Los Angeles, 1922-94, - Major essay on Mogul's body of work.
- 1992 **Art Issues**, March/April - review of *Pages from the Diaries of Children*.
- 1991 **Los Angeles Times**, November 20, "A Dark Side to Children's Diaries"
- 1988 **Artweek**, January "*Dressing Up in Mother's Clothes*"
- 1985 **Afterimage**, November, "*Feminist Performance Video*"
- 1984 **High Performance**, issue #24 - review of *Last Jew in America*.
- 1983 **L.A. Weekly**, 11/25, "*The Last Jew in America?*"
- **Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art**, Contemporary Arts Press, San Francisco
- Village Voice**, October 1-7, Sally Banes review of *Design for Living*.
- 1978 **New Artists Video**, A Critical Anthology, Gregory Battcock, E. P. Dutton
- **Artforum**, December - review of *Dressing Up, Take Off & Comedy as a Back Up*
- From the Center**, Lucy Lippard, E.P. Dutton, N.Y
- Artweek**, August, "Susan Mogul: Moving the Goods", Martha Rosler

RECENT MUSEUM & GALLERY EXHIBITIONS (Also See Videography)

2003 Stefan Stux Gallery, New York, New York

2002 San Jose Museum of Art, "Art/Women/California 1950/2000"

- Armand Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles, "*Cola 2000*"

1998 Armand Hammer Museum of Art, Los Angeles "*Sunshine & Noir*"
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark "*Sunshine & Noir*"
Armand Hammer Museum of Art, "*Too Jewish?*", curator Norman Kleeblatt

1996 Long Beach Museum of Art, "*Beauty's Plea*",
Jewish Museum, New York, New York, "*Too Jewish?*", curator Norman Kleeblatt

1995 Long Beach Museum of Art, "*New Acquisitions*", curator, Carole Ann Klonarides
Huntington Beach Community Arts Center, "*Community Properties*",

PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

American Film Institute, Los Angeles

Anthology Film Archive, New York City

California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA.

Donnell Public Library, New York City

Duke University, Durham, North Carolina

Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany

Fundacio Serralves, Porto, Portugal

Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA.

USC School of Cinema and Television, Los Angeles

Video Data Bank, Chicago

INSTALLATIONS & PERFORMANCES

- 1991 LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica, CA.
- 1989 LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
Franklin Furnace, New York City
- 1988 Young Artists Club, Budapest, Hungary
- 1987 C.O.C.A., Center on Contemporary Art, Seattle
UC Video Electronic Arts Gallery, Minneapolis
Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago,
Wah Wah Hut, New York City
Lhasa Club, Los Angeles
University of Wisconsin, Madison
LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
- 1986 The Jewish Museum, New York City
Creative Time, Central Park's Summerstage, New York City
- 1985 Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA.
Beyond Baroque, Venice, CA.
- 1984 Sushi "Neofest", National Performance Festival, San Diego
- 1983 Richmond Shepard Theater, Hollywood
Real Art Ways, Hartford, Conn.
Just Above Midtown, New York City
- 1982 Chicago Center for New Television, Chicago
Franklin Furnace, New York City
- 1981 L.A.I.C.A., Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions
- 1980 626 Broadway, New York City
- 1979 Columbia Drugs, Hollywood
- 1978 de Appel Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland
- 1977 Canon Photo Gallery, Amsterdam, Holland.
- 1976 Canis Gallery (at the Woman's Building), Los Angeles

TEACHING

- 2003/4 **SCI-Arc** (Southern California Institute of Architecture)
- 2000 **University of California at Irvine:** Begining Video
- 1995 **University of California at San Diego:** Narrative Media:
Video/Film production course for intermediate and advanced students.
Emphasis on structure - both traditional and innovative.
- 1993 **SCI-Arc** (Southern California Institute of Architecture): Video & Performance. *"The Performative, the Diaristic and the Documentary"*. The course combined production as well as presentation and critical discussion of video and film works in this genre.
- 1991 **University of California at Los Angeles:** New Genres - Video and Performance. Begining and advanced courses in both video and performance. Courses combined production as well as presentation and critical discussion of significant works in the field.
- 1989-90 **California Institute of the Arts, Valencia:** Performance & Photography. The photography course was an advanced critique. Separate performance workshops were held for begining and advanced students. These workshops included reading assignments as well as critical discussion of contemporary video, film & performance works.
- **Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA.:**
 "Making Autobiography". This was a contemporary critical survey of autobiographical works in film and video.
- 1987-88 **Hillsides Home for Children, Pasadena, CA.:** Photography.
 (see Grants and Commissions)
- 1985 **California State College at Northridge:** Photography.
 A basic course in contemporary photography and camera techniques.
- Long Beach City College, CA.:** Photography.
 Camera and darkroom techniques.
- 1981 **Golden West Community College:** Photography.
 Camera and darkroom techniques.
- 1979-80 **University of California at San Diego:** Teaching Assistant in Photography, Performance, and Film History. Taught under Alan Sekula, Allan Kaprow and Manny Farber respectively.
- **Feminist Studio Workshop, Woman's Building Los Angeles, CA:**

Susan Mogul

Video Production. Also Co-Director of Summer Art Programs at the Woman's Building ('74 and '75).

Susan Mogul

Since 1973 artist/filmmaker Susan Mogul has developed a body of work that is autobiographical, diaristic and ethnographic. Her work addresses the human dilemma of self in relationship to family, community and the culture at large. Mogul's recent documentaries: *Everyday Echo Street*, *Home Safe Home*, *I Stare at You and Dream* and *Sing, O Barren Woman*, have all been broadcast on public television. *Stare* has been presented at film festivals nationally and internationally and received several prizes. *Echo Street* and *Stare* have received critical acclaim by Pulitzer Prize winning television critic, Howard Rosenberg of the Los Angeles Times.

Mogul's videos of the early 1970's, as well as her recent documentaries, are featured in contemporary university courses, museum exhibitions, collections and publications that examine the history of video art, the history of feminist art and the contemporary documentary. One example, *Women of Vision: Histories in Feminist Film and Video*, published in 2001, University of Minnesota Press, devotes a chapter to Mogul's work and career. The UCLA Oral History Program interviewed Mogul in 2003 as part of a series of interviews with significant independent filmmakers in Los Angeles.

In 1998 Mogul was one of seven filmmakers selected to present work at *Eye and Thou: Jewish Autobiography in Film and Video*, a national academic conference held at the University of Southern California. *The Last Jew in America*, broadcast on the Jewish Television Network in 1984, was exhibited in *Too Jewish* ('96-98), a major traveling art exhibition in the United States.

Mogul has received grants and commissions from the Independent Television Service (ITVS), National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, Brody Arts Fund, Western States Media Arts Fellowship, KCET, California Council for the Humanities, and the Ford Foundation. In 1999 Mogul received a City of Los Angeles (COLA) Individual Artist Fellowship in recognition of her body of work.

It is in my work - and in my work alone - that I am most articulate, fearless and true to myself. I make films the same way I cook - I never follow a recipe.

Nature of Work and Work in Progress

Although I was trained in the visual arts, this field could never contain, represent or duplicate my gregariousness, humor, storytelling, or desire to connect with people beyond the pure white walls of the art world. For the first fourteen years of my career I worked in various artistic, cultural, and political traditions in search of a metier that could exploit my temperament, skills and voice. Finally through filmmaking, I found I could bend, stretch and weave together all the threads of my background: feminist art, video art, performance art, agitprop, documentary, still photography, and memoir, into a cohesive whole.

My video/films are sometimes coined auto-ethnographies or video diaries. I use myself as a gateway to the diverse communities I inhabit (My Los Angeles neighborhood, voluntary childless women, are examples.) and expand the video diary form beyond the narcissistic self. And as a member of these communities, what I capture is rooted in our shared history and enduring relationships. The raw candor with which both my subjects and I expose ourselves on camera creates a level playing field and unusual intimacy between filmmaker and subject.

I infuse my work with a sense of irony, the poignant and the absurd. My work confronts traditional female roles - especially that of the baby boomer - directly or subversively. A pivotal generation raised with one set of gender expectations, as young women we resisted them and made radical changes that redefined women's place in American society. Moreover, as a Jew I am no stranger to being an outsider. Curious, I wander and feel at home everywhere and nowhere, which is probably why I am obsessed with the conflicts and contradictions of fitting in (*but where?*) as I try to find a sense of home and place in the world.

A single woman, the eldest of six, and an Aunt to ten children, I have lived 3,000 miles from my family all my adult life. Yet ironically - or maybe not - family, home, children, relationships, and relations between generations has been a major chord throughout my work. Often fueled by my own autobiographical perspective - an outsider looking in and/or an insider looking out - my future projects will continue to build on these themes and blend multiple viewpoints from various communities, socio-cultural groups and individuals.

Work - In - Progress

Car and Camera

My personal history and emotional relationship with the car and the camera (two portable objects) is the point of departure for a work-in-progress that commenced in 2003. As a Jewish middle-aged never-married filmmaker, I explore my relationships to men in conjunction with the act of filmmaking.

Conversing with former lovers, male friends and colleagues, and male family members, we cruise (I film, he drives.) through the streets of Los Angeles, my adopted

Susan Mogul

home town. Although I am behind the camera, it is my story that emerges through the collected points of view and reflections of these individual men. My story tackles the problematic nature of connection and the process of reaching out. And, inside of that, explores the themes of home, loss, longing, fear, and intimacy through the filmmaking process itself. *Car and Camera* could be called an indirect autobiography.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Jane Collings, Senior Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., Communications, Antioch College; M.A., Communications, University of Iowa; Ph.D. Critical Studies in Film and Television, UCLA..

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Mogul's home in Los Angeles.

Total number of recorded hours: 10.

Persons present during interview: Mogul and Collings.

CONDUCT AND PROCESSING OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one of a series of interviews dealing with feminist media and art of the seventies in Los Angeles.

Collings prepared for the interviews by viewing Mogul's work and reading selected articles on Mogul's work and its context.

The interviewer compiled the table of contents and interview history and supplied the spellings of proper nouns and the complete names entered in brackets in the text. Mogul reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names, made a number of corrections and additions, and provided the biographical material at the front of the transcript.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Oral History Program.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

February 12, 2003

COLLINGS: Why don't we start with something very basic, which is where and when you were born.

MOGUL: Do you want headphones?

COLLINGS: No.

MOGUL: Okay. I was born August 15th, 1949, in New York City Hospital.

COLLINGS: Did you then grow up in New York City?

MOGUL: I didn't grow up in New York City. I grew up— Well, to be precise, my first five years of my life was in Fresh Meadows, which is in Flushing, Queens. I was born like a year after my parents were married, and then we moved to the suburbs of Long Island in a small town called East Norwich, which is next to Oyster Bay, which is on the north shore of Long Island.

COLLINGS: So you're the oldest child?

MOGUL: I am the oldest child, and there were two of us when we moved, and it gradually turned into six.

COLLINGS: Oh, my goodness. Six kids altogether?

MOGUL: Yes, over a period of sixteen years.

COLLINGS: Girls and boys?

MOGUL: Three and three.

COLLINGS: So how does that sort of break down in terms of age range?

MOGUL: Okay. So I'm Susan. My brother Mark [Mogul] is three years younger. Then my brother Sandy [Mogul], who followed, is three years younger. Then my sister Kim [Mogul] is the fourth one. She's eleven years younger. Then my brother Jess [Mogul], he's fourteen years younger. And then the last, my sister [Pam Mogul] is sixteen years younger. By the time, especially the fifth kid came, I was getting close to leaving the house. So in a way we were sort of raised in a certain way, separately in terms of the first three and the second three, particularly me because I was the oldest. There's a lot of experiences that they had that I don't even know about just because I was off and in college.

COLLINGS: Yes, I'm familiar with that, too, the sort of the notion of the subsets, the subsets of siblings.

MOGUL: Yes. It's not a stepfamily or anything like that, but it's because of the age difference, and not being there as often.

COLLINGS: What was home life like? Was it sort of busy and hectic in that way?

MOGUL: Well, yes. I mean, that's such a big question. The first thing you say what it's like, it's like one of my jobs was washing the dishes. [laughs] So I was very good at washing the dishes and setting the table. The boys got to weed. I actually was happy to wash the dishes, because I didn't like putting my hands in dirt. Somehow I didn't mind. And I've never taken to gardening, and I didn't mind washing the dishes.

I mean, I actually enjoyed being part of a large family in certain respects.

There were certain respects I liked about it a lot, and other things I didn't. I mean, you have to also realize this happened very gradually, you know. We're Jewish. It wasn't like in kind of a Catholic— You know, some families where because—especially if

they were Catholic and especially in that period of time—you're not practicing birth control or using the rhythm method, there were kids. I mean, I went to school with a kid where in elementary school there were six kids, and I thought, "Wow, that must be weird to be in a family of six." Then by the time I got to high school, you know—I said, "How do they have any money?" It was like I just thought it was so strange, and then here we were. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes. That's what happens, yes.

MOGUL: Yes, we had six, too.

When my mother had the fourth kid, I was very excited. I was eleven years old, and I had two brothers. So I was hoping for a sister, because I thought that would be great to have a sister. So I did. She got me the sister. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Well, that was nice.

MOGUL: But then when she got pregnant with the fifth and sixth, I was the only one, as far as I know, anyway, the only one who expressed it. All of a sudden, I'm thinking, this is really going to be hard to edit, because I ramble, I go off.

COLLINGS: No, that's okay.

MOGUL: But I was the only one in the family of the siblings that was freaked out by my mother being pregnant with the fifth one and the sixth one.

COLLINGS: What year would that have been, the fifth one and sixth one?

MOGUL: I was born August 15, 1949, so I was fourteen years old. So '59 is ten.

Say I was born in what? Get a pencil and paper.

COLLINGS: You were born in, what did you say?

MOGUL: '49.

COLLINGS: 1949, and by the time the fourth one was born, you were—

MOGUL: No, the fourth one, that didn't bother me.

COLLINGS: Okay, the fifth one.

MOGUL: I was fourteen years old then.

COLLINGS: Okay, so it was '53, so a little early for—

MOGUL: '63.

COLLINGS: Oh, I'm sorry, '63, so a little early still for any sort of Women's Movement kinds of influence in your thinking.

MOGUL: Oh, oh, oh no. But my response was, I don't know, I had very dramatic responses to both. I remember, one, I started running up and down the stairs. I said, "I can't believe this." At first I thought my mother was joking, because my grandmother was the one who spotted it, and I just like went nuts. Apparently, one of the times, I don't know if it's the fifth or the sixth, and I don't know even what I meant about it, I said, "Can't you control yourself?" So my parents thought that was the funniest thing. I don't think even sex was on—I don't know what was on my mind.

But I had a strong emotional and physical—I just was going wild, and it's funny, I never tried to figure out why. I mean, intellectually I knew that I felt like probably in '63— Well, my sister Kim would have been around three years old at that point, the fourth one. I remember at one point thinking, "Just when everybody's getting old enough so we can do something together, now somebody else is going to drag us down again." I think that was part of it, like, oh, we can't—

COLLINGS: Go to the zoo.

MOGUL: Or whatever kind of activity. Now there's somebody else that will make— We can't do things as a group. We can't do certain kinds of family activities because— You know. I think that was one time, that just when everybody's old enough we can do something together, and being able to do something together is not even the idea of like family togetherness, but it's like if you're a kid, it's not like you can go take the car by yourself and do certain activities.

I didn't have that many friends. I've never really thought about this that much, and I didn't really have that many friends. There's certain things that as a kid you can't do by yourself, or, anyway, I wasn't allowed to do, and I can't even think of a specific activity. But it felt like being pulled down in that way. I enjoyed, and I was like the primary babysitter, and none of those things did I mind. But I think it was the idea of being able to be out in the world that I felt that that confined us.

COLLINGS: Did your mother know to drive?

MOGUL: Oh yes. Oh yes.

COLLINGS: So she would be driving you around places?

MOGUL: Yes. It's not to give the impression that I led a restricted life. I took modern dance. I lived in a middle-class neighborhood, and I did middle-class things. I had piano lessons and I took a modern dance class and things like that. It's not like I was confined to the house, and we lived comfortably. But it just seemed that ability to go places, and I don't even know what places I had in mind. [laughs]

I enjoyed my— I really got a kick out of my brothers and sisters, and besides babysitting at home, I also made money babysitting for people in the neighborhood as well.

COLLINGS: Yes. Were the other people in the neighborhood also having families of about this size?

MOGUL: No. We were unusual. Most of the families in the neighborhood, I didn't grow up in a Jewish town— In the area we lived, it was considered at that point in time, considered further out on the island, therefore, there were less Jews. Now, there were certain towns on Long Island, either on the north shore or south shore, that were actually probably closer to the city, like Great Neck and Roslyn where there were big Jewish populations, and, of course, New York City had a big Jewish population. But in the town that I lived in, it was kind of like an older— I mean, East Norwich and Oyster Bay were primarily non-Jewish, and there were some families that had been there for years. Oyster Bay was known for [Theodore] “Teddy” Roosevelt's summer home, and the town tended to be more on the Republican side.

And then there was this— I don't know what the name of the developer was, but it was sort of like, I mean, people in Silverlake, in Los Angeles, would go nuts for the houses, like these kind of fifties' modernist houses that were, I think, relatively— I don't really know the economy of the time, but my parents bought their house in like '55, and I don't know how much those houses cost. I'd have to ask my mother if they were sixteen thousand or twenty thousand, but I think they were actually quite affordable middle-class homes. The style of the homes seemed, for some reason, attracted Jewish people, and relatively speaking, sort of hip Jewish people. Now, don't get this idea that this was like a big artistic community moving in of avant-gardists, but relative to the other people on Long Island, they tended to be liberal, they were Jewish. There was also non-Jewish.

So we're talking about Highwood Road, Sagamore Road, Split Rock Road. We're talking about how many homes, you know, fifty, sixty homes, not a large— You know, in this one little area. And not everybody was Jewish, but if you were to find Jews in this very small town, that's where the Jews were— So I lived around a lot of Jewish people, and they also tended to be much more on the secular side, which, of course, was very common anyway.

So that is one thing. Okay. So the families in that neighborhood, or maybe the kids in my school, like I said, especially at that time, it's not true now, it would be the Catholic families, the Caramicos, who lived down the street, who had the six kids. Or, you know, it was always like Italian Catholic or the Irish Catholic kids, families, that had those, you know, the large families, not the Jewish families. And as I said, I lived in the neighborhood, so it wasn't typical for this middle-class cohort in this neighborhood of the Jewish families to have six kids— The one family, though, the Neitlichs, they had four kids. I know my parents, or my father, used to kid my mother, you know, "You go over there and then you get an idea, you know, and then you want to have another kid." Somehow it was almost like we were in competition with the Neitlichs.

COLLINGS: Well, they weren't going for the boys, because they already two of those.

MOGUL: When we get to them later on in the day, one of my brothers has four kids specifically to try to get a boy. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes, I'm familiar with that situation. That was really something, huh?

MOGUL: No, it wasn't about boys.

COLLINGS: Had your family just moved there sometime after you were born?

MOGUL: No, when we moved to East Norwich, I was five years old.

COLLINGS: Oh yes, you said that.

MOGUL: So I started first grade in the school there.

COLLINGS: So what had attracted your parents to that community?

MOGUL: I honestly don't know. I never asked. I know my mother has a modernist taste. I know the style of the home was very much in keeping with the kind of a taste she had all along the years. I think that was it.

I'm sure it was very affordable. You know, it had the cathedral beamed ceilings, the, what, quarter of an acre of land. My mother would always be very disparaging about the new developments that came in where they'd just like, what do you call it, tractored down. I can't think of the right word. Mowed down all the trees. This developer tried to leave a lot of trees up and things like that. So there was a certain kind of an aesthetic that that neighborhood had that was a little bit different from your typical development, all the houses were the same. And I'm guessing, because it was further out than most people were used to going, it probably was a little bit less expensive.

COLLINGS: Did your father commute to his job?

MOGUL: Yes. And where did he commute to?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Well, I don't know. I mean, my father over the years had different jobs. I remember more a job he had when I was in high school. He used to go to someplace called Valhalla. [laughs] Which was not very much of a Valhalla because of the

commute. That was the longest commute he had ever had, and I remember it was just a really, really long commute. I think it was at least, I don't know, it was an hour, and that was when I was in high school. So I don't remember what his— I don't know all the commutes.

COLLINGS: But what did he do?

MOGUL: My father was, I guess, in some kind of administrative position as an electrical engineer. He went to Columbia University and got a degree in electrical engineering.

He subsequently, afterwards, when I was out of the house in the mid-seventies, he went to work for himself, had an office five minutes away, and became a headhunter. And that's when their whole class— They really moved from being middle class to, I'd say, upper middle class, getting into that field at that time and having a significant salary increase.

COLLINGS: Did your mother work?

MOGUL: No, no.

COLLINGS: Had she gone to college?

MOGUL: Yes. She went to Queens College. She went to Queens College and lived— My mother's from Rockaway, New York, which is like a peninsula. That's where they— Remember right after 9/11, there was that big plane crash?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: That's like a few blocks from where my mother grew up and where my grandmother lived. So that's Rockaway. That's like far out in Queens. So she lived

at home when she went to college. She went to Queens College. That's a city college, part of the city.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I don't know where you're from.

COLLINGS: No, I'm not from there, but I just happen to know [inaudible].

MOGUL: So, in other words, it's a different kind of school. My father had an Ivy League education, and my mother had a city college education, which, I think, probably, at the time could have been a very good education, but it's very different amount of money you're spending on college.

COLLINGS: Was she planning to work when she—

MOGUL: She did work in a hospital, I don't know, taking people's blood. I don't know. I don't know. I never really asked her if she had planned to. You see, I'm going to have to ask my mother all these questions. I never really asked her. I don't know how many years out of college. She got married in 1948, and she was born in 1924, so she probably was out of college just one or two years when she met my father in a resort or something.

COLLINGS: Is that where they met, at a— Where did they meet?

MOGUL: I think they met—I get confused, because I don't know if they went on their honeymoon the same place that they met, which was like some resort in New York called The Balsam's, but I know they had their honeymoon there. I guess he went with some guys, and she went with some girls, ladies, women, and they met at some resort.

She worked in a hospital, but she was not a nurse. She majored in biology, and she always had a very serious hobby of being a photographer, because she was artistic, and from her interest in design and furniture and photography, there was always photography books in the house and there was always a darkroom in the basement: She used to bring me to the camera club. She was like the only woman in the camera club. She belonged to the Fresh Meadows Camera Club, and so even when we moved from Fresh Meadows, she would continue to go out to that camera club. I always remember that as being like this very male domain, where you go into a basement of some building and these men smoking cigars. I don't know that they really were smoking cigars, and they'd have their contests and their whatever there.

COLLINGS: That's kind of an unusual thing for a woman to be doing at that time.

MOGUL: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: How did she get into that?

MOGUL: I don't remember. I know I've asked her that. Now, that's a question I know I've asked. I don't know. I know she had set up a darkroom in the house that she grew up in. I don't know. I don't remember. God, I don't remember.

COLLINGS: How did she keep her house? Was her interest in design evident in the house, or was it just sort of hung with diapers? [laughs]

MOGUL: No, no, it wasn't. You have to remember, this was all very gradual. It's different.

COLLINGS: I'm just kidding.

MOGUL: She didn't make mother art like they did in the seventies. [laughs]

Well, I mean, I know more how it was like from as a teenager than— I mean, she always had nice, interesting furniture. I don't know what exactly.

COLLINGS: Like was it sort of distinctive from a design point of view, I mean, in terms of [inaudible]?

MOGUL: Well, yes. I don't know in my early days, but she still had— She bought, like, I think it was more common then, like we have the [Charles and Ray] Eames plywood chairs. Are you familiar with those?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: So she had that. She had some pieces by Dunbar. She had some— As we were growing up, she'd gotten [Hans] Knoll pieces. They are still in the house, plus she's gotten other things since. I mean, if you would go in the house today, you'd say, yes, this is someone who cares about design and quality of furniture and has a specific aesthetic, as opposed to being a hodgepodge or just not caring, just having maybe just a comfy home, but not— I mean, I became more aware of that as a teenager.

It's a Dunbar— What do you call it? It's a chest. It's where you keep your silverware and your tablecloths, and it's this big thing, and it has so many drawers and opens in so many different ways, and I think that's something— You know how when you're a kid there's some pieces of furniture or some things that just have a certain kind of that you attach to—

COLLINGS: Captivate your imagination.

MOGUL: They kind of almost have a magic quality. I mean, I think of that when I think of an older cousin of my mother's generation. She always had that gold, or looked like a gold or brass, birdcage with the music, with the fake bird that you turn it

on and the music spins around. That chest always was kind of— I don't know, because it had so many places, it always seemed like you could find something new in there.

COLLINGS: Yes. So let's just talk a little bit about your experience at school when you were growing up. Did you like school? Did you do art at school, just sort of from the early—

MOGUL: When you're talking about school, we're talking about elementary school?

COLLINGS: Yes, just if you wanted to talk about elementary school and on, yes.

MOGUL: I really didn't have friends. My mother would try to encourage me to call people up.

COLLINGS: Did you prefer to be alone?

MOGUL: I don't know. I honestly don't know. I know I was afraid. I think I was afraid to call people up, and I think apparently— I don't know if my mother remembers this. I sort of remember this. I guess in school one day in third grade, the teacher asked us to write down who our friends were. I don't even know what the purpose of that was, or I don't know if I know the whole context. But anyway, I had written down that I have no friends.

COLLINGS: Did they call your mother on the phone?

MOGUL: I don't know. That's when maybe my mother started trying to encourage me to call people up and invite them over or whatever.

But I mean, I enjoyed school, I think. I mean, I don't remember not liking school in elementary school. I mean, I did well. I mean, I was like an above-average student. I wasn't the top of the class. I was an above-average student. Since I didn't

have any friends, had plenty of time to do my homework. [laughs] I was a good student.

COLLINGS: Did you sort of find yourself looking about the room and the other kids and just kind of feeling like they didn't particularly interest you, or was it sort of the kind of feeling like you didn't know how to talk to them?

MOGUL: You know what, in that age, during that age period, I have no idea. I remember this one girl, who actually I still keep in touch with, Patricia Ardovino. I remember that when we were eleven or something, we did a science project together. I went over to her house. I remember like at that age I had, you know, kids that I enjoyed. I don't know if I did some stuff with them after school, but I know that I had fun with them in school. I also have home movies of me, and I had a boy-girl party where it looked like we were all having a good time— People showed up, and we had a good time. [laughs]

High school was a little bit more vivid for me in the sense of—I mean, basically I was always a very good student, I was oriented to my family to go to— The expectation was to go to college. I certainly wanted to do that.

COLLINGS: Was that the expectation at the school, in general, to go to college?

MOGUL: For those people who aren't interested in the arts but just what it's like growing up in the fifties and sixties, we had a tracking system. So I was in the college track. I mean, there were some kids who were considered the dumb kids or the slow kids or whatever word you want to put, and they were not tracked to go to college, and those were the kids who were taking shop and typing and those other classes. So I was in the track that was for college. So there was the expectation at school, there was

the expectation at home, and that was just fine with me. I mean, I wanted to go to college very much.

My high school, I didn't date in high school. I didn't have any boyfriends.

COLLINGS: Would you have been allowed to date?

MOGUL: You know, that's an interesting question, because I remember there was a couple of times, there were only two times that somebody asked me out. I don't know what age I was, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, I met a guy at a girlfriend's house who didn't live in our town anymore, that had moved to another town, and he had called. He was actually dating her sister, and he called me up to ask me out, and I was afraid. I was very attracted to him. I just met him once. I don't know. He was foreign. He was very sexy and exotic. And I said no because I was afraid. I don't know exactly what I was afraid.

I never wanted my parents to know anybody who I would be interested in. If I had a crush on someone in school, I was very, very private about it. I mean, it's sort of interesting in saying this to you, that I was so private, because my work, you couldn't get too much more public than the kind of work that I make. I mean, it's interesting. I was like really, really private about my feelings for boys, and I don't know why.

COLLINGS: Were you private about other things, other aspects of your life, like if you were enjoying a book, you kept it to yourself?

MOGUL: I think that's the only thing I was private about that I can think of. Yes, I wasn't shy about—I think once I asked my brother to go upstairs and get me some Tampax. My mother freaked out about that. I didn't use Tampax till college, so

menstrual pads. She like freaked out that I should ask him to do such a thing. And so, obviously, I was never shy about my body, or I don't remember being shy. I remember the menstrual pad thing.

And then another opportunity, there was this guy named Ronald Wegge. He was a couple of years older than me, and what an opportunity I missed. He was weird. I mean, he was weird, and he was like maybe one or two years older, you know, ahead of me in school, and God knows why he asked me out. But I mean, he was someone that I probably would go out with now. Not particularly great-looking, but really like on the edge in terms of like kind of avant-garde.

So he calls me up, and I don't know if I've invented this or not, but he asked me to go to the city, New York, with him to see Lenny Bruce. This was like at the age of— He was probably a senior. I don't know. I know he asked me to go to the city. Somehow I've invented or maybe it was true, he asked me to go to Lenny Bruce. I had never even much had a conversation with him. I think he had been going out with and broken up with somebody in my class, Bonnie Belden, who was also very avant-garde.

So my response to him was, which probably is true, "My parents won't let me go out on a date to the city." I'd never been on a date in my life. [laughs]

And he says to me— The next town over was Syosset. He says, "Just tell them you're going to Syosset for a pizza." He obviously was used to lying. [laughs]

COLLINGS: He knew the game, huh?

MOGUL: And then years later when I realized who Lenny Bruce was, if that's in fact who, which would have actually been— Actually, Lenny Bruce was still alive then. My memory could be correct about that.

COLLINGS: And was there a group of people such as this kind of forming in your high school at that time?

MOGUL: Well, what happened was, in my— I don't know if it was my junior year or the senior, towards sometime in the junior year, a very interesting woman, Elaine— Woman; she was my age. Elaine Rubenstein, she came to our school. She was from one of the boroughs, from Queens. She was from Forest Hills. She and her brother, who was like a couple of years older, they must have come when she was a sophomore. I don't think we became friends until we were juniors. But her brother was like— They were really like— He was clearly like he was an intellectual and he was like a hippie. I don't think he was quite a hippie then.

COLLINGS: He was pre-hippie.

MOGUL: He was pre-hippie. He was pre-hippie. Anyway, Elaine played folk music and wrote songs, and we became very close. Maybe it was my junior year. We became very close.

And then there was another boy, Frank Albetta, who was in our class, and the three of us became very close. It was like my junior or maybe senior year, and we would go, and that was the closest I got to dating, was this group. That's when I really had a group, which was basically the three of us, and we would go to Greenwich Village and go see Richie Havens and Tom Paxton, and we would just go to do all that, you know. I have all the records downstairs, all the people they revive again.

But anyway, we would go into the city quite often. The senior prom, the three of us went. That's what we did for the senior prom. We didn't go to the senior prom; we went to the Village, Greenwich Village, and so that's what we did. I mean, that was so delightful for me.

Also, where I had developed some friendships during my high school age was where I worked— In the summers I was a camper and then became like an assistant counselor or whatever they call it, at a local arts camp. I started going there when I was ten or eleven, and that's where I found people that I connected to. Interestingly, more of them tended to be Jewish, and they obviously came from a similar kind of family. Probably, I don't know, maybe some of them had more money. Probably some of them did, but that wasn't even an issue. And it was kind of a very avant-garde arts camp. It was only like fifteen minutes away, and that's where I would go for dance class in the winter and piano lessons. Then in the summers, I was a camper and then I worked there. My birthdays were in the summer, so then I would have my birthday parties, and then I would invite the kids from camp, not the kids from my school.

COLLINGS: Oh yes, so this was very formative, then.

MOGUL: Oh, that was— So there was a girl Gwen, Gwen Bocian, who lived a few towns away, and we would do things together or visit each other. So that's where I found the connection with girls my age.

One of the things that was very interesting to me, four years ago, I went to my high school reunion. It was the twenty-ninth high school reunion. I hadn't gone to the

twentieth. But I got a few nice notes from people, which surprised me, and they said they had missed me coming, and so I was really touched.

COLLINGS: How many people were at your high school?

MOGUL: It was a small high school. I can count in the yearbook. There was probably in our graduating class maybe a hundred and fifty, maybe two hundred.

COLLINGS: Oh, my goodness, that is small, yes.

MOGUL: But what struck me—I mean, there was a few things that struck me about going to the reunion, but one of the things that struck me was the fact—I never really thought about it much. I knew as Jews we were a minority, but when I went to the high school reunion and then I thought about it, I realized I was one of five Jewish girls in the entire class.

COLLINGS: Oh, wow. That is a minority.

MOGUL: In fact, interestingly, there was more Jewish boys, and, in fact, I was the only Jewish girl from this high school that showed up to this high school reunion, and there were, I don't know, about five Jewish boys. There were more that were in the class, but there were more Jewish boys that showed up at this reunion. And it was just something like I never really thought about it that much, but I think that as I reflect on it, I think the combination of my having an inclination towards the arts, although I wasn't thinking of myself as an artist in high school and it wasn't something until college, that I think the combination of me not being interested in mainstream things and being Jewish were two— Were combined really, you know, sort of set me apart. And that's why, here, Elaine Rubenstein comes to the school, and we gravitated towards one another.

COLLINGS: What were the cues that told you you were Jewish? Because you knew that you liked the arts. How did you sort of know that you were Jewish?

MOGUL: What do you mean?

COLLINGS: Well, I mean, what was it that made you feel that you sort of couldn't mix with the other kids?

MOGUL: There were certain kids that would make stupid comments that didn't really bother me. I mean, you know, "Oh, you get to take off for Yom Kippur." Now, in a lot of schools, depending where you lived, those days are automatically holidays for everybody. But there would be some silly comments about that. You know, "Oh, you get Christmas and Yom Kippur." It was like, oh, Jesus. I just thought it was stupid. To me, it was offensive in the fact of how you could be so stupid. It wasn't like I felt less than because I was Jewish.

COLLINGS: So the other kids were aware of these kinds of—

MOGUL: Oh yes. I found out years later they called our little neighborhood the "Golden Ghetto", and they called Sugar Tom's Road the Gaza Strip. I never ever knew that they said such things. So I mean, there was probably more anti-Semitism that I wasn't even aware of. I mean, I didn't feel ostracized in a way.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

February 12, 2003

MOGUL: No, I never felt like ostracized because I was Jewish or anything like that. I mean, I knew I was different, but I never felt ostracized, because your parents tell you how great it is to be Jewish, and we're smarter and we're better. [laughs] I didn't feel that, you know. But I think in that context I was different.

Like as I said, from the kind of homes that the other kids were coming from, the politics of the households, in other words, it wasn't just being Jewish; it was like I was coming from a more liberal household. I think there was a lot of differences. I think there was probably class difference. I mean, I think it was a combination of maybe working class, lower middle class, Republican goyim and middle-class liberal Jewish artsy people, so there was all these different things that created differences. But I didn't feel like I was discriminated against or ostracized, but it was just feeling different. I don't know. It's just having so many different interests, and, also, I don't know, maybe not just wanting to be part of that group.

As I said, I felt very comfortable in the arts environment that I got to participate in and express myself. I mean, I guess one of the things about going to this place called Fiedel School of Creative Arts was that I got to express myself in ways that I couldn't express myself in school, you know. I took modern dance and you got to improvise. I mean, that was the opposite of being in school. You could be who you wanted and pretend you were a cop and you could pretend you were this.

In the summer camp, there was Elsa Fried, who looked like kind of— She was very olive-skinned, almost looked a little bit like a witch, and wore her hair pulled back. She smoked way too much, and she had this really deep voice, and she'd go, "Colors! Colors! I want more colors!" She was so wild. I mean, when she was teaching, she would commute in from the city to teach at this place, she was probably well into her— Who knows, maybe she was my age— In her fifties.

So you had this place. I had a place where I could sort of just let loose. Much to my embarrassment, I was voted my senior year—and it's in the yearbook—the most talkative girl in the class, so I obviously was communicating in some fashion with people to get that moniker. I'm sure I was talking a lot before my senior year. But I did feel apart, you know.

COLLINGS: Did you feel that way when you went back for the reunion?

MOGUL: Oh no. Because I didn't lose my shape. [mutual laughter] I felt like Janis Joplin. That was my—

COLLINGS: That your retribution.

MOGUL: I can show you a picture. It was like going to my senior prom that I never got to go to. I wore a beautiful classic fifties silk cocktail dress, and I really looked beautiful, and I had just been awarded a commission from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and what I was doing was a lot more interesting. So I came in and—

COLLINGS: Came riding in on a silver cloud.

MOGUL: Yes, I came in. I felt good about how I looked and good about the work that I was doing. And I was looking forward to seeing people from the block I grew up on and some of the people that I was curious about.

COLLINGS: Okay, just kind of like two little— Did your family attend like a temple? Did you have like regular—

MOGUL: Yes, we belonged to a synagogue, a Reform synagogue. It was the next town over, Syosset. We would probably be known as the twice-a-year Jews. We went on the High Holy Days or the high holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, which are the most important Jewish holidays of the year. My brothers were Bar Mitzvah'ed, so they went to actually Sunday school, which is religious education, and they also went to Hebrew School. I went to Sunday school, but I didn't go to Hebrew School, because I wasn't groomed for getting a Bat Mitzvah, which I actually had no particular interest in, probably in part because I received no pleasure from attending the Sunday school. I thought the teachers were— I thought the education there was really boring.

And the other thing is that I didn't feel any kind of affinity to the other Jewish kids there. I didn't really feel any affinity for those kids either. I don't think I ever became friends with any of the kids there.

COLLINGS: So your cohort really was the art crowd.

MOGUL: Yes, yes. I didn't feel an affinity with those kids. That's why I was mumbling to myself about Leslie Fortang, who I think might have gone to that Sunday school and also gone to Fiedel, so we had those interests. Those kids probably came from maybe more traditional— For example, the Jewish kids in my neighborhood, most of them did not belong to a synagogue. Or if the parents did, they didn't go on to religious education.

And I think that I would venture to guess that a lot of the kids whose parents were going to the synagogue, although it's a Reform synagogue, probably they were more traditional Jews. Not that they could have been twice-a-year Jews, but they were just probably more traditional in their lifestyle than—

COLLINGS: More conservative.

MOGUL: Yes, I was hesitating to use the word *conservative*, because not to get confused with there's also a movement in Jewish religion. It's Reform Conservative, and conservative, it doesn't—

COLLINGS: It has a special—

MOGUL: And conservative doesn't necessarily reflect your politics.

COLLINGS: Yes, politically conservative.

MOGUL: It does, yes. I don't know. But I never became friends. I don't think I ever became friends with any of those kids. So as I said, it's not just the Jewish.

COLLINGS: Did any of your other siblings—

MOGUL: I don't think any of the Jewish boys in my class— Because I'm sure I would have been invited. Even if the boys didn't want to invite me, the parents would invite the one of the few Jewish girls. I don't think any of the Jewish boys— Isn't it interesting. I mean, to me it's interesting. I don't think any of the Jewish boys in my class were Bar Mitzvah'ed, I don't think, unless they did some secret private ceremony that I didn't know about.

So there also is a kind of specific kind of Jewish people who lived in my neighborhood— Yes, anyways, that's curious. That's why it's curious to me to think about this being— I think the difference also about being a Jewish girl, one of the few

Jewish girls in the class, is that the Jewish girls and the Jewish boys were at the top of the class and were ambitious in one sense or the other. Not in terms of the sense of a career, necessarily, but ambitious to do well in school. I don't think that's quite the—I don't know what word to use.

COLLINGS: You took it all very seriously, like it matters, it matters.

MOGUL: Very seriously, and we strove to do very, very well. Looking back on that, I think that also sets you apart, because I don't think— Because of coming from that cultural background and striving to do well, and a girl striving to do well at that time.

I do remember Paul Brauner, who was very, very sweet to me. He was not Jewish, very sweet guy. I remember we had become kind of— Compared to most of the kids, we had become kind of close. He had certain empathy toward me. He had asked me why was I going to go to college, because— And he asked this in a very kind—

COLLINGS: Like, “Could you please inform me of the [inaudible]?”

MOGUL: Yes, because after all, I was going to get married, which to me it was an odd question for somebody. And I don't remember how I answered it.

COLLINGS: Were you planning to get married at that time?

MOGUL: What do you plan when you're seventeen? I mean, I assumed I would. I mean, I guess I assumed I would get married.

COLLINGS: Yes, because some people just feel like, “No, thanks.”

MOGUL: Well, this is what, what do you know when you're seventeen in that regard? I think I thought I would. I still think maybe I will.

COLLINGS: Were there other girls in your high school who were planning to go to college in the same very clear-eyed way that you were, a large group?

MOGUL: Yes. I mean, not just the Jewish kids. I mean, yes. I was in class with them. They were in my class.

COLLINGS: Encouraged and everything.

MOGUL: Yes. We had guidance counselors, and they would help, based on what your SAT scores. I don't know what they do these days. But based on what your SAT scores were and your class standing was, and then what your interests were, they would try to help you to suggest what would be the colleges for you to apply for.

COLLINGS: Let me just also ask you about the art camp that you went to. Did any of your other siblings attend this?

MOGUL: We all went.

COLLINGS: Oh, you did?

MOGUL: Yes, yes. It wasn't just for me.

COLLINGS: Okay. So this was something that came then from your mother, perhaps, this idea?

MOGUL: Probably. That came from my mother. The religious education came from my father. He was the one who was very intent on that.

COLLINGS: Because it was important to him spiritually, or because he just sort of felt like this is a responsible part of raising a family or what?

MOGUL: I've got to ask him that. He's still alive. I'm going to tell you, I think it was very important for him that we have an education and that we know that we're Jews. I think that, because he certainly wasn't going to services anymore, because he

wasn't going. It's not like he was going out by himself on a Friday night. He was only going twice a year. But I think he really wanted us to know that we were Jews and that we had a Jewish identity.

As a middle-aged adult probably when he was working for himself and he had more time in the evenings, he was involved in a speaker series at the temple where they'd bring different intellectual Jews in different fields to speak on different topics. He was involved in that, organizing that, I know. I mean, I wasn't living there anymore.

I think I never really was that close with my dad growing up. I always felt we didn't have that much in common, but he was the one, when I was prepubescent, he was the one who would give me books to read. I remember *To Kill a Mockingbird*. I remember specific books that he would give me to read like when I was eight, nine, or ten. I was always interested in reading.

And I realize, probably of all the kids from my family I'm certainly the most interested in Jewish culture and read about things that are Jewish. He said to me, when I was going off to college, he said, "Don't forget that you're Jewish, and remember that your mother's very fertile." Those were the two things he told me.
[Laughs]

COLLINGS: Oh, my goodness. That's pretty funny.

MOGUL: Those were the two things that he told me.

I think if my mother was married to a different man, I don't know if we would have— You know, if my brothers would have been— Well, her brothers were Bar Mitzvah'ed. I think sometimes, I think, in relationships with people, if one person's

more intense about something, they let them take the lead. Maybe if my mother was married to someone less interested, she might have said, “I want my boys to be Bar Mitzvah’ed,” or whatever.

COLLINGS: Did you see much of their families, your cousins and uncles and aunts?

MOGUL: That’s very interesting, too, because that’s something I’ve been thinking about recently, is that when there was just the three of us, and so we were a younger family, and my parents were younger parents, we would see Dad’s side of the family. It always seems like we saw my mother’s side of the family more often, basically, which means my grandparents [Sonia and Nat Blate], and then her brothers lived at home for a very long time. [laughs]

Then also my grandmother didn’t drive. Neither of my grandmothers drove. But Grandma Sonia [Blate], who lived in Rockaway, was like a three-block walk from the beach.

COLLINGS: Oh, that’s nice.

MOGUL: Like my mother would let us— We could go out, like she would drive us out, and we could spend a week at Grandma’s. So we never did that with the other grandmother. So, you know, that was always fun because it was the ocean there and you could lay on the beach.

I was very fond of one of my uncles, and he’s actually only eleven years older— When I became an adult, I realized he’s only eleven years older than me, the same age difference as between myself and some of my siblings. And he was probably like, oh, god, when I would go there, he would be in his mid-twenties. Oh, he was very handsome, and then he had his friends that would come over, and they

would all get together and play poker, and it was like, to me, that was fun, that was very exciting to see Uncle Seth [Blate] and all his friends who would throw you up and down and stuff.

But my grandmother, the other grandmother, lived in Brooklyn, and then one of my cousins, who's only six months older than me, Bruce [Hack], they lived on Long Island, and we would see them. But then it seemed as time went on, we— And I had cousins, my cousins on that side, like Phyllis [Morel Greenberger] and Andrea [Morel Farsakh], they were like probably four years older, five years older.

Anyway, what's interesting about asking that question is that over time everything became much more tilted. Really almost never saw them.

COLLINGS: Was there kind of an emerging sort of class division between your family and the extended family perhaps, or nothing as concrete as that?

MOGUL: Yes, it would be broad speculation.

But what's interesting is that now, in speaking to my sister about that recently, because she's been getting to know— There are these two cousins who are sisters, Andrea and Phyllis. They're Aunt Eleanor's [Morel], my father's oldest sister's, kids. So they're like probably in their late fifties and early sixties. Well, that whole side, they're really quite intellectual and very interesting. It's like Phyllis is some big— In Washington, D.C., in Women in Health.

COLLINGS: Oh, wow.

MOGUL: Andrea married a Palestinian—we were always told he was Lebanese—

COLLINGS: That makes it better, huh? [laughs]

MOGUL: This is way back. This is in the sixties. And my father was given the task by his older sister, Eleanor, to try to talk her out of the marriage. She'd been for years—now she's in D.C.—was in the Middle East in some kind of diplomatic position, working for the State Department in all these countries.

MOGUL: Much more interesting things than my Uncle Seth, bless his heart, who's a stockbroker and sweet, and I really like him, and his brother, Edwin [Blate], who worked for my grandfather in the garment business. And then her kids— Anyway, her kids, Andrea's kids, the woman who married the Palestinian, her kids now are kind of the ages of my younger siblings, and now some of them are living in the city, and my sister has been getting to know them.

COLLINGS: They're their second cousins, right?

MOGUL: It would be first cousins, once removed.

COLLINGS: Okay. Never mind. [laughs]

MOGUL: Even though they're the same age, they're different generations, so it's called first— I finally learned this. It took a long— It has to do with the generation whether you're once removed. You have to know that in oral history, talking about family. [laughs]

COLLINGS: That's right. Once removed, once removed.

MOGUL: So they're living in the City, in New York City. All my siblings live in either the City or Long Island, and so they're getting to know them.

And then I just found out at Shakir [Farsakh], who apparently was known as Shakir within the immediate family, but Joey, to the rest of us, he's, probably, I guess

somewhere in the thirties, he just wrote some play about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and it's going to be shown in L.A

COLLINGS: A play?

MOGUL: Yes. In other words, here we are, you know, having these relatives that I basically don't— Maybe I've seen them at a couple of family occasions, but basically I don't even know. So I want to see them.

But it's interesting, because I see that also happening in my own family where one of my brothers seems like he spends more time with the wife's side of the family and is less involved with— You know, there's just these things that seem to happen.

COLLINGS: Just kind of a last question, I think, for today. What do your siblings do now? Just as a comparative thing with you.

MOGUL: I'm going to start with the youngest, because my youngest sister, she's also single and not married, and she's like in her late thirties now, she's a tennis pro. She teaches tennis. I would say that she and I are probably the only ones— She would have probably liked to have been a tennis star, but anyway, I would say that she and I are probably the only ones who really are— We make the least amount of money, but we're probably the only two that are really doing something that—

COLLINGS: Having the most fun.

MOGUL: We're doing what our passions are. I would say that we're the two of the siblings that are following what we're passionate about.

My brother Jess is financially extremely successful, and he's in the stock market. I don't know what you want to call it, but, anyway, he's in that field.

My sister Kim, after she got married, was in television doing Chyron graphics for NBC [National Broadcasting Corporation], which is where she met her husband. I think that's where she met him. She's now divorced, and she has two kids, and she, about a couple of years ago, got her license to practice real estate, so she's doing that. Jess is a businessman. She's basically in the real estate business.

Number three, Sandy, is a successful paper salesman to all the big printers, and he's been doing that, basically been in the same company for years.

And then Mark. Mark, I don't know exactly what he does. It's something with helping companies become more— He's kind of in finance, but not in the same way as my brother Jess in terms of helping companies design computerized systems to be more efficient. I never quite have gotten it. Anyway, he's actually kind of working for himself now. He was sort of like my father in terms of like working for different companies and never really being happy wherever he was, and he, like my father, followed in his footsteps in terms of he went to the same— He went to also Columbia University.

COLLINGS: And all your siblings went to college?

MOGUL: Yes. I think my brother got his MBA, and I got my master's. Everybody else got their bachelor's. Sandy would have liked to— Sandy, actually, before he went into being a salesman, he got a degree in phys ed and also in exercise kinesiology, and he was coaching teams and stuff. If there had been more money in it, he would have been a coach— That's what he really loved— He was coaching college basketball, or assistant coach. He loved that. He really loved doing that.

So I think, I mean, I think most of the family members have been more driven towards money than me.

COLLINGS: Well, you were all encouraged to participate in the arts growing up, but were you also encouraged to think seriously about making a living?

MOGUL: Oh, how come you ask all these good questions?

My father was— I mean, here was the classic of the period. My father was very oriented toward the boys making money. He was very traditional. So apparently, the boys always got these one-on-one serious conversations about, you know, that you have to make a good living and provide. I never got one of those sit-downs, those face-to-face. I never got one of those conversations, which I think is both a good thing and a bad thing. I mean, probably in the long run, it's a good thing because maybe it would have made me fearful about going into the arts. It's certainly not something he would have encouraged— He would have dissuaded his sons from doing that.

My father was freaked out when one of my brothers decided to take an extra semester to finish school because he wanted to do something abroad or whatever, or after he graduated, to take off a few months and go to Australia. My father told him that there would be no jobs left when he came back. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Right. Every last one snapped up.

MOGUL: There would be no jobs. I mean, this is like an intelligent man. There's not going to be any jobs left. [laughs] It's very funny if you think about it.

I don't know if the youngest ones got that.

COLLINGS: The younger sisters?

MOGUL: Yes. I don't know, because, you know, you realize that times change. You know, because of my sister being sixteen years younger.

COLLINGS: She might be able to get a job.

MOGUL: Well, seeing that his oldest daughter is not married, you know, is self-supporting or attempting, you know, is self-supporting and not making a lot of money in the field that she's chosen, then maybe I ought to encourage the girls. I don't know if he ever said anything to them. That's the interesting thing about why I started thinking about the other side of the family, in terms of I would have more in common with some of the other ones who were more—

I mean, in terms of their professions are more interesting to me, like working in the Middle East. Whether or not I agree with whatever her politics are, I don't care. The experiences that she had, you know, a Jewish woman married to a Palestinian, working in the State Department, I mean, it's pretty interesting. I mean, she went to Mount Holyoke [College]. That's more interesting than some other fields. It's interesting to me. Then it's interesting that I have these cousins who are Palestinian and part Jewish, and how they negotiate that, and that kind of subject matter is relevant to my own work that I do, dealing with, you know, who you are and where you fit in and how you don't fit in. So all these things are very interesting to me.

I just got Shakir's e-mail address, and e-mailed him that I wanted to see him and I'd like to know how long has he been writing. Here's like someone—I don't know if it's like a one-time thing. Here's someone who's in the family, looks like he's

in the arts, he's trying to make a stab at it, and he's obviously making something that's coming out of his own experience.

COLLINGS: Right. Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

February 25, 2003

COLLINGS: Good morning, Susan.

MOGUL: Good morning. Okay. Back to like the sort of class background things and that.

COLLINGS: Yes, a few pickups.

MOGUL: A few pickups. The home my parents bought in 1955, gosh, was— Wait a second. Oh, shoot. I had it. It was \$26,900, and it was the price of middle-class homes at the time. It was designed by an architect, and was very different from the ugly split-levels, and, apparently, you had to put money down and wait a year to get it. Apparently, my mother had been looking for homes for four years, and that was the one. She saw it advertised in the *Times*, and they looked at it, and then I guess they put money on it. They were also taking a chance, she said, because if the company went bankrupt or anything, they would have lost their money.

COLLINGS: What was the name of the architect?

MOGUL: She didn't say. It was the only development house that was not like the ugly split-levels. The builders were also architects. You either loved it or hated it. It is a kind of a classic mid-century home, with the cathedral ceilings.

Gosh, now I lost that one piece of paper that had a little bit more information. I'm sorry. Oh, here it is. Okay. [Reading from letter from mother] "The house cost \$26,900, which we could afford as we never bought anything that we couldn't afford."

Regarding my mother and expectations after college. [Reading] “I don’t believe I gave it too much thought. Everybody I knew was getting married. That seemed to be the thing to do; get a job, date, get married. When I was young, I remember people asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I always said ‘a mother,’ so I guess I fulfilled my dream. Boy, was I brainwashed.”

COLLINGS: That’s how she feels today?

MOGUL: I guess. I don’t know. That’s what she said in the e-mail.

[Reading] “After college, I worked at the Bacteriology Lab at Mount Sinai Hospital for about two years after I graduated college. I guess my title was lab assistant. It was like being back in college going out with the residents, interns, and others.”

COLLINGS: Did she major in chemistry or biology or something?

MOGUL: Something like that.

About my father and being Jewish, she asked my father. [Reading] “I think every Jew should be familiar with—.” About going to religious schools and stuff. “I think every Jew should be familiar with history and traditions of Jewry, men and women!, and an exclamation point. Dad wanted me to make sure that I put in the exclamation points. I think he wants to show that he’s changed over the years.”

[mutual laughter]

COLLINGS: Because at the time he was more interested in your brothers having this heritage?

MOGUL: No, except that I did go to— He did want me to go to Sunday school. He just didn’t have an expectation for me to get Bat Mitzvah’ed. But in terms of Sunday

school— And then one year, I don't know, I must have complained about how I didn't like the Sunday school, and one year, I don't know how long it lasted. My father used to sort of give us some kind of instruction in Jewish history. I don't know how long we did that, but I kind of have this memory being in my room, and I don't know if my brother— We would go over stuff together, Jewish history. I remember liking it.

Now, this is a little background about my mother and marriage, you know, and what she did. [Reading] “After I was married and before you were born, it was only eleven months.” So I came eleven months after they were married. “We looked to buy a house and decided to rent, because we could not afford what we liked. We had to wait for the apartment in Fresh Meadows,” that's in Flushing, Queens, “because it wasn't finished, and we didn't move in until after you were born.” They lived in my grandparents' downstairs apartment in Rockaway.

Basically what she did in those times, she looked for furniture and nursery items since she was pregnant. This was sort of interesting. [Reading] “When furniture was ordered, you had to wait many months also. Remember, this was after the war. You had to wait for everything.” That's when she learned about these different designer furnitures, Eames, Knoll, Dunbar. [Reading] “We could not afford Knoll, but we bought four Eames plywood chairs at forty-five dollars each.”

COLLINGS: Quite a lot at that time.

MOGUL: Yes, I know. I don't get how— Everyone I knew in their twenties, my generation, bought stuff from the secondhand store. [Reading from letter from mother] “My parents bought me the rest of the furniture, as I remember, which was

Dunbar. Aunt Lea [Friedberg] gave me the name of a decorator who gave me a discount.”

[Reading] “We moved to Fresh Meadows in September.” So that would have been—I was born in August ’49, so I guess I must have been just freshly born. “Where I joined a camera club after a short time to see other people and get back to my hobby.”

Okay. So I think that’s basically sort of some things that I asked my mother after the last interview.

COLLINGS: Yes. It is interesting that she was into photography and you also went and that kind of thing.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: As long as we’re on the subject of home and family, you did say that you wanted to mention something about your Great-Aunt Lea and how she was an important influence for you.

MOGUL: Yes. She was much more important to me than either of my grandmothers. She was my maternal grandmother’s sister, and she was very different from any other family member. Also, it’s interesting, my mother had a very, very close relationship with her as well.

Aunt Lea didn’t come to this country until she was in her twenties. I don’t know how much you want of this, but basically what happened was, it would be my great-great-grandmother in Europe died very young, and she had three kids that were maybe one, three, and five. They were a middle-class family in Riga, Latvia. I don’t know, I guess the father was sort of chauvinistic and didn’t care if relatives from the

United States came and took away his three three-year-old daughter to the United States.

COLLINGS: He kept the two boys and the—

MOGUL: No, no, there was three girls.

COLLINGS: Oh, three girls.

MOGUL: There were three girls, but I mean, I just think it's weird for a father to let one of his children leave— So anyway, my grandmother was at the age of three or four or five, quite a toddler, was taken by some relative who lived in New York and brought back there, and so she, Grandma Sonia, was raised in the United States, where the other two weren't. The other two girls weren't, the oldest and the middle one.

Yes, she picked the youngest one.

COLLINGS: I see, yes.

MOGUL: The oldest one, Regina [Oppenheim] was killed in a pogrom. And Aunt Lea, as a young adult, was very interested in opera, and at some point when she was a young woman went to Paris and was studying to be an opera singer and also learned a trade as a milliner, and that's how she made a living. So she was also probably the only one, if I think about it now, the only one in the family that I knew of who was earning her own living, living independently.

COLLINGS: The only female?

MOGUL: Yes, yes, yes, exactly, the only female who was really living quite independently. I meant to look up the date that she came here, because I have some information what year she came across on the ship. I have that information. She actually married a cousin who she met as an adult.

And Aunt Lea always had these Communist friends and artist friends, and she also didn't have children, and she was more like a grandmother to me. She was also so interesting, and she was also a very good, interesting cook. So everything she did was different. She was very outspoken, and she introduced me to opera.

It was always so much fun to go to her apartment, because there were all these hats all around, and we got to try on the hats, and the whole apartment had just a whole different feeling. She was into interior decorating and secondhand shops, so there was this rich— You know, there was this whole different attitude towards life.

She was someone I always felt comfortable confiding in. My mother, also, I know confided in her as well.

COLLINGS: Did you see a lot of her?

MOGUL: Oh yes. Also in the summers, she would rent a place in the country. She would find a way. She and my uncle didn't have much money, but they always would manage, like, to find a place to housesit in the summer. They would find someplace so they'd get out of the city, so we'd go visit them in Vermont or visit them in Maine. They managed to get away out of the heat in the summer.

Also she had a friend who was in the entertainment business in New York who was a reviewer. She had a few friends who wrote newspapers columns for the arts. So that's how she could take me to the opera. So when we would go to the opera, they were free tickets. But when we'd get gratis tickets, they would be seats in the orchestra. I remember she took me to *Rigoletto*, she took me to *Porgy and Bess*.

COLLINGS: Oh, it sounds fabulous. What a fabulous mentor for you.

MOGUL: Yes, she was. She was great. I still miss her. I really do.

COLLINGS: When did she die?

MOGUL: She died quite a while ago. She died probably in the— She's probably been dead easily twenty years. I think also I miss her because she was really encouraging. I mean, she was probably the only one in the family who understood what I wanted. My mother was supportive about the arts, but I think Aunt Lea, because she had wanted to be an opera singer—

COLLINGS: Oh, she did?

MOGUL: Yes, she wanted to be— See, [in this photograph] she's singing at my brother's wedding.

COLLINGS: What a great ambition.

MOGUL: I mean, she was quite good. I have a piece of ephemera from the ship she came over on, I think she sang one night. They have her on a program that she sang one night on the ship.

COLLINGS: Oh, how nice. That's wonderful.

MOGUL: But I think I really felt that she understood my aspirations to be an artist, because she had friends who were, and only as I got older, in fact, did I realize that one of her best friends had been married to a guy who was like this Mexican artist Communist who— I think that's why my grandfather would stop speaking to her at times. It was because of her politics. This is speculation on my part. It was because of who her friends were. I mean, I think there was probably more things about her that I wasn't even aware of in terms of who she was. Basically, I think she had a lot of friends who were these artist radical commies, you know.

Also, after she died, I'd look at different papers and letters and correspondences with people in Europe. I also realized that my Uncle Benny probably had very radical politics.

COLLINGS: Her husband.

MOGUL: Yes, her husband.

COLLINGS: Did your father have any problem with you spending time with her?

MOGUL: No.

COLLINGS: That's good.

MOGUL: What made you ask that?

COLLINGS: Well, you said your grandfather didn't speak to her, and I thought maybe there were other members of the family who—

MOGUL: Oh yes, but my grandfather always had fights with everyone. So I don't know. I don't know all the stuff.

But when you said that, the other thing that was special about my aunt, she would give me— Which is something that I really believe in. I don't think other people appreciate, not about her, but appreciate in terms of like it's not how much money you spend on a gift, but if the gift has meaning to you. And she would take things out of her jewelry box and give them to me, or she would have my uncle's cufflinks turned into earrings for me, things like that. [Cries]

COLLINGS: Oh, how lovely.

MOGUL: So she did things that— I think that's where I also learned to just appreciate that. Like my grandmother would just write me a check for twenty dollars or whatever, and then I used to say, "Well, gee, she's not even keeping up with

inflation.” And it’s not that I was materialistic, because I would never make a remark like that in regards to my aunt, because I just felt what she was giving me came from so much love and appreciation on all levels.

I guess— I’m not sure why I’m crying, but I think that I wish she would have seen me receive a [John Simon] Guggenheim [Foundation Grant].

COLLINGS: Absolutely.

MOGUL: I remember when I performed in New York in Central Park, and that was in— I don’t know if Aunt Lea was dead now then or she was in the nursing home and like with Parkinson’s [Disease] and basically a vegetable. I remember then— And my mother said the same thing, like “I really wished Aunt Lea had been there today,” because I still think of all the family members, that she still is the one who really appreciated me in that regard, in terms of understanding and having a sense of understanding what it meant to be an artist.

COLLINGS: Yes, you were really lucky to have a relative like that.

MOGUL: Oh yes. So I used to go in to the city and like sleep over sometimes, and she made me some hats sometimes. And this shows you about love, the whole exchange of love and what you will do for a person when you feel they’ve— I’m sorry. I think this is a lot of—

COLLINGS: That’s okay. Do you want me to turn off the tape recorder?

MOGUL: No, it’s okay. I just feel probably a lot of this stuff has to do with the opposite things I feel about some other family members in terms of how people engage with one another and how people show appreciation.

So because of the things and the way in which Aunt Lea extended herself to me, and this is just as a young fourteen-year-old, fifteen-year-old, I would make her cards—I saw her and my uncle as kind of characters. So I would make very humorous thank-you cards or birthday cards that had running jokes in them that were plays on our experiences together. Or when she made me a hat, I made her a collage that was a poem—this is like when I was sixteen—that rhymed and had little things on it. I didn't do that for anybody else. For my mother sometimes I'd made funny cards. But I mean, Aunt Lea really inspired me to even do creative things in response to what she had done for me by taking me to the opera and all those things.

COLLINGS: What a fabulous relationship, really. It's really—

MOGUL: Just so you don't think it's perfect. She could embarrass you in public.

[laughs] You'd be in the subway with her, and voices carry on the platform, and she'd start talking about other people that were just a few feet away. And then you'd go, "Shush," and then she'd get upset with you because you were shushing her. [laughs]

So I feel she is someone who introduced me to a lot of things.

COLLINGS: It sounds like it. And you mentioned that some of the cards and things that you would make for her were funny.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: That was something— Being funny and humor was something I wanted to ask you about, because there's obviously so much humor in your work.

MOGUL: Yes. She would probably be a subject of a documentary today. Yes, maybe it would be interesting, in terms of like making a connection between that.

For example, one time she wanted us to go to some state park out on Long Island. She lived in the City. So, of course, she really didn't know that much. She came to driving very late in life, and she really didn't know the island. So that was like instead of being a fifteen-, twenty-minute drive, it took several hours. It's like, "Oh, it's coming up next. It's coming up next." It was called Wildwood State Park, and then you get there, it's just sort of like—

COLLINGS: Three trees and a bush.

MOGUL: Like a white trash area, white trash place.

Then there was this whole thing where my uncle was like, I guess, an adult diabetic, and so he wasn't supposed to drink, but he loved to drink, and so she was always taking the drinks away. So I remember there was some kind of card or it was like a little booklet, which satirized my experiences with them— Also she had an accent. She had like this European accent. She would say "mah-oh-nize" and "Cal-ee-fornya," and to me that was very exotic. So like I would just make a card. I would have running jokes about her trying to take away drinks from Uncle Benny. But I mean, they're kind of silly now, but it was stretching an ordinary situation and sort of stretching it out into something comedic.

COLLINGS: Right. Were other people in your family—quote, unquote—"funny," or were you the funny one?

MOGUL: Well, this is funny, because I never had a sense of myself as being funny until I was in art school at CalArts. I was just kind of, within the context of the family, considered the laughing hyena.

COLLINGS: You always saw the humor in situations?

MOGUL: Well, I know with my aunt and, obviously, I played that off there, but I was never kind of— You know how like in school or within a family, different people play certain roles. I was just sort of considered, in this context of the family, a little bit crazy or hysterical or, you know, not stupid at all. I wasn't considered like, "Oh, Susan's just so funny, so funny," no. And I didn't even realize that I was funny.

I took like an independent study with this artist at CalArts named Lynda Benglis, and she was basically pretty hotshot in the gallery scene and probably ten years my senior, and this was like in '73 at CalArts. And she came there and I wanted to take a class with her because she was a hotshot in the arts scene, and she was a New York artist and blah, blah, blah. Although she did sculpture, kind of avant-garde sculpture, she was one of these artists who were like completely turned on to the whole new video art thing that was happening at the time, and I think she was encouraging a lot of students to do video.

And at the same time I was in the Feminist Art Program with Judy Chicago where we were in conscious-raising and keeping journals and all this encouragement to do work about your everyday life, etc. So between having all those ideas floating around, being part of the consciousness at the time, and then Lynda Benglis encouraging us to use video, that's when I started setting the camera on a tripod and doing video tapes— I did that piece *Dressing Up*, in that independent study I was doing with Lynda Benglis. She kept encouraging me, and I guess she'd make a few little suggestions, and maybe I'd go back and redo it or something like that, because those were like one takes with no editing involved, very difficult to edit at the time.

That was the first time people thought I was funny. Lynda was very encouraging, and then I showed, I guess, the women in my feminist art program, and then they really thought it was funny— People were laughing, you know, and it was the first time that I realized, “Oh, my goodness, I’m funny,” and I was like twenty-three then. And probably— Not probably; is why I’m an artist, is that in just normal conversation, especially at that time, I probably didn’t have that self-confidence, hopefully I’ve gained that over the years. I probably talked a lot, but was not as concise as one could be, and I think a certain kind of humor is about a certain kind of precision and being concise.

So, being an artist, filmmaker, video artist, performance artist, having the time to sit down and conceive and put my ideas together allowed me to be funny and probably a lot funnier because I had that time to be alone and conceptualize. Sometimes I can be like that [snaps fingers], depends who you’re talking to and how the energy is. But I really didn’t have that rapid-fire quality of like a standup comic or something, or someone who is typed as being the class comedian or something like that.

COLLINGS: Okay. Let me just ask you like really just two or three last sort of little follow-up family questions that have to do kind of with the period. Did your family watch TV?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: What did they watch usually? Did you watch together, or how was TV treated?

MOGUL: When you say *family*, all of a sudden I just flashed on something like I obviously must have watched with my parents, and I must have watched at a very young age, which was the public television at that time. I mean, they had *No Exit* on television, with that couple who was divorced and married to each other a million times. Colleen Dewhurst and George—I forget his name. But, I mean, really fine theatrical actors. So I remember that I would watch shows like that, and I probably watched the *Sid Caesar Show*, probably watched that with my parents.

The other thing I remember in terms of watching TV with others in the family, that like if we watched *Ed Sullivan [Show]* or we watched—this would be before Johnny [Carson]—*Jack Paar Show*. I mean, those were shows I probably watched with my parents. The thing that would get the attention, we watched the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and the only time people would shush is— Like if a singer was on, they wouldn't be that interested. But if a standup comic— There was an interest in standup comedy.

COLLINGS: In your family.

MOGUL: In the family. Not that anyone had an aspiration to it, although my brother number three, Sandy, said, I guess when he was asked at one point what he wanted to do when he grew up, is he wanted to go to Harvard College and be a comedian. [mutual laughter] So he sort of extrapolated two things from the family, from the middle-class Jewish family. You've got to get the best education, and we all love standup comics.

COLLINGS: That's funny.

MOGUL: I mean, I can remember watching—I could tell you shows. I remember shows I watched probably with my brothers and sisters, but those are the shows with the family, the parents. Like I probably watched *Bonanza*, and I watched *Father Knows Best*, and I watched *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. I liked that show a lot.

COLLINGS: Oh, I loved that show.

MOGUL: I loved that show. I had a poster of Bill Cosby, and I think I probably watched that TV show with Robert Culp called *I Spy*, and I had that poster like when I was a teenager, in my room.

COLLINGS: Oh, you had a TV in your room?

MOGUL: No, no, the poster, the poster. Oh, no, I didn't have a TV. We had like one TV in the house. But those are the shows. I remember those particular shows that I watched with the family— Probably the *Perry Como Show* we probably watched together sometimes. So I guess the variety shows, and then the serious plays that were on, I remember watching those. I don't even know if my younger brothers would have watched those, and I don't know for how long those were on TV, but I remember watching some of that stuff on TV.

COLLINGS: Did you have rules about watching TV, like only at certain times, or was like anytime fine, after school, what have you?

MOGUL: I don't remember, but I know I have my own ethics, which might come from the family, like to me it seems sinful to watch TV during the day. I never put the TV on during the day. It just seems very creepy and sinful.

COLLINGS: Yes, I know. It does. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: And I'm sure that that comes from— You know.

COLLINGS: Yes, it must.

MOGUL: I think we watched *Million Dollar Movie*. I don't know if you had that on when you were growing up. They used to play the same movie. It was like on Channel 9 or something. This is in New York. They would play the same movie every night for like a week. So if you—

COLLINGS: If you missed it the first time— Did you guys go out to films much as a family?

MOGUL: No, I don't remember. No, no. I mean, I went to movies occasionally.

Also, I don't know where this came from, I would go into the city by myself at the age of thirteen, fourteen, and I would go see the matinee of a Broadway show, like a Broadway drama, on my own, and I don't know where I got that idea. But probably because I was allowed to go, and, you know, things change over time. I was allowed to go into the City. As I said, remember I told you, I really didn't feel like very comfortable in school. I liked the City. I mean, I liked the City as a young person. As a kid, I liked the City, and I liked the things that you could do there.

COLLINGS: Yes, for somebody who's interested in that, that's great. But it wasn't unusual that you were able to go. Wasn't that sort of [inaudible]?

MOGUL: No, I'm just saying now I don't think people would let a fourteen-year-old go— I don't know, go from Long Island, take the train and then take the subway, and go see *Slow Dance on the Killing Ground*. [laughs]

COLLINGS: But at that time, were there other kids your age doing that, or were your parents just sort of liberal in that respect?

MOGUL: No, no, I don't think that they were liberal in that. I think that people, if you had any kind of cultural awareness, that you did do things like that. It was unusual in terms of my neighborhood and what other people did.

COLLINGS: Did any of your siblings do that?

MOGUL: Not like me, I don't think, no. No, not like—I don't think they had the wanderlust that I had. [laughs]

No, and then some of those kids, remember I told you, I'd meet at summer camp. I would meet some of the girls from summer camp in the City, because they lived somewhere else on Long Island— You know, they could take the train to the City, and I could take the train to the City, so we could all meet at Penn Station.

Another thing that I did creatively, was my junior year or senior year in high school, with a friend who lived in a different town, and we would meet at Penn Station, and then we'd go to take modern dance class in the city. I was never very good, but I loved it, and I also took it at that Fiedel School. Then there was this place called Henry Street Settlement house, which was in the Lower East Side. One year I went, and that was like a place that anybody could afford. It was like fifteen dollars for like a semester.

We'd meet at Penn Station, then we'd take the subway. Leslie and I would take the subway to the Lower East Side and then walk to the Settlement House. We took a drama class there, and we took a dance class there. It was taught by people who were in the— Not Alvin Ailey. Alwin Nikolai, which was a very avant-garde dance troupe at the time. This was like '66. They were doing slide projections and weirdo costumes. If I think about it, I was just seeking out different ways to have

cultural experiences. I was sixteen or seventeen. I didn't have an aspiration to be a dancer—I never was like in the class, I never shone, was never one of the stars.

COLLINGS: Yes, you're one of the stars when you're like three years old or something.

MOGUL: It was something that I obviously got a lot of pleasure out of, and I think it was also another context in which I enjoyed being around those people. I found when I went into the City, that was probably the first time I saw these other girls, who were like they were really going to be professionals.

COLLINGS: Professional dancers?

MOGUL: Yes. They were very serious. I wasn't serious about it. I think I liked the whole adventure of it. I liked getting there and getting an eggplant sandwich at some Italian deli. It was like the whole experience. Because I didn't even have an aspiration to be an artist at that time, because, that, you know, in terms of like the family, that kind of wasn't considered a career choice.

COLLINGS: Okay. Let me turn this tape over. Or, actually, it's not quite ready yet.

Well, these days you wouldn't have time to do all that stuff, because you'd be doing homework.

MOGUL: I did my homework. I went to the city on Saturday.

COLLINGS: I know, I was just making a comment about today.

MOGUL: I did that on Saturdays. I did that on Saturday.

COLLINGS: Okay. So in terms of you went to college, you went to University of Wisconsin-Madison, and how did you come to choose? I mean, here you were in this

rich metropolitan area with so many things going on. How did you come to choose to go over to Wisconsin?

MOGUL: Well, first of all, I wanted to get away from home. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes, that was first and foremost.

MOGUL: First, there was no way I was going to live at home or be near home, number one.

COLLINGS: Okay. Why was that, just too many kids around?

MOGUL: I don't think I would have articulated it then. I think I wanted a new identity in some sense. Yes, that's what I would say about that.

Two, I went to a very small high school, I came from a very small town. I wanted to be at a big university, or I wanted to be at an Ivy League. I didn't have the grades or the SAT scores to apply to Harvard [University]. I would have loved to have gone to an Ivy League school very, very much, probably because of the prestige involved, but I also knew, I think, even to this day I enjoy being around people who I—I'm not intimidated about being around people who are intellectually superior to me, and I find that very challenging and stimulating, and I think that makes me smarter. So I mean, it wasn't just for the prestige factor. So anyway, so then I would have gone to a smaller place. But that wasn't an option.

So I wanted to get away from home, wanted to live away from home, I wanted to be at a big place, and I didn't want to be in a small town and have people feeling like they know who I was and what I was. And then I chose—I applied to Boston University; Madison, Wisconsin; and University of Michigan. I know that I applied to BU and Madison because they inherently had good journalism departments, and I

thought that that's what I wanted to do, was be a journalist. I was active a little bit in the school newspaper.

You know what I did? It's so funny. I wish I had the column. My friend and I wrote this column called "Dear Libby," and it was like advice to the lovelorn. We wrote our own letters and responses. I really wish I had that. [laughs]

COLLINGS: You don't think they'd have it at the school, do you think? That would be great.

MOGUL: I don't know. I don't know if they would go back that far. So anyway, I had this idea I wanted to be a roving reporter, because, see, still I wanted to be moving all the time. I did well in writing, got good grades in writing, whatever I did on the newspaper, God knows, not that much, but I liked the idea of being able to be, I guess, involved in activities and events.

So those were the schools that had journalism departments, and University of Michigan must have had a journalism department, too. But the reason I picked Michigan, which was a tougher school to get into than Boston or Madison—I didn't realize also later that Madison was actually probably a lot more interesting and prettier campus to be on, didn't get into Michigan, but I wanted to go to Michigan. That was my top choice, because you know who went to University of Michigan was Arthur Miller, and I *loved* Arthur Miller, and I used to go see all of Arthur Miller's plays or read all his plays. Then I had also read that he had gotten rejected from Michigan many times before they—

COLLINGS: Before they finally accepted him.

MOGUL: I'll finish this. I loved the idea that there was this guy who was this— My thinking hasn't really changed very much. I loved this idea that there was this great playwright who was not recognized early on, and he wasn't getting into college. He probably didn't have good SATs, so I was like identifying with this great person who I wanted to— Who had gotten rejected many times. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes. He finally got accepted, huh?

MOGUL: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. So I guess I had this idea that I was going to do what Arthur Miller did and keep applying.

COLLINGS: Well, that's a good role model.

MOGUL: But, actually, you know, I just think of it just now is, I think— I mean, I don't know how that has stayed with me. I am very tenacious, like in the way— I've applied for a lot of grants. People think I get grants all the times, but they don't know for how many years I apply and I apply and I apply and I apply for the same grant, and I just hang in there until I get it, and that could take ten years, it could take fifteen years, but I hang in there, and maybe I should thank, write a letter to, Arthur Miller. [laughs]

COLLINGS: I think that you probably should.

MOGUL: I see all these different connections.

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

February 25, 2003

COLLINGS: So, thank you, Arthur Miller. But you did go to Madison.

MOGUL: Yes, I got into Madison.

COLLINGS: I wanted to ask you, you said that when you went off to college, your father told you that your mother was very fertile.

MOGUL: Yes. My father was very concise and to the point. "Don't forget you're Jewish, and remember your mother's very fertile."

COLLINGS: You had said that, and it just occurred to me to ask you, what did you think when he said that?

MOGUL: Gosh, I mean, obviously I know what he was saying then. Well, I mean, I think I clearly understood that I'd better use birth control. I don't know if he hadn't said it, if it would have made a difference. My mother *never*, ever spoke to me about birth control, which is sort of funny, considering that I saw her pregnant many times and nursing babies, and she was very open about birth control or the facts of life— She didn't hide her body and wasn't modest in that way, but never did she talk about— My father told me about the facts of life, and then he was the one who made that comment.

COLLINGS: Did they teach birth control or anything at school at that time?

MOGUL: Oh, god, no. Oh, god, no. Oh, god, no.

COLLINGS: Nothing.

MOGUL: God, no, and subsequently, I think I already had that implanted in my head from seeing my mother pregnant many times, although I didn't really know. I knew how some of my siblings were conceived, like one was a diaphragm that hadn't gotten refitted or one was an IUD that didn't work. I don't know if I knew all that at that point. So I knew birth control existed.

But I remember when I was on a trip, this teen trip that I went to in Mexico between my junior and senior year that I paid for mostly by myself with my babysitting money, I remember this boy wanted to have sex. I'd never even really dated, so this was my first— That summer was the first time I was like making out with boys and having—

COLLINGS: This was the summer before college?

MOGUL: No, the summer between my junior and senior year.

COLLINGS: At high school?

MOGUL: At high school, yes. See, then I went away, too. I saved up money to go— To live with families in Mexico. See, there's always this thing of trying to get away and have adventures. [laughs]

I remember that was my first experience of making out with boys and stuff, and I remember this one boy. I think he wanted to have sex with me, and I just looked at him like he was out of his mind. [laughs] I don't think I was very interested in him, but also I think the idea was that, "Are you crazy? If you have sex, you have children."

And then when I did meet somebody, when I finally did have sex— I had gone to the doctor and gotten— When I finally made up that I wanted to— This guy, this

man, that I was very, very fond of, wanted to— I did finally decide I wanted to go to bed with him, then I went and got birth control pills. I don't know if that's an attitude from what my father said or from realizing the consequences of having sex, from coming from such a large family. So I don't know.

COLLINGS: Did you ever talk about birth control with your girlfriends?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: And what were they using for the most part?

MOGUL: The pill. I got a pill. I got the pill. I got Ortho-Novum. It was very strong. My breasts went up two sizes in two months. I went from a C to a double-D in two months. That was in 1968. That was in 1968. Yes, I think a friend of mine went to the and you had to lie, you know. This was in Madison. I found out what doctor to go to. You told the doctor that you were engaged, that that was the way that one doctor would give birth control pills, because that was illegal at that time. This was 1968. It was illegal at that time to give an unmarried person birth control pills in Wisconsin.

Then when I told the doctor I was engaged, he asked me if I had my blood test yet, and I didn't know what the hell he was talking about, because I didn't know people had blood tests before they got married. I don't even know what I said. I remember that really threw me off. [laughs] Yes, so it was illegal then to have them, anyway, in the State of Wisconsin it was. In other words, I had to go to a private doctor, not on the campus—

COLLINGS: At the health center.

MOGUL: Not at the health center.

COLLINGS: Were most of your friends doing that, or were you and this friend of yours kind of like on the vanguard in this respect?

MOGUL: Having birth control?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Gosh, I don't know. Maybe I didn't talk about it to that many people. And people were pretty open about stuff. I remember who I went with. I went with Lauren.

COLLINGS: I just wondered, just trying to get a feel for the period.

MOGUL: Obviously I must have heard through the grapevine, I must have done some research or must have found out somehow what people were doing.

COLLINGS: Yes, sure. Okay. Where did you live while you were at college?

MOGUL: I lived in the dorms my first year. You had to. That's the other thing if you're interested in the period of time. I entered Madison in fall of '67. In fall of '67, women had hours, freshmen women had hours; men did not.

COLLINGS: Wow. And what were your hours?

MOGUL: You had to be in by a certain time on the weeknight, and you could stay out later on the weekend. But, of course, the loophole in this whole thing was— Say you're out. Maybe you're supposed to come in at ten o'clock on a Friday night, for example. So if you come in at eleven o'clock at night, you get some kind of penalization or whatever because there's somebody there checking you in. But if you don't come in at all—

COLLINGS: They think you're in your room all night.

MOGUL: Exactly. So I mean, it sort of encouraged people to, like, stay overnight someplace else.

Things were in such upheaval between my first and second year, between the Dow [Chemical] demonstration, and that was the major demonstration— Well, the Dow demonstration, kids had their heads bashed in, which then precipitated a campuswide strike, and that was in my second month in school there.

COLLINGS: Your second month as a freshman was the campuswide strike?

MOGUL: Yes. There were the out-of-staters and the in-staters. A lot of the out-of-staters, who were from the big urban areas, were already very— Even freshmen, were very political.

COLLINGS: Were you?

MOGUL: No. Well, I became so. In other words, they came to Madison knowing that this school had a reputation of being an activist campus, had a long tradition of that. I wasn't aware of that. Also, the people that I got to know there, the out-of-staters, kids who were in my dorm, well, the in-staters, too, but it was very striking to me, because I told you I had such a romance about Harvard education or Ivy League education, that I met students who came from— There were quite a number of out-of-state students who came from very wealthy backgrounds. Sally Yarmolinsky was there. Her father was in the [President John F.] Kennedy administration cabinet.

And there were different people who came from well-to-do backgrounds, some of whom got into Ivy League schools, but chose to come to Madison. A lot of them, a lot of the out-of-staters like New Yorkers, they had gone to private schools. I mean, this was just sort of like this whole new group of people that I had not really had

contact with, because I went to sort of a very parochial small-town high school. So there were all these people who were a lot more— Coming from a lot more sophisticated and higher socioeconomic status and background. Not the school as a whole, but the group of people that I kind of identified with, which were a lot of the kind of the New York radical or Chicago radical Jews.

COLLINGS: So they had specifically come because they were interested in politics?

MOGUL: I never really asked them those questions, but they seemed to be more aware of all of that. Maybe because they had come from private schools, that was the last thing they wanted to do was be in another small elite institution. I never really asked them that.

So there was a lot of upheaval shortly after I arrived. It was pretty exciting, and it was fun. Well, you know what was so engaging for me? I came from a background where I guess my family discussed stuff, but not that much. I had started to get some very close friends in my senior year in high school where we talked more about folk music and went to the City and did stuff.

But here was like, everything went on strike and then it could be late at night and you could find some discussion group, or I would just like walk into some auditorium and there would be some late-night meetings. You know, with all these kind of people in fringe organizations, like with the SW, Socialist Workers Party. Then you'd see like this one person, I think his name was someone Green, and he'd be like spouting off. But there was just such an engagement and discussion, and I think I was just sort of taken with all this dialogue.

It was also kind of theater. It was theater in a way, too. I think I was kind of engaged by all these characters.

COLLINGS: That's really interesting.

MOGUL: I mean, I didn't think of it then. I mean this man who became my boyfriend, we met at some kind of African— He was black, not African. We met at some African conference. This was at the end of my freshman year. Why I was at that conference— I'd never really been clear on— I was interested in American black struggle, never been interested in Africa. I don't know why I was there. I'd go to things— Some things I did with groups of people, and some things I just would find out on my own.

And I think that is why I wanted to go to a big university, just to— But at the end of my freshman year, what had been a requirement to live in the dorms, well, I don't know, that might have changed. Maybe you had some alternatives in your second year. I lived in a co-op, in a women's co-op, Grove's Co-op [House] in fall 1968. I think if you did live in the dorms, I think the whole thing with hours changed. That's what happened, because then the dorms were starting to lose people.

COLLINGS: So you came to Madison. You did not have interest in politics. Had you ever sort of read the newspaper or followed the daily news, anything like that? I mean, you were interested in journalism, but—

MOGUL: Good point. [mutual laughter] Yes, my parents, when there was the Israeli war, the '67 War, my parents tore me apart because my friend, Elaine Rubenstein, and I could be less interested, and all we were interested in was our folk music and going to the City and going to Greenwich Village. I don't know, I guess I wasn't paying

attention to what was going on. They just thought I was so unaware of current events in my senior year in high school—I don't know, they really took me to task for that.

I wasn't political, but I know I was interested in civil rights. I mean, that sounds so namby-pamby, but I know I was always very interested in the civil rights movement. I didn't have a relationship to Israel. I don't think I was an avid newspaper reader. I liked to read. I always liked to read the second section of the *New York Times* on Sundays, which was the—I'll tell you my favorite things to read growing up, in terms of newspapers, was the entertainment— Well, they didn't call it the entertainment section. It was the section where you could read about theater and the arts in the *New York Times*. And then in the *Wall Street Journal*, I liked to read the jokes. I didn't read comics.

COLLINGS: They had jokes in the *Wall Street Journal*?

MOGUL: Oh yes, they had great jokes. They were very intelligent. In the *Wall Street Journal*, my father got the *Wall Street Journal*— When I got older, I started reading some of the front page articles, which often a lot of them were interesting human interest pieces. But they'd have, like in the same way that *The New Yorker* have these cartoons, the *Wall Street Journal* had those, so I used to like to read those. It was Pepper and Salt, that was my— God. That's what they were called, Pepper and Salt. But I didn't— No, I was not an avid follower of the daily news.

COLLINGS: But it makes perfect sense to me. You liked the idea of kind of getting out and reporting, but you don't have to— Frankly, it is a different life than sitting and consuming newspapers. It is a different focus.

MOGUL: Which?

COLLINGS: Getting out and reporting and documenting what's going on, versus being kind of a consumer of this stuff.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: You were at Madison for two years, right?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Did you kind of like come out of that situation having— I mean I hate to use the term *raised consciousness*, but did you sort of achieve some kind of political awareness having been in that environment at all, with the demonstrations and strikes and—

MOGUL: Yes. I think you may not be into something because you're not in an environment in which it exists or that it is encouraged. I think if you don't have the inclination towards that, the engineering students had their lights on all the time in Madison and were never involved. I don't know what happened to them later.

So I guess what I'm saying is yes, but I think that I also was open to that. So, yes, it did. I was there for two years. There was the black students' strike, too. I mean, in a very short amount of time there was a lot of stuff going on, and then my boyfriend was black.

COLLINGS: Did your family know about this?

MOGUL: No, that was a secret. And I would correspond with him in the summer when I was home and he was in a job. He was from Brooklyn, but he was in a job in the state of Washington. He was a physics major. Remember the whole thing about being private, we were writing, and I got a letter from him, and my mother started asking me questions, and then I just started to tell him to— I didn't like being

questioned, and I felt the questions had like— You know, there's questions and then there's questions that imply judgment, and they were very judgmental questions. So I started having him send the letters to another address, because I didn't— That's still part of me today, is that I'd rather not— I just don't want to deal with that kind of conflict. So, yes, he sent me letters elsewhere.

Then another time, when we were both like in New York on a spring break or something I visited, I met his family, in Bedford Stuyvesant where they lived, and I stayed overnight at a girlfriend's house, because it was secret. And this story has a tragic end, because we were in a car when we were— He was two years ahead of me in school, but a year older than me, and he was my first lover, my first boyfriend. He had to go to summer school for whatever reason at the end of my sophomore year, so I made a case to my parents, well, I needed to go to summer school, and I signed up for more courses. And then we were going back to New York after summer school in Madison. He was going to go to [University of California] Berkeley in the doctorate program, and I had decided I wanted to go to art school. I didn't know where, but I thought I would take time off and then apply to art school, something like that. On the drive back to New York we were in a car accident, and he was killed.

Larry [Taylor] lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. He came from a very well-educated middle-class family. His brother was a doctor. He'd gotten major foundation money to go get his degree in theoretical physics. And my parents were going to have to pick me up in Brooklyn at his home, so I had kind of consciously made this decision that they were going to meet him. In other words, it was sort of like kind of happenstance, "Well, you've got to pick me up here." So there was

something—I had been seeing him for a year and a half, and I loved him and I felt that he loved me. And then the shit hit the fan. So that probably had the biggest impact on me— That I’ve never really quite gotten over.

COLLINGS: I would think not.

MOGUL: I don’t know what else to say about that. I mean, you can ask me questions if you want.

COLLINGS: No, that’s all right. That’s okay.

MOGUL: But that’s when the relationship came to— Talk about how things are in different time periods. People forget about that. That was very controversial to be in an interracial relationship. It was also very controversial for blacks.

COLLINGS: Yes. How were people at college responding?

MOGUL: Both Larry and I studied a lot. He really studied a lot. I mean, basically, sometimes we would socialize with other people. It was kind of—I would go over to his place. He had an apartment, and he had a male roommate. So I didn’t find much of a problem— Yes, I think I socialized with my former roommate and her boyfriend once. I mean, we did some things with other people.

But I remember this guy, white guy, I was so upset at the time, he made a comment. I was so excited that Larry had gotten this Ford Foundation fellowship to go to Harvard. He had this whole pick of places to go for his doctorate. He made some disparaging remark because he was black, that he got the fellowship because he was black, and I remember that upset me. So that wasn’t about interracial; it was just about his own prejudices about what opportunities were available for blacks.

Actually, there was two—I can tell you two things that actually were related to blacks. Larry identified as a Black Nationalist, and prior to meeting me, he had been, I think, more active in black politics. And I think when I met him he was coming in his last year in school and was just focusing on his studies.

I remember I thought it was so sweet because he truly was such a purist. He had told me he was going to go to a basketball game, but he wasn't going to invite me, because he had felt it would be very hypocritical to do the Black Power salute with me sitting with him. [laughs] And I wasn't offended at all, because, first of all, I didn't go to sports events.

COLLINGS: So you didn't want to go.

MOGUL: It wasn't an issue, and I thought it was just really kind of great that here was this person who was trying to deal with his own conflicts and how he was trying to solve them and he was explaining them to me.

And then the other thing that he did that was sort of strange, looking back on it— He had been friendly with these two like really serious Black Nationalists, this couple Libby and Willie. They're in the movie, documentary *The War at Home*. It's about the history of the Madison progressive movement in the sixties demonstrations in Madison. And he invites them over for dinner, and I make the dinner. We weren't living together, but I made the dinner. And they didn't talk to me. [laughs] And Larry kept wanting me to sit on his lap. I don't know what he was thinking. I think he felt bad that that had happened. [laughs]

So those are two situations where because there was the whole Black Nationalist Movement, that there was that tension. The couple that I'm giving you an

example, like if you were to invite any people to your house, I mean, he should have considered inviting them over in the same way he considered the basketball game, because I was friendly with some other blacks who were politicized and they wouldn't have been like that. But he picked those two separatists for some reason or other.

But I just remember the only time really being uncomfortable is one time we went outside of Madison to some kind of campgrounds or something, and it was all white people and out in Wisconsin, and I remember feeling very nervous. You could just—

COLLINGS: Something could happen.

MOGUL: Yes, I just felt uncomfortable in that situation.

COLLINGS: Sure. Did you know anybody who was starting to get interested in anything to do with the Women's Movement?

MOGUL: Not in Madison.

COLLINGS: That was completely untouched territory for you at that time?

MOGUL: Yes. I don't think that—I was there from fall of '67 to August of '69. I don't think there was a Women's Movement.

COLLINGS: No, but, I mean just anybody talking about in the context of some of the other political activity.

MOGUL: You know, you have to also realize this, that I was not involved in any political groups. I was not in Mother Jones or in SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. I was not active. I marched in the black students' strike. I marched when we had this thing after Martin— There was some march after Martin Luther King, [Jr.] was assassinated. I participated in the student strike, and I don't know what other

things we'd do. But I was not a member of any organization, so I wouldn't really be a good authority on what people who were much more politically active than I was were talking about.

COLLINGS: What kinds of things were the women in the co-op that you lived in, what were they studying and doing, and did they have any comments about your relationship with Larry?

MOGUL: I don't think so. I was only really friendly with the woman who I shared a room with. It was like a house and then there were rooms and you shared a kitchen. No, I don't think anyone had a problem with it.

Then the second semester my sophomore year, that summer, I lived in an apartment with a girlfriend. She didn't have any problem— Nobody close did—I mean, I don't remember experiencing— During summer school, in 1969, I would have lived with Larry that summer had I not been fearful that my parents would find out.

COLLINGS: Would they have been upset if you had been living with any man?

MOGUL: Well, yes, and this was like double.

COLLINGS: Double jeopardy?

MOGUL: This was double jeopardy. Exactly, exactly, yes. I mean, see, that's another thing that— So I would protect myself about that.

COLLINGS: Sure. So why did you leave after two years?

MOGUL: You know, I don't know how much it was an influence that Larry was leaving. It's hard to know that, that I knew he was leaving, but I also had become serious about wanting to major in art, and so I wanted to go someplace else.

COLLINGS: So you went to the Boston Museum school [School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston], right?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: What kind of work were you doing at that time, in Boston?

MOGUL: Nothing that I do now. I was interested in sort of this vague idea of multimedia art, and I was doing soft sculptures that you could get into and people were supposed to move in, but I wasn't choreographing them. So I just made these kind of body sculptures that had zippers and canvas with tubes of foam that were all hooked together and someone could get into.

COLLINGS: Great.

MOGUL: They were okay. They were partly influenced by my dance background and some costumes I had seen. From that camp that I used to go to, I had learned how to do silversmithing, so I continued to do that in Madison and then I did that to some degree in the Museum school.

And what else did I do? I don't know. Just sort of like stuff that was in between. They had some exhibition at Boston City Hall, some new modern building, and so I did something that was sort of ugly with stained canvas and things hanging from the high ceiling going down. Stuffed sculpture I guess I was doing.

COLLINGS: Did you feel that you had found a medium that worked for you, or were you—

MOGUL: It wasn't until I came to L.A. I mean, what was nice, what I liked about the Museum school, it was— Okay, this is also kind of reflection of the times. I had left a big university which had like all the things that I mentioned a university can offer, but

it also was fairly, in terms of education, fairly traditional. You had to have your science requirement and your math requirement. I mean, there were some courses I loved, like history and English, and I loved taking the art classes, and there were some requirements I was dreading, you know.

And then I switched to this other school, which was probably smaller than my high school, which had also undergone a radical educational change, and the way they had it structured was you could take, say, four or five courses in a semester, but the way you were evaluated—and this was very much oriented towards being an artist—the way you were evaluated was the body of work that you finished at the end of the semester. So, say you took jewelry and sculpture— And, you know, this didn't include the academic courses. There were some academic courses you could take that was affiliated with Tufts [University]. But say you took three or four studio courses. Maybe one of those studio courses, say, in jewelry making, like you did almost nothing in there. That wasn't an issue, because what happened was you would have like your review committee, and you would present your work.

So it took into account that maybe all your energies might have gone into some other courses and you produced an incredible body of work, and you were not going to be penalized because you didn't do anything in one of the courses, because they could see that you were not—

COLLINGS: You were working in this other area.

MOGUL: Yes, and you were working very hard. You were producing good work.

And I really liked that.

COLLINGS: For sure.

MOGUL: Yes. You know, I have some slides of some of the things I did at that period, but I don't think any of those are particularly significant. Yes, I don't think any of those are particularly significant.

COLLINGS: So you were planning at that time that you were going to enter the art world and be an artist, is that—

MOGUL: I guess I was. [laughs] Yes, I was. I was. I mean, that was a decision that seemed to have come naturally, to switch to an art school, and then I also decided I wanted to go to graduate school as well.

COLLINGS: Was that sort of the norm for people at the Museum school, people were just going on to graduate school, or was that sort of a decision that you made?

MOGUL: Gee, you know, I don't know, because—I don't know. That school had a certain kind of a— There was sort of a working-class aspect to that school. I mean, who knows, I might be inventing that. But you know, some people would go to that. There were various ways you could graduate from that school. You could graduate with a professional certificate.

COLLINGS: I see, and go into like graphic design or something?

MOGUL: Oh, you would just have this whatever from the Museum school. I was in the program that was affiliated with Tufts, so I would also take these academic courses and other certain requirements, which were not as stringent as the ones in Madison, Wisconsin. I didn't have to take math or physics anymore. [laughs] I don't think there were that many who went to graduate school, but I don't really know. I remember my close girlfriend had applied, but I don't know.

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

February 25, 2003

MOGUL: There's something very significant about Boston. Boston, one, that was a big transition. I had recuperated at home for six months after the accident.

COLLINGS: Oh, were you injured?

MOGUL: Well, I wasn't injured that badly. I had a mild concussion, but I mean I hadn't applied to school. I didn't have a place to go, really, I mean in terms of a school to go to. So I basically stayed home. But I mean, being in Boston was really a— That was a big transition, like from dealing with the accident and Larry's death. It was a difficult period.

COLLINGS: I'm sure.

MOGUL: Also it was a period— I moved to Boston in February of '70. So that was when I was introduced to the Women's Movement, and that's when I started getting involved in the Women's Movement, still on the periphery. That's when I took on this very butch look. I also put on a lot of weight. I think a lot of these things were in response to— I don't know when I started putting the weight on, but I think part of it was a response to Larry's death.

COLLINGS: Yes, maybe depression or something.

MOGUL: Then also there was, at that time in the Women's Movement, there was this whole— How can I put it? There was this sort of emphasis on being unfeminine, you know. So, I think, looking back on it, there was a place for me to retreat. Retreat isn't really the right word, but there was a place for me to— I don't know. It just seems it

was interesting that here I had lost this man that I was in love with and who was in love with me, and I lost him, and that at that same time, there was the Women's Movement that began. There was all these radical ideas and also the ideas about looking at the other side of being feminine, which I think was very comfortable for me at that time. Also, I would go to, like, lesbian dances and things like that. I think you've gotten the idea that I'm just open to a lot of different things, and I think it was kind of a safe haven in a sense, too. I never went to therapy for the situation. My parents responded really, really badly to the whole thing, and so there was two things.

I really didn't have any place. I really was not able to properly grieve for my loss. So I think that, in part, that the Women's Movement at that time, although I wasn't engaged in the more intense way that I became engaged when I came to Los Angeles, you know, wearing my button, that was the first time I really started wearing a Women's Lib button, and wearing my hair really short and going to these women's events and some protests, was very comfortable for me. I think it was a way, in a certain way, to express things I wasn't able to express otherwise, that were like more intimate feelings that I had of grief and sadness and anger, probably, toward my parents.

COLLINGS: Did you identify yourself as a feminist at that time?

MOGUL: Oh yes. Oh yes. Oh yes. I was very ardent. I was very ardent about that. At one point I was in a reading group of these straight women and gay Jewish men, and we would read books about Jewish stuff together. That was something else. So there was a lot of different kinds of things that were of personal, both personal political. This guy, Louis Landerson, he worked on this paper called *Fag Rag*, and

then these other women who I knew who were involved in—Bread and Roses, a feminist organization, and the Jewish reading group didn't last long. So those were different interests of mine that were both personal and political were starting to emerge, and all those interests, I was getting involved in those things outside the art school. It was outside.

I lived in Boston, or I was there for two years. I lived both in Boston and Cambridge, and I also waitressed in Cambridge. So that was all outside the art school, and that is why hearing about a Feminist Art Program in L.A. was very appealing, because I felt like my art school buddies were not very political, although there were some. That was also during the Cambodia thing, 1971. I remember at night with Lorraine, whatever her last name was, we would go plastering the Cambodia posters up. But nobody was doing— They were doing antiwar stuff, but they weren't doing stuff about feminism in the art school, and the people who were the active feminists weren't interested or knowledgeable in art.

COLLINGS: Were there a lot of other female art students?

MOGUL: I didn't feel— Well, you know, that's the whole thing about— I think there was. I don't know if the word *irony* is even right. That's the whole issue about art school and then who becomes artists, because I think art schools often have probably more women than men, unlike other fields like lawyers and doctors, of my generation.

COLLINGS: Right. Okay. Just one sort of question about your family. Did you run into any conflicts or problems with family members identifying yourself as a feminist? Were there ever any discussions about that?

MOGUL: They didn't like that I wasn't shaving my legs. It's sort of like— Isn't it funny, in terms of that period, it's like everything that the family, that the parents were upset about, had to do with hair. The boys' hair was too long, and then the girls weren't shaving under their arms or their hair. I think that was probably more of an issue than what my politics were, was hygiene. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes, the concrete is always less potent, isn't it?

MOGUL: In terms of politics, if you want to go back, when I got involved in the Madison student strike, I just thought this was so exciting. And the police brutality and all this stuff, and then there'd be the school newspaper or the alternative newspaper would write articles about it. And I was so naïve. I was like writing my parents and telling them I was on strike, and sending them papers which was explaining everything that happened. And that was one of the few times my father wrote me a letter, and it was like this six-page longhand letter.

COLLINGS: Cease and desist. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: How I was being duped by the Communists. So that was probably the time that my parents responded— Actually, my father responded the strongest to my political ideas and actions.

COLLINGS: Just one question. You had mentioned that it was exciting for you going to Madison because it was almost like this wonderful theater going on around the campus, and I wondered, did you have a sense at all that this kind of activity there and then later on, the feminist activity in Boston, that this was actually going to change society in concrete ways, that this was on the vanguard on a social movement, or was it a different kind of appreciation that you had for it?

MOGUL: I don't think so— You know, it's hard to know what you think when you're in the middle of something. I mean, I did see like the rules about women's hours in the dorm change, something very small and concrete, something that was hard and fast there for God knows how many years, change. Because I think we must have made some student demands to get that changed to no hours.

This one friend of mine, Ken Mate, who was a big political activist there in Madison, and he was also like four years older than me, I'm sure if you asked him that question, he really had clear ideas about the revolution that was going to come, or maybe he had doubts about it. But I think he, who was more coming out of both an activist and theoretical base, probably thought more that way.

I did see some concrete changes that happened very rapidly in the course of being at Madison. One, sexist discrimination in terms of hours changing and what boys were allowed to do and girls weren't allowed to do.

Two, we went marching for the black demands. And the next semester, there was a black literature course being offered— I was taking all the black classes. There was black history the next semester. There was black literature. They were flying professors in to teach courses. So in that regard, you were seeing— I mean, talk about quick response. I don't know how I was digesting it, but I did see some short-term things happen very quickly. I saw a school shut down, which that doesn't really mean anything, but those two other things, those come to mind.

COLLINGS: Yes, so those are good examples.

MOGUL: Then I also have a sister— One of my sisters is eleven years younger than me, and I know when she was in school, they had abortion referrals, all kinds of

different referrals on campus for things that— As I told you, it was illegal to get birth control pills. So in her generation there was birth control and all these kind of health services. So that's when I realized the impact my generation had on my sister's generation of women

COLLINGS: Yes, it's remarkable when your own sibling grows up in such a different environment. I just was wondering if there was any sense, and I'm specifically asking you precisely as somebody who was not like a leader of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] or something, but somebody who was there at the time, at the place. Was there a sense of being sort of on the threshold of a new world? Did you have a kind of a sense of that at all?

MOGUL: You know, I think it is so hard to answer, because I think also that when you're that age, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty—

COLLINGS: You feel that anyway.

MOGUL: Yes. And you see time— You think of time in a different way. And I've always been very enthusiastic and kind of optimistic and forge ahead, but maybe not always knowing really what you're forging ahead towards.

COLLINGS: Yes. Okay. You heard about the Feminist Art Program at CalArts, right?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: From your sort of group outside of the art school?

MOGUL: Actually, somehow I remember, and I don't know how, I read about it, I think, in *Time* magazine or *Newsweek*.

COLLINGS: That's interesting.

MOGUL: I don't know how I happened to be even reading *Newsweek* or *Time* magazine. I think there must have been something there about the *Womanhouse* project, that project that got a lot of attention, and probably in the context of that, they must have said there was the first Feminist Art Program at CalArts. So that is probably— Somehow in my memory, or the mythology of my memory, it was in a national popular magazine.

COLLINGS: And then you just ran right out and found out more and applied? Or how did it go?

MOGUL: I applied to go to graduate school there. I wanted to go to California. See, more of the wanderlust. I wanted to go to California to graduate school, so I applied to—

COLLINGS: Why did you want to go to California?

MOGUL: Probably, again, to go far.

COLLINGS: Just go far, okay.

MOGUL: I don't know if in the back of my mind because that's where Larry was going. I remember Larry had that poster, which probably is a collector's item, which was that funny poster about California's going to separate. It was a classic sixties poster of California kind of floating out into the ocean. There was all that mythology that California was going to fall off.

I felt like, I guess, I had been in the Midwest, I knew the East Coast, I wanted to experience California, and I also think it was very much of the period, too, to want to— I think that was sort of the vanguard of where kind of a new— I think for a lot of

people of my generation it was sort of a new frontier. It was probably a new frontier for me in a very vague way.

So I applied to U.C. Davis [University of California, Davis], which had some interesting well-known artists, [California College of] Arts and Crafts in Oakland, and then the Feminist Art Program, which was really the one I wanted. CalArts is where I wanted to go, not only because of the Feminist Art Program, but it was a very new school and it was avant-garde and it was dealing with all the arts and supposedly the intermixing of the different art forms. So it was interesting. It was attractive to me for various reasons.

And then I went out to California. I did not get into the graduate school at CalArts, but, see, I was very clever where my girlfriend Dawn [Shifreen] wasn't as clever. She applied to the graduate school, too. But I, in my cleverness at twenty-three, wrote some letter to Judy Chicago saying I was also very interested, or maybe in my application, that I was very interested in the Feminist Art Program. So the Feminist Art Program called me up, and they told me if I wanted, I could come be an undergraduate.

I got into graduate school at Arts and Crafts, and I don't remember what the deal was at Davis. So I went out and visited the school, and I saw that Oakland was just like a replica of the Boston Museum School. It was just the same. It looked the same. It had no appeal to me, and then CalArts just was very appealing to me. I know my mother tried to talk me to go to Arts and Crafts, because she says, "You didn't get into the graduate school there. You don't know how to drive." So there's two things. So those were the two different things she thought weren't attractive. But I knew that

the education there and the kind of people that were going to be there, I was going to be in a great situation at CalArts.

COLLINGS: Was it expensive at that time?

MOGUL: Probably not. It probably was more expensive than Arts and Crafts. I mean, obviously, disregarding inflation, it probably is less expensive than even taking inflation into account than it was, than it is now. I had money from the car accident, and I also after art school, I ended up saving up money waitressing, too. A lot of things are fuzzy from that time, but I think that was the reason I was able to do it and make my own choice. I don't know. I don't know. But anyway, I had some money to spend on school.

COLLINGS: But your parents were sort of like supporting you, like your decisions and what you wanted to do, in terms of going out to California, is that what you were saying?

MOGUL: I don't think they were. I don't remember too much. I don't remember. I don't remember too much about—I don't remember too much. I don't think that was a high priority. But it was for me.

COLLINGS: Okay. So you decided— You did go to CalArts.

MOGUL: So I went there. Because of the expense and everything, I decided not to enter in the fall of '72, but I entered in January of '73 so I could save up more money. And actually, because I didn't drive, I lived in a dorm, in a dorm for a semester. So then all I did was work. I took all these classes. I took documentary photography and then I was doing the video with Lynda Benglis. Allan Kaprow had a happenings class, where we did performances without audiences for one another that were all kind of

part of his whole theory of working. It was sort of a non-performative performance— There was all this emphasis on the everyday life as performance. And I remember reading Irving Goffman, the sociologist at that point, at that time. Well, he really still is a sociologist. But I read that book at that time.

So I was doing documentary photography, then there was the video art that I was doing. I did a beauty parlor series. I'd go every Friday to a local beauty parlor and photograph the same women who would get their hair washed and set every Friday. And then I was doing all the consciousness-raising stuff and the journal writing. Then Judy Chicago told me, like when I got there, I should work with Suzanne Lacy and Laurel Klick, and she said, "We have a date for you to perform at Womanspace in Culver City. Put a performance together." So it was just like a lot of— I was just extremely busy. And then people got tired of driving me around. The women that I was friends with, part of my group, they got tired of driving me, so one of them offered to teach me to drive. So I probably did more in that six months—

COLLINGS: Jeez, that was six months?

MOGUL: Oh, I did a lot of—I did a lot of stuff. I was completely opened up to a new way of thinking, to a new way of working, to just new ideas, expressing myself, working in new media. I'd never done photography. I knew a lot about it from my mother. So, yes.

And at the end of the semester, we had a little show. Then I was also getting feedback from other people outside of the Feminist Art Program. The Feminist Art Program, it started interesting people. There's all these books now on feminist art in

the seventies and everything. But back then we were in the basement, and we were considered like the really— We were not seen with high esteem in the school.

COLLINGS: How was that manifested?

MOGUL: We weren't cool. We weren't cool, as opposed to the followers of John Baldessari, you know, the disciples of John Baldessari, who were like really cool— David Salle was there at the time when I was there, and they were like the cool set, and we were just sort of like not really considered very cool. That was all. It didn't bother me. I was having a great time, and I was around people who I felt understood me, and I was completely engaged in what I was doing.

COLLINGS: It sounds fabulous.

MOGUL: I also was getting encouraged to make work about my loss regarding Larry. I mean, none of that work was ever particularly good, but I was just getting encouraged in ways I hadn't gotten encouraged.

COLLINGS: I was reading some of an interview with Judy Chicago about her time with the program, and I think one of the things she was saying was that she felt that part of her work in teaching young women art students was, in fact, almost to sort of mentor them and bring out some of the urges and impulses and expressions that maybe they hadn't dealt with before. And what you say sort of sounds like you were having an experience like that.

MOGUL: Yes. I mean, she was the first teacher who told me that she identified with me, in terms of some of my own personal struggles, and it's very powerful when someone who is your teacher says that to you, but they're not saying it to you in way in which they're trying to be your best friend. I think Judy was both strong and she

showed her own vulnerability, which allowed you to feel okay showing your own vulnerability.

And the other thing that she did that she did— Was that when we were at CalArts? Because I followed her to the Woman's Building. She would like do things like say, "I've set up a date for your performance. You get it together." She was always like pushing us out into the public, to do things, get out of the closet and go out into the street, as a metaphor. In other words, "Okay, I have a gig for you. Now you've got to step up to the plate." So I feel she really came out of the theory about the self-fulfilling prophecy. If you someone sees you in larger terms and if you see yourself in larger terms, then you will do something larger than you expected of yourself.

It was very meaningful. She was invited as an artist-in-residence for several days at U.C. Santa Barbara, and she told them that she would only do it on the condition that she could bring three of her students and that they would make presentations as well. We didn't get paid, but we got hotel rooms, which, to me, that was like— I was so excited.

COLLINGS: Talk about affirmation.

MOGUL: Yes. I remember Laurel [Klick]— I don't know, Laurel and Suzanne, they had to perform live, so they were nervous. I had to show my videos. So, I don't know, I thought that was so exciting that someone was paying for my hotel room.

COLLINGS: Sure. Yes.

MOGUL: I think that must have been that same semester at CalArts. So there was just so many things, and then there was a lot of really smart, interesting students there,

too. Yes, that was very important. One of the key things about Judy and her organizing skills and also her philosophy, psychology, the way she worked with people, gave me the feeling that I could also get gigs. The following year, I remember, after we started the Woman's Building, I wrote a letter back East and said, "Hi, I'd like to do a lecture for you on the budding Feminist Art Movement. This is what I charge to do that." And I got a letter back and saying, "Yes, we'll hire you." It was like I had never done— So all of those things about putting yourself out into the public realm and soliciting, those were all new things for me, new skills and self-promotion.

And there were also little things that she taught, how you introduce yourself. You use your full name.

COLLINGS: As opposed to what?

MOGUL: "I'm Susan." In other words, she was teaching. It was almost like— What would you call it? It was like charm school. It was kind of like the reverse; instead of charm school for debutantes, it was like charm school for artists.

COLLINGS: Assertiveness training.

MOGUL: No, it wasn't—It was like, in other words, that you should present yourself as a professional. If you want to be taken seriously, you look somebody in the eye and you shake their hand, and "My name is Susan Mogul," and maybe you might even tell them what kind of artwork you're doing or whatever.

David Ross started the video department at the Long Beach Museum of Art— Was like a video curator, he was the first video curator at the Long Beach Museum. Judy would be at some party or whatever professional gathering, and then she would

make a point of saying, “You have to meet with Susan Mogul and see her work.” So she was trying to do what she felt like male teachers did for other young and up and coming male artists.

So I get a call from David Ross. That was a group show, but it was a very important show because video was such a new medium, and also there was a quality about video unlike other mediums that was very democratic, maybe because it was new, that this was a show that had young artists like myself in it, but it also had people like John Baldessari in it and Eleanor Antin. It was a show called *Southland Video Anthology*, so it had many different artists in it, so a lot of different people saw you in that show, and in part that was because Judy had a big mouth and was promoting people who she thought were appropriate. “Well, you’ve got to see Susan Mogul’s videotapes.”

COLLINGS: Now, as far as teaching you how to present yourself, was that something that she would do sort of formally, or was that something kind of informal that people picked up by just being around her?

MOGUL: [laughs] Well, Judy was never what you’d call formal.

COLLINGS: I mean, would she tell you, “Susan, you’ve got introduce yourself as Susan Mogul”?

MOGUL: Oh yes. Yes. I mean, probably she stated it in a group setting. I don’t remember. Let’s put it this way. Rather than the word *formal* or *informal*, it wasn’t done casually, and it was also discussed in a group setting. It wasn’t something saying, privately, you know, “Susan, by the way, next time you’re in a public situation.” Oh, no, this was like part of—

COLLINGS: What she would say to the whole group, “Bear in mind, represent yourself in this way.”

MOGUL: She would say it a little differently [imitates Chicago]: “I can’t stand it! I can’t stand it when you do this, you’re not a chicken girl! It drives me crazy!”

Well, you should see some of the film. Did you see Johanna [Demetrakas]’s film?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I was just watching an excerpt of that when she’s freaking out about how women don’t do stuff.

COLLINGS: Don’t do the reading. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: I think she was getting a little angrier then. I think she retreated after she left Los Angeles.

COLLINGS: She left CalArts because she sort of felt like she didn’t have the freedom to do the program the way she wanted to, isn’t that right? Or that it wasn’t getting the kind of recognition from the school.

MOGUL: God, I don’t really want to represent her incorrectly. My sense was that probably one of her feelings was that probably to have a Feminist Art Program in the context of a patriarchal institution was antithetical to the program itself.

At that point, Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro did the Womanhouse project together, which was basically they took an old house and created an institution and all the students created different environments in the rooms of the house. People get very confused, because there’s Womanhouse, Womenspace, and Woman’s Building.

Womenspace was a gallery in Culver City where there were different exhibitions.

Womanhouse was a temporary project conceived and started by Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, and that was an art piece unto itself. I wasn't there at the time, but that was done between '71 and '72, and Miriam and Judy had a falling-out, which I didn't know anything about, wasn't particularly relevant to me, except the fact that when I got there, I didn't realize that the Feminist Art Program at that point was also two programs.

COLLINGS: Oh, hers and hers.

MOGUL: Yes, right. [mutual laughter] It was sort of like there was Mimi's girls and Judy's girls, and never the twain shall meet. So I didn't realize when I first got there that there was— Because I had for some reason contacted Judy. I didn't really know anything about her. It just was the person I had contact with. So, in other words, when I got there, they weren't talking, so the program wasn't as unified as it had been earlier. They had just had a very successful project.

But she had this art program, and then Sheila de Bretteville had the design program at CalArts, too. And then there was this other woman coming, so it was this idea that she had. But I think she thought that she could accomplish more of her vision. Probably she wanted to do something that, again, was larger and more visionary. She probably wanted to challenge herself and take it into the next place. I mean, in a way, it makes sense. From the point of view of being an artist, it makes sense. She started in Fresno, then she comes to CalArts, she has this big thing, now she's got problems with somebody else there. She wants to keep expanding.

COLLINGS: One thing that strikes me that's a big difference between the CalArts thing and the Woman's Building thing is that the CalArts thing is at a nationally

known accredited, presumably, institution of a sort, and then the Woman's Building thing is not. Were there sort of palpable differences in terms of the kinds of people involved in the ventures that you could point to?

MOGUL: You ask such good questions. Now I'm afraid to say certain things. We can always censor it.

COLLINGS: Yes, you can always seal it for a million years.

MOGUL: Seal some things. You know, that's something that I thought about recently. I wasn't thinking about it at the time. I left. I had no reason to stay at CalArts, because I wasn't in the graduate school program. Judy asked me if I would basically come with her to be in what she was going to call the Feminist Studio Workshop. And I said yes, because, you know, Judy was my mentor, and I had never had a real mentor. I was just getting so much out of the situation, and we were going to be renovating a building. It just seemed very exciting, and it was just a continuation of what I had just been doing. So I wanted to do it, and I really didn't know what was in store.

In the group of the thirty women that first year at the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building, I was kind of one of the women that was kind of considered one of the better, more accomplished people. At the end of the year, when we did the summer workshop, which was run by the students, like myself and several other people were selected to run the summer program. So I was kind of the cream of the crop in the context of the Feminist Studio Workshop, and I didn't really think too much about it one way or the other. I was just happy to be doing work and being in that environment and learning new things.

Recently, several years ago, I went to a reunion of people from that year, and most of them aren't artists.

COLLINGS: That's interesting.

MOGUL: And most of them, looking back on it, were not very good artists, and those people who were the accomplished ones then, are the accomplished ones now.

Because the feminist art did not have the cachet that it's even had in the eighties where there's feminist artists showing in galleries, the people who were attracted to it were attracted to come to the program for different reasons. In fact, it was a few of the people who had been at CalArts, those were the ones who continued to really be good artists. And the ones who came from other places never really were. It was some way for them to express who they were, but not really through work.

COLLINGS: It sounds like the emphasis was more on feminism and social outlooks, and the art was a kind of a mechanism or a sort of a pathway, whereas at CalArts the art was preeminent. I don't know if that's a fair assessment.

MOGUL: It's a fair assessment in one sense. However, I was in both those places. I was in art school because I had a commitment to being an artist—I mean, there's a lot of people who go to art school. There's a high percentage of people who go to art school, as opposed to people who go to law school, forget male or female, who don't continue as artists for various reasons, because it's not easy and it's a very financially insecure choice to make. Okay. But people who go to art school have a commitment, have or start with some commitment to being an artist.

I think the people who were attracted to the Feminist Art Program or the Feminist Studio Workshop, the art was just one part of it. I wasn't signing up for the

feminist revolution or the feminist doctors or the feminist thing when I went to CalArts; it was because it combined two things I was passionate about. One wasn't going to be enough. I could have stayed in Boston. So I was equally passionate and probably more passionate about art making in one sense. I mean, it was almost hard to separate.

So I think the people— Because that was the question you asked. I think the people who were attracted to the Feminist Studio Workshop and the Woman's Building ran a whole gamut from psychological to political to social to being very— To someone who just split up with her husband. And it was interesting in that sense. COLLINGS: Yes, sure. It sounds like it would be. Did you ever see Womanhouse, the exhibit?

MOGUL: No, but I've seen the movie. [mutual laughter] But I've seen the movie. I have all the slides, and I know a number of the women who did some of the environments. So I feel I know it quite well, but I was never there.

COLLINGS: I guess I just wanted to ask you if you had any— What your response was to the "Waiting" piece that's in Womanhouse.

MOGUL: It's interesting that you're asking me that, because I just got sent a tape by Laura Cottingham that there's a clip of my work in it. It's called "Not for Sale." It's about feminist art in the seventies. It's eighty-seven minutes. So I just actually watched that two nights ago.

COLLINGS: Good.

MOGUL: What did I think about it? What did you think about it?

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO

February 25, 2003

MOGUL: The "*Waiting*" piece by Faith Wilding, and it's a performance.

COLLINGS: Exactly, yes. Well, I was struck by just the sort of an almost surfaceless expression of passivity, and I think that probably a lot of the things that feminism of that period was probably grappling with in terms of raising women's consciousness was that women would—I'm kind of looking back. I did not come of age during that period, and that's why I need to sort of ask other people about this. But I'm sort of thinking that the women of the fifties or even of later periods that she's sort of expressing would have had perhaps a false consciousness that would cause them to really get into the cooking, the sewing, the looking after other members of the family. So there's that. I felt like that's not in the piece; the tenacity of false consciousness is not there.

I also felt that it sort of seemed like very much the kind of thing that people sometimes say about the period, that it's kind of like a daughter's piece in that she doesn't have the perspective on what some of the joys or struggles or what have you of older women might, in fact, turn out to be. Okay. So I'm not going to go on and on, because it's not my interview.

MOGUL: Yes. Well, first of all, I think the first thing I should say, and then you can say whether we should talk about this or maybe we can think of something I saw at the time. Now the only way I can talk about the piece is how I viewed it when I was watching it the other day. So when I was watching it the other day and then they cut

to people in the audience, who are all just sitting around, kind of that way of just sitting on the floor and that kind of alternative space situation, and I was watching these women of the time, who were my age at the time, how were they responding to it, you know, and it seems like people were really, like, taken with it, and, you know, I look at it now, there's a quality of it that just— Obviously, it's simplistic to say it seems kind of dated. I think maybe we should talk about what pieces maybe I did see at that time.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, let's do, because I wanted to ask you if you had seen that piece.

MOGUL: Now I'd be giving a critique almost in the same way as you would be from looking back. A piece I thought was so good, but I don't remember so much the specifics of the content, I know the general content, was by Vaughan Kaprow, who is like twenty years older than me. She was married and had four kids with Allan Kaprow, the very well-known performance happenings guy, and she had started late, in her forties, becoming a documentary photographer. We were in a woman's photo group together. She gave a talk at the Woman's Building. This is in the seventies, probably '75, '76. She's probably, say, in her late thirties, early forties, and she gave a slide talk about being the wife of the artist. And she's very droll. She's also deaf. So her voice, she doesn't have that much inflection, but she has that kind of way of delivering these sort of stinging things in a very flat manner.

And she had like a slide of a George Segal sculpture where her husband and these other guys are all sitting around the table. Jill Johnston, the one token woman, is sitting there with all the guys, and then Vaughan is standing behind Allan. I don't

remember the specifics, but in terms of things that you see and that you remember, that was something that meant something to me. That had an impact on me.

There was a piece that I saw that Ilene Segalove did. She was primarily doing video. She was my age. She wasn't at CalArts, but somehow there was some performance evening at CalArts, very casual thing, and she was invited. She came with her mother, and her mother had all these banal things wrapped up as gifts, and she just handed them to her, and then Ilene opened them up and responded to them.

So these are the kinds of things which are obviously also related to my work. They're like everyday life is performance, in terms of that, like you bring your mother on stage and she has a penchant for giving you the better knife or the kind of these—what kind of word?—banal objects that she thinks will be important for you. The mother-daughter relationship was also a theme that's been through my work. So that was a piece that stuck with me.

I'm trying to think. The exhibition that had the biggest impact on me because I was fresh off the boat from the East Coast, was the menstruation show. And the menstruation show was sort of like analogous to I'm only at the University of Wisconsin for one month, and we're out striking. I'm only in L.A. one month, and I get taken to a show where every art form on the topic of menstruation is on exhibition, which inspired me to make my own menstruation tape. I mean, there were like sculptures and everything, so, I mean, that had an impact on me because menstruation was such taboo. That was taboo subject matter that I saw being explored in a whole show, which was like, wow. If you can do this, you can talk about this and make art about this, there's like no rules in terms of what you can make work about. So that

was a show that really had just opened, there were no barriers, and I actually made a menstruation tape. Not that the tape is that important, but just how one's change of environment and what's accepted and not accepted, how that makes an impact on you.

I'm trying to think if there's any other performances. Oh, and one other thing. All the things that I remember are all related to storytelling or interaction. Deena Metzger was doing a writing project. She's a writer in L.A., and she was doing a writing project with women who were interested in writing at the building. That was like probably in '75 or '76, and they did *The White Papers*. It was a group of eight or ten women, and then they were working on these stories about losing their virginity. So the presentation was just one woman after the other reading these pieces that they had made. They all wore white. But those are the things that came to mind quickly and are the pieces that are somehow related to storytelling.

And then, of course, I don't know if it's because I just saw this the other night [*Not For Sale*] and it was also in the tape, but that I was present for, was a performance Nancy Buchanan did with Barbara Smith. That performance was just a really smart take on role reversal, where she had all this kind of ballet music and these two guys were dancing in this prissy way doing ballet, and they were muscular guys. Then when that ended, then she and Barbara were dressed in karate gear, and they were fighting each other as hard as they could. I'm remembering that because I just saw it, but I remembered that when I did see it I liked it very much, because I thought it was an interesting way to handle role reversal in a nonverbal way.

COLLINGS: So were you interested in these pieces specifically because of the way they addressed concerns that you had about women's place in society and your desire

to express certain subjects related to being a woman, or were you more interested in them because of the way that they were kind of breaking down barriers to expression per se? Was the feminist content itself crucially important?

MOGUL: No, no. Because there was some work that people would do that was very embarrassing, not because of the content, because the work was just so bad. It was just like— What word would Judy used to say? I can't remember. She probably had some standard expression like "not transformed." I can't remember what word she would use, what expression.

No, that wasn't enough for me. No, that wasn't enough for me. Like the thing that Ilene did with her mother, I thought at the time it was very fresh. This was my perspective as a twenty-something. I thought it was very fresh and inventive, and it had a certain kind of spontaneity to it. I thought Vaughan's piece was also content you usually didn't hear, and I thought it was also the way she did it. It had a certain kind of dry wit. It was understated. It wasn't like over-the-top kind of "poor me" thing.

I don't know how I would have responded to Faith Wilding's piece at the time. I really don't know. I know I probably would have liked the ironing piece where that woman just ironed. In the Womanhouse, there was a performance where someone just irons a sheet. I think I would have liked that. That probably would have been more my taste.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right, just the sort of endless action of it, perhaps.

MOGUL: Yes. Well, also because— Yes. It was just kind of— It makes a feminist point. It's very banal. It makes a point without saying— Without hitting you over the

head, but hits you over the head in terms of the sense of— It's very clean and compact. It says something in a simple— It says a lot with such efficiency.

COLLINGS: Yes, I agree, yes. Okay. So where were you when you made the Mogul classics?

MOGUL: *Dressing Up* and *Take Off*?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: *Dressing Up*, I was at CalArts, and I made that in that independent study I did with Lynda Benglis.

COLLINGS: Were those two pieces like—

MOGUL: And then *Take Off*, *Take Off* I did— I mean, we can talk about them separately.

COLLINGS: Okay.

MOGUL: Then *Take Off* I did the following year.

COLLINGS: Okay. So they are to be considered separately? Because I was wondering if you'd made like a whole bunch of these, and those were the two best or something.

MOGUL: Oh no.

COLLINGS: Like one-act-type things?

MOGUL: No, I don't know. Sometimes I would put them on one tape together and that's all. No.

COLLINGS: But were you doing a lot of these kind of one-take sort of, I guess you could call them, like, performance pieces?

MOGUL: I didn't do that many. When I was at CalArts, I also did a few that I was taking on different characters, like being a black man and being some kind of woman in a crazy wig, and I don't know what else, but *Dressing Up* and *Take Off* were the better ones.

COLLINGS: Was performance becoming an important medium for you at this time?

MOGUL: Well, in front of the camera.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I hadn't done live performance. Well, I'd done that one thing with Suzanne and Laurel, but that didn't involve speaking, and actually it was sort of like making costumes. It wasn't really like my own performance, and it wasn't really me where I was feeling like I was putting myself on the line so much. I felt more of a performer and costume maker in that piece. So I really didn't consider myself doing live performance at that time.

COLLINGS: Okay. So what else were you doing around the time you made *Dressing Up*, I mean in terms of placing it within the—

MOGUL: Because I was in this, the Feminist Art Program, I thought it would be interesting to do— There was this critique, oh, well, why are you separating yourself out, and blah, blah, blah, as feminists and your own program. And then I thought it would be interesting to explore environments that are acceptable female environments, i.e., the beauty parlor.

And also I had gotten interested in documentary photography when I came to CalArts. I don't know. People were teaching it, I had been exposed to it all my life,

and so I did that. So I did this one beauty parlor series. I was taking pictures at the same beauty parlor every Friday for over an eight-week period.

And then I also started doing photo collage. I started doing photo collage then, too, and I tried to do like this little book about my feelings about the car accident, using images from my learner's permit. In other words, because I didn't know how to drive, I had failed driving in high school, and then I didn't need to drive in college, and then I was in the car accident, so then I was convinced I would never drive. And then I tried to make some links between my loss of Larry and then learning to drive again, and so I tried to make work using the driver's permit, driving test form or whatever, which isn't a very successful piece, because I don't think I really knew how to express, you know. I just didn't know how to deal with that subject matter very well.

The way I ultimately dealt with that was a photo collage I made called *Mogul is Mobile*, which I can give you one, which is me flying in the sky with a car and I'm over this landscape of Los Angeles, and that's the beginning of a whole series of photo collages about Mogul being in Hollywood. So, basically I started doing photography, photo collage, and performances in front of the videocamera. I wasn't really committed to one particular medium.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

March 4, 2003

MOGUL: I think that there's value to this interview process, because I think part of being an artist is you're constantly reevaluating where you are in your work and where you're moving, and it seems like as an artist, you're always in transition, especially when you're in the middle of a project or you've ended one project and where you're going to go to the next project, and you have somebody from the outside come interview you, and they're not just asking about your art, but your life. And especially since my work often reflects my life, it's a very valuable process.

And also there's some things that I've discussed with you which I've discussed in other interviews, but nobody usually asks— You know, there's certain maybe rote answers I have at this point about certain pieces because I've presented those pieces many times in a public arena. But when you start to talk about everything from like the beginning of your life, then I started to think about things I hadn't thought before.

For example, I realized after you left last time, we hadn't talked about, well, how I decided to become an artist, because I wasn't somebody who like knew from the time I was eight that I wanted to be an artist. I thought I wanted to be an actress, and then I mentioned to you like when I was in high school, I assumed, I thought, well, journalism seemed like a good deduction of what I would major in, since I was good in English and I had spent two seconds on the school paper.

You had asked me, like, "Well, did you read the newspapers a lot?"

And I said, “No, I read the arts.” I loved reading about the theater section in the *New York Times*, and then one of the things I was going to even add was also the thing I really liked to read in the *New York Times* which was in the Arts and Leisure section. I don’t know if they called it back then, it wasn’t Arts and Leisure, was the hundred neediest cases. Every Christmas they would always have in that section the hundred neediest cases, and you’d read about these little paragraphs about these children.

COLLINGS: That would make me so depressed.

MOGUL: I liked reading about that. I don’t know why, but I did.

But there were two things that I felt like in the period we were talking about last time that I felt were important to touch on. One was I had said that I really didn’t have any political consciousness when I came to Madison, but yet somehow I just fell right into the strike and got very involved, was very sympathetic to the activism and was involved in a peripheral way. I thought about that, and I thought, well, I really had started to get some introduction to that prior to going to Madison, and I started remembering that.

What was very significant was the trip that I was very proud that I had paid half for. I think it was seven hundred dollars, and I paid like four hundred dollars from my babysitting money to go to Mexico for the summer, which was basically you lived with families in Mexico, but it was a group of teenagers who were— We’d do a little bit of traveling, and we lived in Cuernavaca for six weeks.

It turned out I didn’t have the most Mexican experience in terms of the family, because I was put in this very wealthy family’s house, and the house was so big.

There was like eight girls of us there. So there was eight American girls, so we really didn't have that much interchange with the family, although there was a lot of social things that went on in the town where we interacted, particularly with boys, Mexican boys, which was a lot of fun.

And among these girls were some very interesting young ladies. There was a girl named Carol who was active in the Catholic Worker. She was radical. She was Jewish, but the Catholic Worker was a radical organization. I remembered she was teaching us a song, "Lyndon [b.] Johnson told the nation, 'Have No Fear Of Escalation,' " so she was very political. She was from New York City, so some of these people who I had met on that trip, I would visit the following year and kept in touch with for a few years. Her boyfriend was from Yellow Springs, Ohio, David Scott, and he was, I think, involved on the American Friends Committee or the American Friends Service. So I was very taken with— I really liked Carol and I found her very interesting. So that was like one introduction to politics, and someone who became a friend.

I think that the whole way my friends, Elaine Rubenstein and Frank Albetta, they would both play music, and we were listening to all this alternative music, Richie Havens and Tom Buckley, and who's the guy who committed suicide, the folksinger from back then? Not Tom Paxton. I can't think of the other guy. Michael Ochs is the music archivist. Phil Ochs. We're listening to all this music, which was like antiwar or peace. I may not have processed it all, but I was certainly listening to music and then having political discussions with people prior to Madison. So I was certainly primed for that atmosphere, although it still was kind of a jolt.

COLLINGS: Did you know anything about that atmosphere at Madison before you went?

MOGUL: No, no, I didn't. I didn't know. But, as I said, I think I wasn't like a kid from Kansas coming in.

COLLINGS: Right, of course.

MOGUL: But, no. Somebody else from my town could have been like a kid from Kansas—

COLLINGS: Really?

MOGUL: Oh, sure, from my school, oh, definitely. But I was probably the only one in my class. Me and Elaine and Frank, we were probably the only ones who were going to Greenwich Village and listening to this kind of music in my class. So I just wanted to add that.

And the thing about how I decided, in terms of becoming an artist— Oh, there's one other thing I wanted to mention about the trip in Mexico. Remember how I said I really didn't feel like I fit into the school atmosphere, and I always talked about Fiedel School, the art school, as being the place?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: The positive thing about also living with those girls in that Mexican household was that we were all living together. We all didn't get along, but there were people I became friends with. But I remember specifically what was so significant. I think once we were in like this bedroom, it was probably a really big bedroom, and I was speaking, and I remember everybody was listening, and I think that was a special moment, because it wasn't what I experienced in high school, for

example, that there were people who were interested to hear what I had to say. I have no idea what I was talking about, but I remember that moment.

And even that, that whole experience in Mexico, also was a lovely kind of segue into my senior year. I think that whole experience between having some experience with boys, you know, just in a much more social and making-out level, that that brought me into my senior year, I think, feeling more confident about myself.

COLLINGS: Was the trip organized through the school?

MOGUL: Oh no. No, no. I figured that out on my own.

COLLINGS: That was your idea. You brought it to your parents.

MOGUL: Yes, yes, it was my idea. I researched this on my own.

And then the other thing that I found out was the woman, Leni de Vries, who— There were all these different trips that one could go to get down to Cuernavaca, this language school. But Leni de Vries, who ran the school down there, she wasn't the one who brought the groups. There was different facets of the organization. She, it turns out, was one of these Americans who had to leave the country, USA. She was in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade.

COLLINGS: Oh, wow.

MOGUL: I think Carol must have told me about that. So there were all these like bits and pieces I was learning about people who were expatriates— And this was between my junior and senior year in school. I was learning about people who were expatriates, and I knew everything was very fragmented.

COLLINGS: It was beginning to create a climate in your mind.

MOGUL: Yes, yes, yes. So that was that.

So I entered Madison, thinking I was going to be a journalism major. The only reason I even took any art classes at all was I had been silversmithing for quite a number of years. I started doing that at Fiedel. Then I would help teach silversmithing at Fiedel, and I had my own little pieces of equipment to make jewelry out of silver and copper. And it turns out they taught silversmithing and jewelry making at Madison, so I wanted to take the course. But since this was a big university, they had their requirements, and even if you had experience, you had to take the basic design and basic drawing class, which, actually, ended up being a really good thing, because I loved the basic design class, and I loved taking all those classes.

By the end of my freshman year, I noticed that—I guess I evaluated how I had done in school. All my art classes, not only had I gotten A's in them, but any assignments that we had to do, I always would do more than was necessary. So to me, I said, "I like doing this, and I do well at it," and so that's how I decided to be an art major.

This probably also had a certain influence. My freshman roommate who I was just put together with by happenstance, her name was Holly Schuldt. She was a classic-looking gal from Duluth, Minnesota. She looked like she stepped out of *Alice in Wonderland*. She was very smart, very knowledgeable about music, she played the harp, and she came to Madison knowing she was going to be an art major. We got along very, very well. We lived in a small dorm room. We got along very well. She had a lot of poise, and she knew what she wanted to do, and she took herself seriously as an artist. That's what she was going to do. So I think that had some impact. Not that I was mimicking her, but there was this seriousness of purpose that she had which

I was remembering, that she had that seriousness of purpose in terms of like picking a career or a field, or whatever you want to call it, although most people don't think being an artist is much of a career. [laughs]

So that's how I decided to become an artist. And then the whole idea of a certain kind of attitude about that, which, I think, after two years let me decide to go to art school and pursue it in a more serious way, was Larry. Larry was a year older than me, but he was two years ahead of me. So in my sophomore year, he was graduating. I mentioned he was going on to get his doctorate, and although I knew other people who were getting their doctorate, they were my teaching assistants or whatever. So Larry was someone I was close to, and he was a peer, and he was going to get his doctorate in physics. He had a very strong political consciousness.

There were two people, Holly and Larry, who I was close to who were very serious about what they were going to be and how they were pursuing it, and I think that somehow had an effect in terms of—I don't think it affected my choice to be in the arts, but the fact that I decided to go to art school. I don't know if I decided to leave Madison because Larry was going to leave Madison, but why was I choosing to go to art school?

COLLINGS: Did your parents have any preference in terms of what kind of major you would declare?

MOGUL: No, because I wasn't a boy. My father had a preference for the boys, and my mother didn't really have a preference, so, no.

COLLINGS: Were they expecting you to have a job when you graduated?

MOGUL: Well, I think I did, and I think the summer that I extended, like summer of '69, when I went to summer school at Madison and I also was working. I think I always had some kind of job in Madison, like one semester cleaning bathrooms and one working in the library, and I had some job, and I don't know what I did that summer. I also took an education class, because I decided that I would minor in education. So that would be the backup.

COLLINGS: Like an art teacher?

MOGUL: Like an art teacher, yes. [laughs] And then I did actually take more education classes. When I transferred to the Boston Museum School through Tufts, I took more education, so I did end up with my sixteen credits in education, which I never have used in terms of teaching high school or— You know, you don't need education credits to teach in college. You just need to know what you're doing, hopefully.

COLLINGS: Okay. Let's see. When we left off last time, you were kind already out to California.

MOGUL: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: You talked just a little bit about being at CalArts and then moving over to the Feminist Studio Workshop, and you said that when one was at CalArts you were either Judy [Chicago]'s girl or Miriam [Schapiro]'s girl.

MOGUL: Yes, if you were in the Feminist Art Program. Or you were Baldessari's boy or girl. [laughs]

COLLINGS: So you were one of Judy's girls.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Did that come about solely because she was the one who had seen your work and admitted you, or was there—

MOGUL: Yes, it was completely by happenstance. It was completely by happenstance, because I wrote that letter saying, “I very much am interested in the Feminist Art Program.”

Then I think Faith Wilding, Judy’s assistant, she wrote me back saying, “Come be in the program.” Actually, my intention was, towards the end of that semester, that I would reapply to be in the graduate school at CalArts, and then Judy said, “Why don’t you come with me and leave CalArts.” But, yes, so that’s how it happened. It was just happenstance.

COLLINGS: As far as you could see, was there any difference in terms of approach or method between Miriam’s girls and Judy’s girls? Were they sort of doing different kinds of things?

MOGUL: You know, I don’t really know. I don’t know if the students who were working with Miriam were involved with consciousness-raising. I do not know. Our group, did, and I really wasn’t—I honestly can’t remember which female students were involved with Miriam then. You know, I was just at CalArts just for a semester. It was a very important time, because I was getting the biggest bang for my buck probably in any semester I ever took in any place in terms of all the different teachers and students I interacted with and the projects that I did. I was just like lapping everything up.

But neither group were doing group projects, so there was nothing being produced as a group, so there wasn’t that kind of visibility that, like, Womanhouse had

or any other project. It wasn't that visibility, so I really wasn't aware. I remember Mira Shor was doing these bear paintings, and then I heard through the grapevine that she was having an affair with one of the teachers, John Mandel, and John Mandel was the bear. [laughs] I think Mira was studying with Miriam. I think I always remember stuff that's attached to little stories. Plus, Mira's a very good artist. She's a very good painter.

I was just involved with whatever students were in my classes or whatever projects I was doing, but I have a feeling that just from knowing Judy and having a sense of Miriam, that there was much more—Miriam's intense in her own way, but I think Judy was just more—I think there was probably more emotional intensity in terms of, like, expressing stuff, and Judy always wanted you to be kind of expressing stuff in terms of like being vocal. Basically, you'd freak out, I guess, we could freak out, so I think she was kind of very direct and confrontational. I don't know if Miriam was that way.

COLLINGS: Was this the first consciousness-raising group that you had participated in?

MOGUL: Yes, yes, yes.

COLLINGS: What was that like?

MOGUL: Actually, I remember more from the Woman's Building and the group I was in there being really intense and really liking it. I don't remember that much of the consciousness-raising group at CalArts. In the group that I was in, there was like thirty women in the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building, and I was in a group of five people, and that group of women was more committed.

COLLINGS: What was the goal of the—

MOGUL: Consciousness-raising group?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I don't know if there was an overall goal of the consciousness-raising group at the [Woman's] Building. I know every week together we would pick a topic that we would talk about, so it could be mothers, it could be whatever topic, and then we would all speak about it. What I liked about—I'd never been in therapy, so for me, consciousness-raising in one sense was like my first therapeutic experience or something that was close to therapy. What I liked about it— This isn't answering the goals, but I think this does tie into one of the goals of consciousness-raising. Are you familiar with the rules of consciousness-raising?

COLLINGS: No. Maybe just generally.

MOGUL: Well, one of the rules of consciousness-raising is there is no leader, one, and that you decide, like, basically how much time— Like, everybody has the same amount of time to speak, and you're not allowed to be interrupted. The only time you're allowed to be interrupted is for clarification. And I guess that's where it can also be made analogous to therapy or how some therapy is, is it's supposed to be nonjudgmental.

So the idea is that each person in the group has a voice, and one voice does not dominate over the other voice, and, in fact, the way— I don't think this was ever stated explicitly in the Feminist Studio Workshop at the Woman's Building, but Judy and Arlene and Sheila, Judy Chicago, Arlene Raven, and Sheila de Bretteville, who were the leaders of the Feminist Studio Workshop and the teachers, organized the

groups in such a way that, like, kind of the stronger women were all in one group. I mean, I don't know if that was good or bad. It was good for me, because I was with people who were my peers. I think it might have been good for other women, because then it enabled them, even though the rules supposedly were supposed to give equal voice to each woman, perhaps it allowed women who were not as outspoken—I was in a group of five or six women, who in the context of the larger group, we were the outspoken ones. We were the stronger ones, for lack of a better word. We were the ones who ended up running the summer art program. I mean, it wasn't decided then. So maybe women who were less forceful or less vocal in the larger group got to be in a smaller group where they had the possibility to become more vocal.

COLLINGS: Yes, that sounds like it makes sense.

MOGUL: So that was one of the purposes of the consciousness-raising group, was for women to speak. So it wasn't just about dealing with your feelings, but also about knowing that you had a time and a place that you could speak and you were being listened to, and I think that probably is the most important goal of consciousness-raising—I mean, consciousness-raising, the idea supposedly came from Mao. So I think even more than a political or social consciousness, it allowed you to have a sense of a voice for yourself, which I think that's what the whole Women's Movement was about anyway, was having your own voice and discovering your own voice.

COLLINGS: Would the topic always be gender-related? You know, you said “mothers” and—

MOGUL: Because who can forget the topic “mothers”? [laughs]

I don't know the answer. I remember at the end of the year, and this was the only time we ever did this, we talked about how we felt about the other people in our group. But usually we didn't talk about that. But I don't know.

COLLINGS: Would there be an effort to sort of tie that discussion into the artwork, or was this considered to be separate from the actual practice of art?

MOGUL: I think you would have to speak to Judy and Arlene and Sheila about what their overall goals were. I think everything in the program, whether it was at CalArts or in the Building, was— Multifold? No, that's not a word.

COLLINGS: Multifaceted.

MOGUL: Multifaceted. Was multifaceted. And one was supposed to have impact on the other, where what you're saying, which is, was the consciousness-raising tied into the art making, I think that took place on Monday nights, which was "crit" night, and that's where the artwork was looked at because everybody was there and the three leaders were there, and all of us were there.

COLLINGS: Did you have to put your art up every Monday night, or was it by choice?

MOGUL: Well, you'd take turns. They only have time for a few people each week. Yes, that was part of it. And I know they were very long, and people would always get upset. But people would get upset when I was in graduate school, too. I know in graduate school people always were devastated about getting their work criticized, and I was never devastated about getting my work criticized. I always thought somebody's talking about my work, this was very exciting. I mean, I remember one of the times I was upset when a teacher criticized my work, and someone that actually

I was very fond of, it was one-on-one, and it wasn't what he said about my work, he said that I wasn't prolific and I wasn't making enough stuff. Now, that, that hurt me more than anything about the work, because it was about what—

COLLINGS: Kind of like what kind of person you are.

MOGUL: Yes. So that's the only time. I'm sure there's other times I've been bothered, but that stands out in my mind. So Monday nights—I can't even remember anything that was even said in those Monday night things. They were these long things that seemed to always upset people.

COLLINGS: It's just, to me, sort of looking back, I think, one of the most fascinating aspects of the period of the Women's Movement is the notion of consciousness-raising sessions, because it's so the opposite of the way people normally relate to one another in American society, where privacy is valued and very sort of nonjudgmental, benign kinds of conversations are encouraged. So it's just sort of fascinating to me that there was this period where this kind of interaction was—

MOGUL: Well, but you can see how nonjudgmental can be both a good thing and a bad thing, and I think we would pick hot topics to discuss and feelings, different topics to discuss, and each group picked their own topics. So what we were talking about in my group in a consciousness-raising session wasn't what another group would be talking about, because that's something we also decided among ourselves. Or maybe we took turns with somebody picking a topic. I don't even remember how it was done.

COLLINGS: Would it always be very confessional, like using examples from one's own life, or would it be more sort of third-person?

MOGUL: You know, it's funny, I did this probably every week for, like, at least nine months, and I have no memory. I'll tell you, I have only one memory. I don't know what people's reaction have been to that memoir you have there by someone from the Feminist Movement, but somebody really should do something where there's a collection of people's memories from that time, of that particular period, because they're all so different.

My one memory of consciousness-raising was actually of a specific physical experience. It was like the last session we were doing for the year. We were talking about our feelings for the people in the group. There were five or six people in our consciousness-raising group, so we had known each other quite well inside the consciousness-raising group and outside, because we're always at the Building doing something.

We were going around the room, and everybody was saying their feelings about people. I don't know if they were saying negative stuff about each other or what, but nobody had said anything negative about me. When it got to me, I think I was in shock. [laughs] And what happened was, when it got to be my turn, I had a physical response. We were all sitting on the floor, and my legs went up and my legs kind of got paralyzed, and I was like sitting on the floor with everything extended, "I can't move!" I was so shocked that nobody had said anything negative, my body was speechless. [laughs] My body became immobile. So that's the most memorable thing I had from CR.

COLLINGS: Wow.

MOGUL: But I think what happened is, you know, I internalized, in a positive way, the experience in terms of being able— Like I told you, like that first time like I felt people listened to me was that summer I was with these group of girls for the summer, and one night I go, “Oh, my god, they’re listening.” This was like the summer I turned seventeen, and I had nothing, no idea about consciousness-raising, or having your own voice or have any of that articulated. Then here I am, like this is 1973, and I’m in a structure where each person has that time to speak.

COLLINGS: Do you feel that this impacted your work, these structured consciousness-raising sessions?

MOGUL: I think it impacted directly when I teach, how I teach, how I am, how I try to be in the world, I think from the moment I got in the Feminist Art Program at CalArts, that I could make art about anything personal that I wanted. I think I always had this desire to make personal work. My work, I know, is a lot more personal than a lot of other artists’ work, but that certainly gave me the okay.

So I think that, you know, both in terms of how I am in the world and that whatever you wanted to say, you had a right to say. All topics, all topics to make art about were okay. So that in that way, yes.

COLLINGS: Do you sort of miss those kinds of sessions, or do you feel like it’s not necessary for you at this point in your life?

MOGUL: I haven’t done those sessions for a long time.

COLLINGS: Yes. I mean, is that—

MOGUL: This is the closest, being interviewed.

COLLINGS: Is that something that is important to an artist at a certain age or could you benefit, could you be enriched by that kind of thing today?

MOGUL: For me to be enriched? I don't think I need that. I mean, I certainly could go into one-on-one therapy right now in my life. That wouldn't be a bad thing to do. But I certainly don't need to be in a consciousness-raising group at this point in my life to know that I have my own voice. That's certainly not the case.

I think, first of all, the times have changed so much, number one. So things that were taboo to talk about now have been now distorted to such a point where you see them on those horrible shows like [*Jerry Springer Show*] or whatever, where it's really distorted where every topic is okay and it's just for—what's the word?—for titillation.

COLLINGS: So at that time you felt like you were exploring taboo topics.

MOGUL: Well, and also you were exploring feelings that you might have that you don't know if other people have, because you've never talked about that with anybody. I don't know if I talked about Larry in a consciousness-raising session, but here I was coming from a situation where I had lost my boyfriend and nobody was talking with me about it. So just the idea of being able to talk about your feelings about anything that meant something to you was really good. And knowing people—I mean, I think that's another way that you gain confidence as a young person, is to know that your own feelings are also shared by other people and other people have experiences that are similar to yours, more intense, more weird. I think it is something more for young people in a sense when you're trying to find out who you are and find your own voice. I don't know how one would want to use that today. I mean, I could

see consciousness-raising being used today if you were trying to work together as a group and plan some kind of plan of action.

COLLINGS: New venture of some sort.

MOGUL: New venture, and some people weren't getting to have their say. And I think that technique can be used if you are working as a group in any venture and maybe things need to be aired in terms of group dynamics.

COLLINGS: While you were at the Feminist Studio Workshop, you were there for like two years?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Were there any sort of changes while you were there in terms of the way things were run or the mood of the place?

MOGUL: I don't know. I mean, all I could say is that one way to understand the experience is that it was all-encompassing, that at the workshop we were like a group of thirty women, and then in the building were galleries and bookstores and different organizations that slowly became part of the building. The women at the workshop not only were doing classes and consciousness-raising, we also helped renovate the building. That took quite a number of months. We sort of like were running the building, in a sense, and it was like our little campus. So our whole life revolved around that, and then we also organized—I think the second year there is when we also organized conferences. I guess that's the way in which it changed the second year. We organized a lot of conferences, design, writing, a series of conferences.

But basically, I think—I don't know about everybody in the workshop, but myself and the four or five women that I was closest to, we were just like, our whole

lives were the Building. It was sort of like we were living in a little bit of our own kind of culture.

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

March 4, 2003

COLLINGS: Was it fun to go in every day there? Was it a fun place to be?

MOGUL: Sometimes I feel like I'm a Pollyanna. It was intense. I liked it. It was intense. There were fights that would happen.

COLLINGS: But would one go in with like enthusiasm for the work and the activities?

MOGUL: Well, I was probably one of the more enthusiastic ones. I've shared stories in the recent past with people, and they would tell me they had other experiences.

There were some people who were very bitter and angry and unhappy.

COLLINGS: That sounds potentially like it could be really a lot of fun.

MOGUL: Well, I think it was pretty stressful for a lot of people.

COLLINGS: Why was that?

MOGUL: All the interpersonal dynamics, the fact that it was such a fishbowl.

COLLINGS: Was there a clear organizational hierarchy?

MOGUL: Well, Judy and Arlene and Sheila.

COLLINGS: And then everybody else was kind of at the same level beneath that?

MOGUL: Yes, because we were all just students, and we were paying to go there.

COLLINGS: How much did it cost?

MOGUL: I don't remember.

COLLINGS: Was it a lot?

MOGUL: Well, it wasn't CalArts. [laughs] I don't remember. I mean, probably a few thousand dollars. And some of the women resented that they came there and then they were sanding floors and putting up— Doing building and doing work. That didn't bother me. I liked doing it. I liked doing anything that was new and different. [laughs] I sound like such a— You know, it was— I don't know. I mean, it's funny, because I certainly have gotten into fights with people as an older adult, as a middle-aged adult, but I don't know, I liked the whole thing that was going on there.

I also think that part of thing was, I was liked by the teachers, too. So I don't know. Everyone had different things that went on there, you know, and some people were manipulated or let themselves be manipulated in ways that I didn't experience. But I had fights. I had some intense things with some of the other people, but for the most part, it was positive for me.

As I said, some of the women that were there, I think they were kind of floundering in their own— I mean, they were young women, so there's no reason that you should be all together. But I think I had mentioned to you in the past that I had more direction in terms of knowing I wanted to be an artist, and I think some of the other people maybe did not— Weren't clear about what it is that they wanted. They were looking for something, but they weren't clear, and I think maybe that's often the problem, when you're thrown into an intense situation with a lot of strong personalities, and you don't really know what it is you want. And I knew I wanted to be an artist and I wanted to be out in the world, and that was enough, and I would also get a lot of encouragement and support from Judy and Sheila.

So I had a lot of things going in terms of that, and then there was some people that I was close to. One of them, Laurel Klick, she and I lived down the hall from one another, so when I went home we would discuss things together, too. So that's why the Building was always— So I think that probably was also very useful that Laurel and I could talk about what happened during the day, and we were in the same consciousness-raising group. So I had a private place to discuss things.

COLLINGS: Did people tend to go there every day?

MOGUL: I think so. You're really asking me questions about stuff that was thirty years ago.

COLLINGS: I know, I know, because—

MOGUL: I know some people—

COLLINGS: On a college campus, people come like two days a week for classes, that kind of thing. It wasn't that kind of thing, though, was it?

MOGUL: As I said, that's why I can give you some overall feelings. My life kind of revolved around that place. I lived close to there, and so I lived on the border of Silver Lake and East Hollywood, on Myra [Avenue], and the Woman's Building at MacArthur Park. There was less traffic then, and you'd get there probably in ten minutes.

COLLINGS: Are you in touch with sort of the broad range of people that you had classes with today? I know you've mentioned the instructors.

MOGUL: When I got to CalArts, Judy Chicago was my mentor, and she was the one who brought me to— Not brought me, she said, "Please come with me to start this new venture, to be part of this new venture." And Sheila de Bretteville, I didn't get to

know, I really didn't know, at CalArts. She was there at the same time. She was in the design program, which was separate, and she also had a women's design program. Sheila and I became very close, actually, in a lot of ways. Judy was not there the second year, if I remember correctly. I think after the first year she left. Sheila and I, I think we became close in the first year. In fact, I used to house sit sometimes for her.

Judy influenced me in the sense of being out in the public, and the whole confessional thing, and making work that was personal, and I think that intellectually in terms of certain ideas about art making, I was very influenced by Sheila. Sheila was a designer and very much believed in the multiple—Sheila had two things that she talked about a lot. One was voice. One of the things which she talked about, which also got me interested in the whole idea of billboards, which when you come from another city and you come to L.A. and you see billboards and you see there's more billboards than art galleries at that time, and that that's another space into which to show your work, she would talk about billboards. She'd talk about how billboards are saying, "Buy this!" And she was very interested in the idea, the whole notion of the female voice and the female voice maybe being, "Do you want to come to dinner?" Or, "Is seven o'clock okay for you?" And that that doesn't mean that the woman who's asking doesn't know what she wants, but she's trying to be inclusive.

And she would talk a lot about the different voices that one could have, and that you don't have to have a voice that's shouting at you to get attention, that there's other kinds of voices, and so she talked a lot about that and the idea of possibly taking a form, a format like the billboard, which was about shouting at you and creating, putting a different kind of voice, talking about something personal or intimate in a

format that is about shouting at you. She also made posters, multiples, something that everybody could have.

Those were all ideas that were very interesting to me and influenced me in terms of like the *Mogul is Mobile* series, the *Hollywood Moguls* series I was doing, although I also was interested in posters and the whole idea of shouting out. But I think I liked the idea that you'd take a format where you expect a certain kind of information and you subvert it with something different. So I feel that she was very influential to me in that way in thinking about voice and form and how those two things might interact.

She was very supportive of me, too. [laughs] I was crazy about her—I still am. We've been e-mailing lately off and on. I was crazy about Sheila. Sheila wasn't intimidating or demanding in the way that Judy could be, although Judy's qualities never really—I guess she was so much like my mother was, it wasn't anything new. I ended up staying closer to Sheila. Well, Sheila stayed in L.A. also.

COLLINGS: Did your mother have a very forceful personality?

MOGUL: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: Oh, because you hadn't mentioned that before.

MOGUL: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: Did you make *Dressing Up* and *Take Off* while you were at the Feminist Studio Workshop?

MOGUL: I made *Dressing Up* at CalArts, which we talked about with Lynda Benglis. Then *Take Off* at the Woman's Building, I'm doing some kind of class with Arlene, and I was supposed to write a paper. This was like a year later at the Woman's

Building, the Feminist Studio Workshop, and I was going to do a paper about how men presented sexuality in their art versus how women presented sexuality in their art. At that point, this was like '73, '74, this was when I had started to make so-called video art and there were starting to be shows, and there was a show at the Los Angeles County Museum. Also a lot of these shows tended to have lots of tapes.

So I think that's when I first was introduced to the work of Vito Acconci, and I liked his work a lot. I thought it was really interesting. All of his work, he did performance work and he did video art, and it dealt with sexuality. One tape, specifically, was about him wanting you to believe that he was masturbating as he was sitting at this table. I was going to compare that tape—

COLLINGS: Did you like that piece?

MOGUL: Oh yes. Oh yes, I thought it was very—I was very captivated by him. I was very captivated by him. I don't know quite why. I don't know why I liked Vito Acconci, but I did. I mean, it was interesting for me when I later found out that he had come to video and he's made all kinds of art, larger artworks. He originally started out as a poet.

COLLINGS: Yes. I found that out recently, too. I was surprised by that.

MOGUL: That was interesting to me. That's interesting to me, because a lot of my work comes out of people talking, my talking, the voice, speaking, language; I don't consider myself a poet, but that his work did come out of some kind of writing base was very interesting to me. I don't know if I knew that then, but I did like his work.

Then I was going to try to compare that work to some self-portraits or portraits done by Artemisia [Gentileschi] or something like that. And then somehow I just

decided to do a kind of a satire on his piece, where I used the structure of his work and even the way he shot himself. I did basically a self-portrait performance, about my experience with my vibrator, where his piece was about him wanting you to believe that he was either fondling himself under the table or there was a woman under the table fondling him, which he alternated with direct address to the camera. So, basically, I borrowed his structure to make a piece about my own introduction to masturbation via a gift I received from my friends.

COLLINGS: Because I was wondering if you had liked his piece, because I didn't know if your piece was a sort of a rebuttal in the sense that you—

MOGUL: Oh, it was a rebuttal. It was a rebuttal, but that doesn't mean I didn't like it. It was a rebuttal. I mean, it was a rebuttal about sort of a male attitude, but, I mean, it was also— Yes. It was a conversation, a rebuttal, an argument. It's also a piece that stands on its own. You don't even have to know the Acconci piece to— I don't know what you would say.

COLLINGS: You don't have to know it to appreciate it.

MOGUL: Yes, it's just if you know the Acconci piece, it gives a—

COLLINGS: It gives it another dimension, yes.

MOGUL: Yes. And you know what I've discovered about the *Dressing Up* piece, I discovered this years later. Did I mention this relationship to [Martin] Scorsese?

COLLINGS: I don't think so.

MOGUL: Okay. So I made the *Dressing Up* piece. I don't even remember—I remember I was writing diaries. Lynda Benglis said do a video. I was keeping a journal. I was doing consciousness-raising at CalArts, and maybe I was writing about

feelings about my mother. Who knows? I don't remember. I don't have that journal anymore.

Somehow something I wrote in the journal gave me the idea to do this reverse striptease. A reverse striptease, which also was another comment about females.

Rather than taking your clothes off, I'm going to put them on.

COLLINGS: And discuss every piece in great detail.

MOGUL: In terms of how much it cost, etc.

Well, maybe five, six years ago, I noticed there's this video— In the Video Journeys, the local video store, of Scorsese's early films, and so I said, "Oh, I want to see this." So one of the films is a student film. And it turns out I saw it when I was a student, and it was shown in a festival in Madison, Wisconsin, and I remember I liked it very much. Scorsese was not Scorsese. And it stayed with me, this film.

So here I am, watching this. So I saw it probably in 1968. I'm watching this tape like maybe five, six years ago, and it's this short film about this guy, and he's sort of like this obnoxious Italian guy, and he's goes, "These shoes, 59.99. These pants," blah, blah, how much he paid for that, and that's when I remembered. I said, "That's where I got the idea." I had seen that film in Madison.

COLLINGS: But also you presumably had been doing some shopping with your mother.

MOGUL: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. But I had liked that film, because it reminded me of my own experience and how family members would talk about clothing, and then I saw this student film in '68 and it stayed with me. I think that was in my consciousness when I made *Dressing Up*, although I put my own mark— It was me.

But it's interesting to me that I have seen these different works by men who were sort of doing these portraits, that were self-portraits or portraits of a guy who was talking about himself, and then I replaced the guy with me and then created my own structure to make a comment on my role as a woman and also my own specific life experience.

COLLINGS: One of the things that's interesting about the *Take Off* is that there's something about the way that the camera is positioned vis-à-vis the table and you, that you come across as very presentational. One doesn't have the sense of being a voyeur. You come in and you've got this nice, neat haircut and you have kind of sort of stylized language. There's sort of a little bit of stylization to the address, and you are sort of presenting this. So it's kind of a reversal in terms of the Acconci tape in that way, because with him, I think there's more of a sense of voyeuristically observing this thing that he's doing. He's not sort of like presenting himself so much to the camera. Is that right?

MOGUL: Well, I set the camera up—I tried to set it up as close as I could to how he set himself up on camera. Well, I think I am more forthright— Because if you look at the picture.

COLLINGS: Yes, and I saw his thing like a long time ago, when I was like a teenager or something. I really can't comment on it.

MOGUL: Well, his language is obscure. I'm not doing any obscuring at all. That was one of my points, was not to obscure, was to present and not obscure. And he, in his language, he's being very ob—

COLLINGS: Obfuscatory.

MOGUL: What is that? Does that mean the same thing?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Oh, I've got to use that word.

COLLINGS: And your piece is also very funny, with the batteries, the big bag of batteries as well.

MOGUL: It's almost like I keep telling you more and exposing more. Not only am I showing you what I'm using to masturbate, then I'm showing you the underpinnings of this industry. [laughs]

COLLINGS: That's right. That's a really good piece.

Now, with both of those pieces, are those one takes, and did you do them sort of over and over until you found a take that you liked?

MOGUL: Yes, they're both one-take pieces that I did a number of times.

COLLINGS: Until you found the take that you liked?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Did you do them in a room by yourself, or did you have somebody—

MOGUL: I did them in a room by myself. *Dressing Up* I did in a room in CalArts where you could set up lights and stuff, and I did that by myself, and set the camera on the tripod. That's when I know I would do something and then I would show it to Lynda, and then go back into that same room again and do it again. I don't know how many times I did that.

With the other, with *Take Off*, I did it in my apartment on Myra Avenue, and I didn't have curtains, and I was sitting at this table with my—I don't think I was

wearing any underpants, so I could masturbate under the table, and if you watch the tape, once in a while—

COLLINGS: You're sort of looking out the window?

MOGUL: I'm looking out the window to see if anybody is looking in— Because I don't know if I didn't have shades or if I needed the light to get a better picture.

[laughs] But once in a while I'm going—

COLLINGS: "Is that a shape I see moving out there?"

MOGUL: At least I was on the second floor. [laughs]

COLLINGS: So where did you get the idea of eating the corn nuts in *Dressing Up*? Because that's a really wonderful distraction.

MOGUL: I know the reason I did it. I don't know how I got the idea. I know that what I was trying to do in *Dressing Up*, where I talked endlessly about bargains I've gotten with each item of clothing that I put on, I thought I was taking a character trait that I had, that I inherited from my mother, and that I was creating a caricature out of that, and I saw it as being obsessive.

Then I did the thing with the corn nuts. That was something that I would eat at CalArts, and I don't think I ate it obsessively, although I was quite overweight then. That was a device I was doing to play off of the obsessive nature of this portrait I was creating, and I don't know how I came up with that idea. I know that is why I did it. I don't know if that came from myself. I don't know if Lynda suggested that. I have no memory of that, but I know that's ultimately why I made that choice, was to emphasize this obsessiveness of this Susan character that I was doing.

COLLINGS: Because I think kind of what that does in tandem with the discussion of the bargains and everything is that it brings a person or a personality out into the frame, which is like of equal strength to the physical body, or maybe even by the end of the tape even overpowers it so that you've got this. So you've got manifestations of the mind that are more powerful than the representation of the female body by the end of the tape.

MOGUL: You have a manifestation of the mind because I'm eating?

COLLINGS: Because you're discussing your thought processes, so that's one, and then just to simply be propping up that discussion with the eating. That's just sort of another— As you say, you kind of sort of make it appear that this is sort of an obsessive personality. Well, that is sort of another manifestation of the personality. So it presents a robust portrait of a personality, and it's quite good.

MOGUL: Which piece— Did you like one more than the other?

COLLINGS: No, I can't say that. I think they're both really well conceived and extremely witty.

MOGUL: Because, you know, it's interesting, both those pieces have become— They were embraced by feminists at the time, but because feminist art in that period has now been taken into the canon, those pieces have also been historicized in the video art and in feminist art. Video Data Bank rents on a regular basis the *Take Off* piece. I think that the *Take Off* piece, compared to *Dressing Up*, is probably more intellectual in a sense, and maybe that's why it is more popular with academics.

I was discussing this last spring with curator Connie Butler, who's going to do a show on feminist art, I don't know, in several years, and I don't know, I was asking

her about that— Because I hadn't looked at them in a while. So I kind of understand *Take Off* has a tighter structure, it seems a little bit more intellectual, but I think I actually like, in a certain way, I like *Dressing Up* better because of the rawness that it has.

COLLINGS: Yes, I like that, too.

MOGUL: But I just thought it is interesting that *Take Off* is the piece that has, in terms of that period, the one that's been embraced and rented more and people have used to teach.

COLLINGS: Well, I think it goes more directly to the heart of feminist concerns of that period, like women's sexual pleasure and owning ownership of your experiences, and then there's a little bit of sort of critique of consumer culture, with the batteries and the different brands of vibrators and stuff. But the *Dressing Up*, I think, addresses more concerns that are more of our contemporary moment, I mean, just sort of the ongoing—

MOGUL: Oh, you mean even now?

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, and particularly now, in my view, because of the whole question about globalization vis-à-vis textile production. Where do these garments come from, who makes them, how much do they cost, and what do they mean for us as—

MOGUL: Do you think you can bring all that to that one piece? [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes, I do. I do. But I have a particular interest. I've always been kind of interested in the garment industry for that reason, and also because these factories are often staffed by women. This is many times a women's factory job. So, yes,

Dressing Up, I think, has got meanings for now, in my view. And I think your mother's idea of putting in subtitles, you know, with inflation, I think that's an excellent idea. You could relearn that piece.

MOGUL: You could put all kinds of subtitles in that piece. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: You could start dressing her up with other clothes before the other clothes—

COLLINGS: Yes. That's a nice piece. How did people react to those pieces at the time?

MOGUL: Well, as I said, in the feminist environment they're very well received.

COLLINGS: Even at that time they were embraced?

MOGUL: Oh yes. They were both shown in *Southland Video Anthology*, I'm pretty sure. I know *Dressing Up* was, and I don't know if *Take Off* was later.

John [G.] Hanhardt, at the Whitney Museum [of American Art], I brought them to him in like '77. Those tapes were done in '73 and '74, and I got up my nerve maybe around 1976, I think, to leave them at the Whitney. Then I called him up, and I tried to— That was like in my late twenties, and I had gotten up my gumption and called him up and got him on the phone, and I guess I asked him for his reaction, and he just said that they were “problematic”. [laughs] So that was like—

COLLINGS: And you said, “Thank you very much. Let me know what problematic means.” [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: I didn't know what that meant. [laughs] So that was that, and now, like, they've been shown more now in the last five or six years, probably, than they were

shown when they were made, that's for sure. That's definitely for sure. And rented and shown in academic environments.

COLLINGS: Yes, I could certainly see that.

MOGUL: I mean, they got shown, and it gave me a certain reputation as an artist, particularly on the West Coast, and I gained a degree of respect for those works. Certainly the New York establishment wasn't interested in that kind at that point in time.

COLLINGS: It strikes me that a lot of the feminist art of that period had a kind of parodic tone.

MOGUL: A parodic? Does that mean like pariah?

COLLINGS: Parody.

MOGUL: Oh, parodic.

COLLINGS: And I'm just thinking that that must have been a climate that was really, really comfortable for you.

MOGUL: What other work are you thinking about?

COLLINGS: Well, I just can't think of anything in particular, but I've been leafing through some colored plates and—

MOGUL: Yes, yes. Yes. Not in video particularly, but, well, as I said, Ilene Segalove for sure.

COLLINGS: I'm thinking of that Judy Chicago *Cunt and Cock* play.

MOGUL: No, no, definitely.

COLLINGS: Lots of humor.

MOGUL: Oh yes. A lot of it in the static art, and that was in the performance. Yes, a lot of it because it was all satirical, we called pink, “feminist pink,” because we were going to own our pinkness, and taking words that were considered like negative stuff about women and sort of turning it out, turning it upside down, like Sheila de Bretteville made a pink poster. Yes, it was flipping everything upside down. “You think we’re pink? We’re *really* pink. You think we’re really frilly? Well, we’re really frilly.” You think— in the *Bridal Staircase*.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I mean, the *Bridal Staircase* in *Womanhouse*, the woman’s train on the wedding gown goes over that staircase and just keeps going, and it becomes a noose, essentially. Yes. There wasn’t that much humor in videotape. That’s why a lot of people also outside feminism, like on the West Coast, responded to my work, because they said, “Oh, it’s funny like William Wegman, because there was only a few people who were doing pieces that were funny, because video art had this reputation of being very long stuff about— Very conceptually oriented, process oriented. All very kind of long pieces with very little going on. But you’re right about there was a lot of humor in the—

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

March 4, 2003

COLLINGS: So when you were at CalArts, you started doing the collage work.

MOGUL: Actually, you know what I realized? Oh, you didn't want to ask me about Judy?

COLLINGS: Yes, I do.

MOGUL: Do you want to do that first?

COLLINGS: That would be fine.

MOGUL: What did you want to ask? Ask me something specific.

COLLINGS: In the compilation video, *Not For Sale, Not For Sale*, there's that clip where she's berating the workshop for not doing the reading in feminist theory or in theory of any sort, and it's kind of a tirade. I just wondered how helpful people found that, or not, you know, and whether that was a daily occurrence and how people reacted.

MOGUL: I don't remember how—I know I said you could ask that question. When I saw that, there was something about it that, I mean, was familiar. I mean, I certainly recognized that. I'd seen the movie before, but I recognized that from my direct experience with her in the feminist art programs. And I sort of got a kick out of it actually. She wasn't just berating—I mean, if you really listen to what she was saying, it actually is thematic of what she was trying to do as an organizer and as a leader, and she wasn't just berating the women for not doing the reading; she was berating what she sort of saw as a female attitude about—I don't remember

specifically. See, I don't remember how she put it. Do you remember how she put it? She was berating women for acting in a certain way and not taking responsibility for their own intellectual life.

COLLINGS: She was saying that women are ignorant and are embedded—

MOGUL: In being ignorant.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: But, you see, so she wasn't just berating the women in that group for not reading; she was putting it in a larger context. See, I'm shouting like Judy. But that's what she did. She was trying— And I think that's what she would try to do. She would say [imitating Judy Chicago's voice], "If you're going to paint in a closet, then you're going to make work the size of a closet. If you have a big studio, then you're going to make a big work." So she was always making analogies about how women— She didn't put it always on the women, but basically she was saying, she was putting it all on women if you— In other words, a man's not going to help you to—

COLLINGS: Get your work shown or whatever.

MOGUL: Pardon me?

COLLINGS: To get your work shown.

MOGUL: Her whole theme was that you have to take responsibility for yourself, you have to present yourself in such a way and say, "I'm not Susie, I'm Susan Mogul, and I'm making this particular kind of artwork," that you say, "I want to do this." You have to claim your own space. I mean, that's basically what she's saying. That, like, was the whole theme. Her style put a lot of people off. It did never put me off at that

time, because I understood what she was saying, and I think she was a great model for that. She was saying, “Nobody is going to hand you something. You have to claim it for yourself,” and that, I believe, goes beyond gender. There’s a certain attitude.

Some people say to me, “Oh, Susan, you get grants all the time.” Well, they do not know how many times— How many rejections I’ve experienced, and that I have put myself out. I got a Guggenheim. . So now, actually, I got about five colleagues to apply for a Guggenheim because they know me, and they thought, “Oh, so Susan got a Guggenheim,” and so that was nice. But it’s like I’ve been applying for the Guggenheim for years and years and years, and most people, whether they’re men or women, people don’t want to face rejection and, like, put themselves out, and I don’t know if that’s more specific to artists or people in other fields.

So I really responded to her— People, and women specifically because she was often involved with women, responded to her differently. Some responded to her as a model, which I did. “Oh, I can claim my own space. I can call up people and tell them I want to do this project in this space. I can go to the guy in the soda fountain who’s never had an art show there, and start talking to him and get him interested in what I’m doing and let me use that soda fountain space. Oh, and then, now, by the way, I think I want to do performance there, too,” and ingratiate myself because I think it would a great place to have a whole installation and performance.

Putting yourself out in the world, that’s what Judy was talking about, all the time and all the different ways, and the opposite of holding yourself back. That’s what she was saying to the women. “Like it makes me crazy when I see women holding themselves back,” and that approach that she used and her screaming in there and her

frustration, some women, I'm sure a lot of women, found that, like, intimidating, offensive, whatever, which has to do with style, because somebody else could say that in another way. But it made her nuts, and that's who she was.

And if you could see some of the way she behaved stylistically and then separate that out from the content and see what it was she was saying, she was saying some important things about how you either disable yourself or enable yourself. That's basically what she was saying.

She was really big on people being in therapy. I went into therapy because of her. Not that Judy drove me into therapy. [laughs] But I started seeing a therapist. I think I found out from her that Cedar Sinai had a sliding scale. She was very big in people being in therapy.

COLLINGS: Did she feel that they needed to see male or female therapists or that it didn't matter?

MOGUL: I don't know if she had an opinion about that. I had an opinion about that. I only wanted to see a female.

So that's how I understand that yelling, and I think a lot of people couldn't. Her style was very abrasive, just people—I think if you come from certain kinds of ethnic backgrounds, sometimes you can sort of accept it more as a stylization of that particular group— You've experienced that kind of talking before, and maybe that also could still put you off, because maybe you're offended by it, or else maybe you can say, "Oh, this is familiar, but she's saying different things in that style. I haven't heard that before."

I think if she was just berating about the book you haven't read, and I don't know how that would come across in a classroom today or in a situation today, I don't know— If you could say that even in a mixed class of men and women, like you're embedded in your own ignorance. I don't think it would have the same effect as saying, "This is what women do to hold themselves back," which is more powerful than saying this is what people do to hold themselves back. Somehow it's more stinging, a woman saying to another woman. It's funny. It's interesting.

COLLINGS: You mentioned her mentorship got it so that you could like go to somebody at, for example, the Columbia Soda Shop and say, "I want to have a performance." Why don't you talk about that particular show and performance. It seems like a nice way to segue into the collages.

MOGUL: Oh, okay, fine. I can start with the performance or go back to—

COLLINGS: As you like.

MOGUL: Okay. I did end up having a show of my work in 1979 at the Columbia Coffee Shop, which was a drugstore across the street from CBS and next door to Columbia Studios, or used to be Columbia Studios, at Sunset and Gower. That coffee shop no longer exists.

From, oh, 1976 to '80, I had been doing a series of photo collages called *Hollywood Moguls*, and here again I was doing various satires. I was using my own name, Mogul, and its multiple definitions, one being the Hollywood mogul, the obvious one. I was from New York and— Didn't get so much attention from my name until I came to Los Angeles where everybody is a mogul or wants to be a mogul. Then I ended up looking up all the dictionary definitions of Mogul— So anyway, I

started on a series of photo collages where I was taking over Hollywood in various guises as just these different kind of characters in karate outfits and wild turbans, and I can't think of the other images. But I was taking over these icons of Hollywood. In *Crisis in Capitol* the Capitol Records Building was falling down. I was invading, I was coming out of the clouds into the Pantages Theater, and then coming out into the audience. Minions of moguls were invading Hollywood.

Oh, yes, it all started out with *Moses Mogul Parts the Hollywood Hills*. So, obviously, Moses is parting the Red Sea, taking over Hollywood, and that was, I think, one of the first collages where I was just a singular unit. Then I made other collages, taking over other architectural icons in Hollywood, and then I had my minions, that there were these little replications of me, so I had my mogul army, and they were all meant to be posters or billboards. They were meant to be replicated.

COLLINGS: Meant to be seen from a passing automobile.

MOGUL: Yes, or on the side of a wall of a building. I think those pieces definitely came out of working with Sheila, although they were very different from Sheila's clean lines. But the idea of creating your own voice. It's probably a combination of the influences of Judy and Sheila. My imprinting myself in the landscape, going out into the world, claiming your space. Well, I was claiming a lot of space. I was taking over a lot of space. So there was both the influence— That series is very much influenced by both Judy and Sheila, the whole idea of the multiples and the posters and this notion of a voice, claiming your own space. That's almost a cliché from that period.

My first photo collage actually was also taking over space. *Mogul is Mobile*, and that was done as a postcard. That's a significant work in the sense of the car accident— Although I was never really able to make work until later on directly about the accident. Later, in the nineties, I did videotapes where I wove in the death of Larry and the car accident into the work. I don't know if I've ever really successfully dealt with that experience in any of my work.

But *Mogul is Mobile* was the other side of coming out of that on one level because, after the car accident, I thought I would never learn to drive or never be a driver. When I came out here, which was also leaving the past, which was leaving certain aspects of the past behind, or if you want to say starting all over again, which maybe it's more like that than leaving the past behind, I made this collage. I may have made this collage in '74, because I got my driver's license in June of '73, and that's when I left CalArts. So I couldn't have made the collage then. Probably made it sometime in '73, later on, under the tutelage of Sheila de Bretteville.

So that piece was also I was going out into the world, claiming my space, flying with a car over— The Los Angeles landscape: *Mogul is Mobile*. So she's mobile, she's out in the space, and that was the beginning really of the Hollywood Mogul series. And then that was me flying. I'm not in any costume. And then they started expanding. Then I have this Mobil gasoline pump there in the postcard. And it's very specific to Los Angeles because of the palm trees, but then later on with the *Hollywood Moguls*, it's specifically in Hollywood in the landscape, and also being physically very present in the landscape and taking over the space.

When I finally finished the series I came upon this soda fountain, Columbia Coffee Shop, at Columbia at Sunset and Gower and I met the owner of the coffee shop, Shabir Mansuri, turns out he was from India. I somehow came upon the place. I think I probably wanted a picture of a Hollywood soda fountain. I don't remember why I came in. But I was living in San Diego. I came in there. It had that whole thing. They sold stage and screen cosmetics. I think at that time they might have had one phone to CBS. People could call directly from CBS, which was across the street.

Anyway, I started chitchatting with him. I found out he was from India, and he hears my name is Mogul. Well, the Taj Mahal is a Moghul empire. So he was very fascinated by my last name, and basically I started building some kind of relationship with him where I guess I came up from San Diego another time, and I showed him the collage I had done, the "Mogul television empire," and it's me and I have the Taj Mahal in Hollywood. Here he is, an Indian in Hollywood, so he loved that collage.

So basically I told him that I would like to do a show in his place, and he was very receptive. I don't know how many months later then I expanded, I photographed his soda fountain and made placemats for the event. So not only would my collages be on the wall, when people would sit down, there'd be these paper placemats, which would also be an image of the soda fountain.

The thematic was twofold. I was playing with two themes there. You had my collages on the wall, which were about all these moguls taking over Hollywood, and then the theme of the placemat and then some of these life-sized cutouts and then later the performance, was a satire of women waiting to be discovered. In the performance I was the director, there was a camerawoman, and I had invited a lot of women from

the women's community, about ten, to come dressed up loosely as women from different periods in time, and then I gave them screen tests, and there was a monitor to set up behind the counter. People could watch the screen test live or on the monitor.

Then there was an announcement that this performance was happening and that anyone could come; it was free. The place was packed—I had never performed live before. [laughs] Basically, I had a script, and I was dressed up like the stereotypical Hollywood director. I gave women their lines to read, and the improvisational part was how I would respond to them, the way in which I would respond to them.

It was like this three-hour-long thing. I don't think I knew what I was getting myself into, because it was just like people were really interested. It was a good idea. But it was kind of a frightening thing to do for a first performance.

COLLINGS: Because it was so successful, you mean, because so many people came?

MOGUL: No, because I had to carry the whole thing, and I had to stay in this character as kind of this stern director— The women took on a lot of different kinds of characters, and their instructions were they had to preen. In other words, while they weren't performing, they were supposed to be drinking malteds and putting on lipstick. They were supposed to come with compacts and lipstick, mirror, and sipping malteds, and just being passive.

Because I knew who was going to come, I sort of created different kinds of lines for different women. What I didn't take into consideration, which I could have exploited had I been a more experienced performer, was the fact that I was doing this in Hollywood, and I found out later— There were people who came who were dying for me to give them a screen test; in other words, audience members.

COLLINGS: You mean they thought it was real?

MOGUL: Possibly. Or they would have liked that anyway, because here I had a camera, there was a monitor, they would have loved to have done it, which would have been fun to do, in other words, to actually mix it with people who knew they were going to get one with the other people.

I think it was a good event. It was also interesting because people, Shabir and the waitress, they were serving. It really went off more or less how I wanted it. People were getting their French fries and their whatever. It was all the things like, again, it was taking over a space in another way. It also came out of the, in a way, kind of stuff from Allan Kaprow about performance where there's really no division between the audience and performer. In a way, it was a happening, really.

COLLINGS: It sounds fabulous.

MOGUL: I know I was petrified. [laughs] I think that I have done things as an artist where I've just dove into something and not realized what I was getting myself into. "Oh, my god, all these people are here. I have to give a screen test to thirteen people. How am I going to—?" I remember, though, starting was the hardest thing.

COLLINGS: Did you ever do anything like that again?

MOGUL: No. I mean, I've been on stage.

COLLINGS: I mean that kind of happening-type thing, where you take over a space.

MOGUL: No, no. You know what, I'm going to turn off the heat.

COLLINGS: Okay.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: No, I've never— Gosh, maybe I should.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, you should, yes. I think those are great events.

So your sort of collage work is kind of bracketed by that event at the end and *Mogul is Mobile* at the beginning.

MOGUL: Oh, you're so good. Yes, once I started driving, then—

COLLINGS: Yes, there's no time for collage.

MOGUL: No, once I started driving, that's when I wanted to make all the billboards. Yes, yes, yes. I think so, yes, because then I started moving into that, because I did that in June of '79, and then— So at that time I went to UCSD [University of California, San Diego]. I went to graduate school in 1977.

COLLINGS: Why did you leave the Woman's Building?

MOGUL: Why? I was there for two years. Well, I wasn't going to be a student there anymore.

COLLINGS: So there was like a sort of a two-year course, is that how it was done?

MOGUL: I don't even remember. I think there was some people who were there for one year, and I don't know if they came back the second year. I honestly don't remember. It's amazing what you don't remember. Then I guess I was just doing various kind of shit jobs to support myself at that time.

COLLINGS: At that time were you sort of thinking, "Oh, I will go to graduate school," or just not yet?

MOGUL: No, no, I wasn't planning to, because then I had started showing some and I didn't have that— No, it wasn't in my consciousness.

Actually, my mother was the one who was upset to see that I was doing shit jobs, and she thought that I should consider going to graduate school, and so I applied.

Then my friends—I was like twenty-seven, and they said, “Why do you want to go to school? You’re showing,” and blah, blah, blah. Showing meaning not showing pregnant. [laughs] And then, I don’t know, I didn’t mind the idea of going back to school.

So then I didn’t want to leave the West Coast, and I knew there was a lot of really good people. Some of them knew my work already, David and Eleanor Antin down at UCSD, I had met them at Long Beach Museum when there was that big opening for *Southland Video Anthology* that I was in, in 1975 or ’76. So I had met some of those folks there, and I had seen their performances and I really liked their work. Then also at that time, Allan Kaprow, who had been one of my teachers at CalArts, and then I had become friendly with him and his wife, because Vaughn was a photographer and we were in a photo group, so I knew them quite well. Allan was no longer at CalArts, and he was in San Diego.

So I applied way late, and they were a little taken aback by having somebody like me apply, because they thought that—I guess they didn’t know what they could teach me or something. It’s funny to think of that now, because I was twenty-seven years old, and I think the year before I had applied to teach video there. [laughs] Teacher, student. I think probably a combination of things. “Doesn’t she know what she wants?”

But, see, they hired Ilene Segalove. Ilene Segalove and I, there was a point where it was always Ilene and me over the years. Ilene and I were either invited to do things together sometimes. I don’t know if she’s aware of it, but we were competing

against each other for some teaching jobs. So I think she was hired to teach for a quarter down there or whatever.

So I got in. There was no question of me getting in. It was a question of like, “Why does she want to be a student?” They didn’t know if I was going to be a good student. That was the question, I guess, that you have of somebody who was so-called mature. It’s so funny. Twenty-seven.

COLLINGS: I know. How old were the other students when you were there?

MOGUL: Oh, they were probably three or four years younger. But they also hadn’t gotten like— By ‘76, I had gotten a— I wasn’t like super famous or anything like that, but I had like a teeny, teeny, teeny bit of a reputation. I had gotten a review in *Art Forum*. I had done a few things. So I went there.

COLLINGS: And your mother was encouraging you to go to grad school. She wasn’t sort of saying, “When are you going to get married?”

MOGUL: No. Maybe that’s why I’m not married. [laughs]

COLLINGS: She wasn’t— That’s kind of the way your family saw you, too, at that point, is that right?

MOGUL: I don’t know how my family saw me at that point. I know she saw that I wasn’t making a very good living. I was just scraping by, and so she thought if I went to school— She should have told me to go to medical school or law school or something. [laughs]

But I know a lot of people questioned me about going back to school. Not my mother, but my colleagues and friends. So that was a fairly easy move to go from Los Angeles to San Diego.

COLLINGS: And how was the experience?

MOGUL: Oh, that was great.

COLLINGS: Yes. Being in school is great.

MOGUL: UCSD was a great place to be in graduate school. The tuition was low. There was graduate student housing, which was very spacious and cheap. After my first quarter or so there, I got teaching assistantships, so then I was able to teach. So not only I was able to support myself on the T.A. salary, but I had teaching experience, because they don't have that, I don't think, at UCLA. They gave lectures to freshmen, and then we had these small sections where we would teach the sections. I don't think it's structured like— Maybe it's structured like that in history or other things like at UCLA, and I don't know if it's still that way at UCSD. So you really got to do your own individual teaching. You weren't there like, I know, some T.A.'s are like doing grading or Xeroxing. You actually were teaching and coming up with lesson plans and stuff like that.

Then I had a wonderful— My roommate, actually, she was an older graduate student. She was eight years older. She was thirty-five. Yolanda Lopez. We became great friends. She's still one of my dearest friends in the world, and she lives in San Francisco. So I had a great roommate and great intellectual dialogue going on there, pretty place, and I had my own darkroom, I had my own studio. I had a great roommate.

COLLINGS: Wow. I'm surprised you ever graduated.

MOGUL: I stretched it out. [laughs] Unfortunately, Yolanda was ahead of me, so I didn't get to live with her for the three years I was there; only for about a year or so. So that was a very good experience.

And then David Antin—I went down there with Allan Kaprow being my mentor, because you had to choose a graduate advisor. That was the term they used. I did that because Allan already knew me and my work, and it was just like really easy to just start talking with him. But really who became my mentor there and who I felt the most connected to was David Antin. He was known. He also came out of a poetry background and art criticism background, and at that time, which I don't think he does so much any more. He was known for his talk pieces. He would just stand up and talk. And he's quite a brilliant man. He's like a raconteur who would just start with one idea, go off on all these tangents that were very entertaining, and somehow seem to weave everything back to where he started. And I was just really taken with him. He was sort of considered like the brain of the department. All very, very smart people in that department.

It was a very intellectual, conceptual—I didn't just pick San Diego because I knew people there and I knew the chances of getting in were going to be very high. The reason the chances of getting in was going to be high was because the kind of work that I was doing and the things that I was interested in was completely in line with the orientation of the department, which was a nontraditional art department. They did performance, concept art, photography, all the different things that I was interested in. They didn't have foundries. They didn't have printmaking. They didn't

have the traditional things that you find in almost every art department across the country.

So anyway, I went there, and David really in many ways became my mentor. He was the one who encouraged me to do live performance, based on what he had seen of my videos. I guess I had done one live performance for the graduate students there, sort of a takeoff on being a standup comic. So he was the one who encouraged me to do that.

Then I got invited to New York to do something, some guy who I thought was a girl named with a masculine name, because I didn't understand that a guy really had organized this whole feminist event. I said, "It must be a woman with a boy's name." Bill Gordh, I thought, "It must be a girl named Bill."

COLLINGS: Yes, obviously. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: There was some country-western song with "A Boy Named Sue." Why is this guy making this exchange between New York and Los Angeles feminist artists?

I was invited to do a performance, and this was towards the end of my time at UCSD. I had done the collages and the soda fountain performance, and I don't know if I was doing any documentary photography at the time. Then I was invited to do a performance there. So that's when I did the piece about the live performance that was— What did I call that? [laughs] I don't know. What is the name of that piece?

COLLINGS: Here, I'll turn this off.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: So I did a piece. In fact, I didn't know if I was going to go. It was in New York in an alternative space, and I remember David really pushing me to do that, and I

don't really remember how I— Anyway, apparently there was money in the school to send me to New York, whatever.

So I came up with a concept for a piece to do there, which was called *Design for Living*— It was structured with me talking and having simultaneous activities going on. So, in other words, the piece did not stand alone on what it is that you're talking about, but was framed with the activities. So there were ideas being put across about female role and relationships as described by the activities which were framing you.

So what I was doing was making a salad and discussed the ways in which I liked to make salad. It is almost analogous to the *Dressing Up* piece. These are the clothes I like to wear. This is how much it cost. Well, this is the way I like to fix a salad, and I do it this way, and I take out the pits or I don't put in the pits, and just kind of going on about it, and what guests like, but what I like to put in anyway, and going on about the salad.

Actually, some of the seeds of that piece came out of working— Taking this class with Pauline Oliveros, who's an avant-garde composer who was teaching in the music department. She was giving some kind of New Age—she would probably hate me to say that—New Age kind of class, but this class that was about open focus. She called it open focus. She was into kind of being— I guess there was a combination of meditation, being open to things; I don't know. I ended up doing a salad thing in her class, and then I took it further where while I was making a salad, I come out with groceries, and I'm in this white paper jumpsuit.

Then my assistant, who is, I think a second character in the piece, also in white, Jerri Allyn, who lived in New York, so I was able to rehearse with her on this piece there. She basically created a stage set around me, and it's all color-coordinated. So when I'm talking about lettuce, all the green leafy wallpaper comes around and a green leafy apron is put on me by Jerri. Then when I'm talking about the red cabbage, then the red stuff. Then there's this whole set of the wallpaper coming down the wall and then under my feet. So she's both manipulating me and color-coordinating me in various aprons, and so there's this tension between the two of us as I try to continue to speak and do my spiel and she's trying to make me fit in. That was the whole idea, of someone trying to make you fit in, and kind of the tension between that.

It was kind of a— Not kind of. It was an indirect piece about my relationship with my mother, where I was kind of the expressive one who was going to have salad flying around, an improvised expression of who I was, and then there was this other person who was madly trying to rein me in. That's really what the idea was, and it was being expressed through this, you know, the color-coordination. And that was called *Design for Living*.

COLLINGS: Where did you get the title?

MOGUL: I think— I didn't take it from the movie, because I understand there's some kind of classic movie from the thirties or forties called *Design for Living*. I think I got the title from like some kind of interior decoration brochure, something like that.

COLLINGS: Why did you like the title for that piece, *Design for Living*?

MOGUL: Because my mother is, and still was, like, very interested in interior decoration and how things should be put together, and so it was a reference to that,

and then this woman was trying to design who I was. The piece that I did, *Dressing Up*, is also about a relationship to my mother. That's also done in an indirect way.

COLLINGS: You mentioned the mother-daughter outfits.

MOGUL: Yes, yes, and I make a comment, I said at this age— At that point I was twenty-four or twenty-three, “Yes, at this age, we’re starting with mother-daughter things,” and I kind of roll my eyes.

COLLINGS: Because you hadn’t done that previously? She hadn’t done that previously, she hadn’t been interested in mother-daughter stuff previously?

MOGUL: I don’t know.

COLLINGS: I was just curious.

MOGUL: Yes, I don’t know. But we did have the same outfits— And here we were adults.

But ultimately, I did do a piece that was directly about our relationship, called *News from Home*, which was based on twenty years of correspondence from my mother, and also I, in the course of reading excerpts from the letters and commenting on them, I incorporated a fashion show of clothes, different clothes that she had that I fit into perfectly. That was a piece that really was explicitly about a middle-class mother-daughter relationship revolving around clothes and food and behavior— Where she ate, where they went out to eat, advice, various things. I also incorporated slides. You saw family members. That was a final piece. I was going to say *final*, and you always wonder what’s final, but kind of a final piece about my relationship with my mother.

That was also the last live performance I ever did. I did that piece, many versions of that. I got to travel a lot with that piece, and did many versions of it. I was doing that piece from '85 to '87. Sometimes I did it with a lot of women modeling my mother's clothes. I did various things. My final version, the best version, and the one you saw excerpts of in the *Mogul Video Sampler*, that was done at LACE in 1987, December of '87, and that was my last live performance, really. I think that was enough.

COLLINGS: You were finished with that period.

MOGUL: It was funny, I was sort of finished with some of that mother-daughter stuff that kept kind of bubbling in and out, and I didn't know then that was going to really be the last time I performed live.

COLLINGS: Now, in terms of the clothes in *Dressing Up* and the wallpapers in *Design for Living*, is there social status sort of embedded in any of those wallpapers or the fact that the skirt is a sort of a designer skirt? Is the social status that comes with these kinds of consumer objects important at all?

MOGUL: To me?

COLLINGS: To her and to you because you're commenting on the relationship.

MOGUL: The wallpaper that I used in the performance was not wallpaper she would ever put in the house. That was also like matching—I was literally trying to get like green leafy wallpaper.

COLLINGS: I was wondering if this was like sort of like very expensive wallpaper that was clearly indicative of—

MOGUL: No, I couldn't afford that. I couldn't afford that anyway. When I did the *Design for Living* performance, I was picking out stuff that was going to go match the salad, so, leafy green wallpaper, and I silk-screened a leafy green pattern on an apron—I got a white apron, and then I silk-screened a leafy green pattern on it. Oh, I know. With a roller, one of those pattern rollers, I could paint—I could get a leafy thing. It was just about matching. In fact, the wallpaper was kind of schlocky-looking. Now, about her designer clothes—

COLLINGS: Yes, I was just wondering if that was part of the message of these things at all.

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

March 4, 2003

COLLINGS: I was wondering if there was a message in there about social status or if it was primarily—

MOGUL: The pieces about my mother?

COLLINGS: Yes. Or if it was primarily to do with mother-daughter and gender kind of issues.

MOGUL: Well, I think it was about—I mean, I don't think social status has been that important to me, except for the fact that one can't deny that it is a middle-class—I mean, this isn't where I start with my work. I don't start with like, "Oh, I want to make a comment about what it means to be a middle-class Jewish baby boomer." But I'm certainly aware that the idea that you can dress in a very sophisticated way and maybe even upper-class way, even if you don't have the means, but if you have the know-how, which is very specific to middle class and often Jewish middle class, or that there's a way to, you know, effect style, a high style, without those means, and then that represents a certain kind of know-how, a certain kind of almost Jewish street smarts. [laughs] That's like what would be Jewish street smarts. You know how to look good in the street, on certain streets, anyway. You may not know how to take care of yourself in the street, but you know how to look good. [laughs]

That's why I said with Ilene Segalove, I mean, I don't know what her impetus was to doing the work about her mother, but it certainly also was a certain expression of certain kind of middle-class values that was also part of a mother-daughter thing. I

have never done work that was specifically about being middle class. But it is part of my relationship with my mother, it's like you can't even get away from that. I mean, that's part and parcel of the whole package. But I would never set out to do just that, because it's not interesting to me. I'm more interested in relationships and the tension in a relationship, the way in which we're both similar and different to the person that we're interacting with.

COLLINGS: Yes. Okay.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: I was thinking, this is just something like an aside. I was just thinking about that we talked about these photo collages I was doing and then at the same time I was doing documentary photography. From '73, say, to '77 on a regular basis, at the same time I was doing the photo collages, I did a beauty parlor series. I also did a series in a slaughterhouse in the city Vernon—right next to L.A. I was photographing people who were having backyard weddings. I was going home and documenting my family. When I'd go home to visit my family, I was taking pictures of the family at dinner, my brothers and sisters doing things, my parents. And I can't think of what other— Taking some street photographs in New York City.

It was like I never really made—I guess if you would look back at my photographic work, there was never a particular commitment in one direction or the other. It turns out that my video film work and my performance work was the work that moved me along in my career and is the work that got responded to. That work was responded to.

But it all led ultimately to the filmmaking. The strongest pictures there are of the beauty parlor and also the stuff of my family. In the documentary photography I was recording the reality of everyday life, and the other, I was creating my own reality or my own fantasy. I was carving that out with fantasy images, but fantasy images of somebody in a real place. So I think there was the tension between those two, and I just was exploring those two things, and I was exploring them okay, but it wasn't until I finally moved to film that I was really able to carve out something that was truly mine.

COLLINGS: So do you feel like the photographs were kind of almost like notebooks or something, where you were almost sort of jotting down ideas, or do you consider those to be works in and of themselves?

MOGUL: The documentary photography?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Now what do I think? Or then?

COLLINGS: Well, then and now.

MOGUL: Well, then I was trying to—

COLLINGS: To actual work.

MOGUL: I was trying to do work, and I was trying to do—

COLLINGS: So you weren't just kind of like recording, like, impressions?

MOGUL: I was very knowledgeable about history photography, and I knew much more about the history of photography, certainly, than the history of painting, for example. I was very interested in looking at photographs and looking at other people's photographs. So I took the medium of photography very seriously, so if I

would look back now, I would say it gave me training as someone who knows how to look—

COLLINGS: Set up a frame?

MOGUL: Yes. Yes, yes. So I learned a lot about setting up a frame, yes. I mean, it certainly taught me that, because almost all my work I've shot. So it gave me that experience. And the photo collages, I don't know if you have the same questions for that.

COLLINGS: Well, I see those as being more, obviously, works in and of themselves. I just wasn't— Because I haven't seen the photos, I was just wondering how you were dealing with them.

MOGUL: I think now that the photographs were the latent desire to be a filmmaker. The other thing, you have to remember that videocameras were very expensive then, and I didn't own a videocamera. I didn't make that many video pieces. I don't know if I would have made more had I owned one, because one doesn't necessarily inform the other. But the video pieces that I made were made from cameras that were owned by schools, by hospitals, where I knew somebody where I could get in and use a camera, and I actually didn't own my own camera until 1993. No, sorry. That was the second camera. Till 1990.

So that's what I think now, that had I had both a certain kind of conception—I mean, this is all looking back. Had I had both a portable video camera and also a certain kind of concept of what I wanted, maybe those series of backyard weddings, I would have been filming and talking and making a short video series about backyard weddings.

COLLINGS: Well, it strikes me that the photographs sound like the only pieces that you don't appear in, isn't that right?

MOGUL: Right. And I think that had they been little documentaries where I had— There's a few ways I could have gone, if you think. This is interesting to actually think about right now. I never have thought about this.

Had I made them into books and written text telling, adding another dimension where I was inserting myself in some way my experience of being at the wedding, taking an audio recorder and recording things that were said at the wedding, you know, whatever, they might have been more successful as works. Or maybe if I had had a movie camera or something and then recording them in some way and interacting with them in some way, but I didn't do that.

And at the time, my first photography teacher was a very interesting man named Ben Lifson, who brought in all these wonderful street photographers to CalArts. I really got a— I mean, I knew a lot about photography. I knew a certain amount from my mother and the books she had at her house, like Helen Levitt. I knew about quite a number of photographers prior to CalArts— That I grew up with in the house. Then Ben Lifson was bringing all these wonderful photographers as guest speakers— I met Garry Winogrand through him, a lot of different people, and I continued to be friends with Ben after CalArts, which was after '73.

He was a very forceful personality, very smart guy, and he believed in this whole purist street photography thing, like you compose in the camera, you do the full frame. I did a piece where I brought my street photography and my documentary photography and my collages into one installation. I did a piece in 1976 called

Mogul's August Clearance at this little gallery at the second Woman's Building on Spring Street. I think for him that show was blasphemous, because I had like a strip of work prints on a hangar, and I was discounting my work, and I was hanging like maybe photographs that hadn't been fully fixed properly and they were on thinner paper. I had framed photos. I was sort of taking off on Loehmann's, you know, the discount store, the odd lots. Some stuff was in bins. Some stuff was on a hangar. The most expensive stuff was hung on the wall. I had price tags on everything. I think that was my desire to put my work into a context— And I was then the shopkeeper.

In one case I was the director and in another I was a shopkeeper, because the soda fountain piece came next. What I was trying to say, though, is that Ben could be less interested in the photo collages that I was doing, and so it was almost like keeping different parts of your life separate from the other. So I had my photo collages here and I had my purist pictures over there.

COLLINGS: Were they sort of authorless in a way? Was that sort of part of the idea, that they would be kind of like not a lot of intentionality in the photograph? I don't know, maybe I'm leading you off in the wrong direction.

MOGUL: No, that might be— There's probably some truth to that. I think there might be some truth there. I didn't care that Ben didn't like the photo collages.. I just, like, kept the collages separate, because that was separate from the other work.

And the only way or time I actually merged some of my other sensibilities with the documentary photographs is when I put them in that clearance sale context. But because of the ethic— It almost bordered on ethics. Because of the ethics of purist photography, I never— I mean, that was like really blasphemous kind of what I did

with them, even in that show, that because of the ethics and the purism of that particular school of documentary photography, and because of who Ben Lifson was, and I had admiration for him and also some other people in his circle, I didn't ever think of diarizing those photographs in any way or putting them into a book or sort of doing something else with them.

I wasn't getting encouragement from anyone to do it, and then I also knew that was a no-no— But I never really thought about that before, and it is interesting that you're saying that. That's why I think the pictures of my family, in part, that I did at the time, I think are the better pictures, because obviously I am inserted in those pictures, not physically, but there is a subtext there that I think happens when you take pictures of your own family.

I think that is interesting, the notion that they were to be authorless, which is also, if you think about, here I was at CalArts, and I was, like, with Judy Chicago, claim your space, have your own voice, and Sheila de Bretteville, and I was still involved with— I was actually in a women's photography documentary group, and nobody was— There wasn't the insertion of the self, because it was sort of just like women who were doing that kind of work, which nothing is wrong with that.

But I think my strength as an artist is when I insert myself in some way, and I have made works, even some videos I've made, and when my presence hasn't been there in some fashion, I know that even from feedback I've gotten from people, that it's not as strong. This recent piece I'm working on, I'm not in very much at all on screen, but my presence is there in voice, and the guy I'm filming is very— I mean, he's very, very dynamic.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

March 18, 2003

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Susan Mogul at her home on March 18th, 2003.

All right. So you graduated from UCSD in 1980.

MOGUL: At the end of the year.

COLLINGS: At the end of the year. So this was 1980, and the seventies were over. I just wondered, just sort of generally, did you have a sense that you were entering into a new era in terms of your artistic concerns? Obviously it was a new decade, and you had now left graduate school. What did those transitions mean for you, if anything?

MOGUL: Well, I mean, it meant moving back to Los Angeles, because I had left. I didn't leave Los Angeles in such a dramatic way, because I was able to come and visit friends. I was in graduate school for three years. But it was coming back to Los Angeles and getting resettled here. But like, as I said, it wasn't that dramatic because really I had been visiting over that time period.

Gosh, in terms of like the decade, I don't think so. It was resettling. And I'm remembering that I stayed at a friend's house. She had a big house, and I stayed there for a few months, and then I ended up getting a place in Highland Park. Then it was like having to find— Then these different jobs seemed to kind of fall into my lap. One was making sandwiches at CBS for a few months. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Okay. I'm surprised you didn't turn it into a performance piece.

MOGUL: Well, this went the reverse, because the person who hired me was the guy, Shabir Mansuri, who owned the coffee shop where I did the show, and he had a food concession across the street from his coffee shop in the CBS commissary, or whatever you called it.

So I did that for a few months, and then I think I got a summer teaching job. I think this was my first college teaching job, at Golden West College. Then a friend knew somebody who needed somebody to teach photography at Golden West, and I did that for the summer. Then I think shortly thereafter, another friend needed a photo editor at the *L.A. Weekly*. I wish things were so easy now, in terms of work. [laughs] I don't know what I was even thinking about in terms of my own work at that moment.

COLLINGS: I think it was in your interview with Alexandra Juhasz that you had said, and maybe you don't claim this statement anymore, but that you had said that you needed to relearn how to be a feminist as the community that had nurtured that had become harder and harder to find. I was wondering if you still believed that, because sometimes we make statements and then later on we're not really connected to them.

MOGUL: Oh, that's what I said.

COLLINGS: So I'm not going to hold you to that, but—

MOGUL: No. You know something, I don't remember really what my concerns were. I know that I had very good experiences at UCSD. I did that salad piece, *Design for Living*, while I was there, and went to New York and performed it while I was still in graduate school. I did the soda fountain project.

It was interesting, the big projects I did, although I did the work, I worked on them in graduate school, but then they all were taking place outside of graduate school, almost like my MFA show was in one sense a little bit anticlimactic, because I'd had this show, the performance, *Design for Living*, in New York and got a really wonderful review in the *Village Voice*, which was really completely unexpected and very exciting. I had done the Columbia Coffee Shop project. That took place in Hollywood.

Graduate school in a lot of ways functioned as my studio, and then it was almost like as if I was a teacher there. I wasn't, but in a way, like an art professor has her studio, and then they're having a show here and show there. So even that time when I was there, those three years I was there, I wasn't really in one—I was cloistered on one hand, in that I was in the academic environment, but then the big projects I was doing, they were out in the world. Probably if I think about it, probably more the art transition was probably like what I was going to do next, was probably more of a concern, I suppose.

I know when I came back what was a bit surprising to me and made me feel like, gee, even though I was only a few hours away, I'd become a bit of a hick, was there was this whole punk scene that had taken place, which wasn't happening in La Jolla and San Diego. So the art scene had shifted in that there was sort of this punk element to it, and then, particularly, I was working at the *L.A. Weekly*, and everyone there was like into this punk music and punked out. I enjoyed working there, but in that context I felt like really straight, you know.

COLLINGS: So did you feel like you needed to start bringing some of this esthetic into your work?

MOGUL: Punk?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: No, I didn't feel like I was part of it. No. It was just like I had to pick pictures. I mean, part of my job was like running pictures of some of these rock groups that some of these rock photographers would bring me, and I'd go, "Circle Jerks? Who are they?" That wasn't the main job that I did, but, no, I didn't feel—I was around, oh, I guess thirty, thirty-one then. No, I don't think I felt—I've never really felt that pressured by a group around me that I have to become like whatever.

COLLINGS: No, but I just mean that because your work is always so sort of socially observant, I was just wondering if you felt that this was a phenomenon that you needed to address in any way.

MOGUL: I think if I was friends, if that was somehow touching my life. I didn't really feel connected to it or touched by it. It was just something around me.

COLLINGS: Okay. So for the most part in the eighties, you were leaning toward performance, in terms of your work.

MOGUL: Yes. I was nominated for an [CalArts] Alpert Award [in the Arts], and the application was pretty interesting because, I mean, it was a lot. They asked you like what were milestones. They asked you to list, like, five milestones in your career. They asked various questions, or maybe it was even in another grant where you had to do a career narrative, nevertheless. Maybe I even noticed it before the Alpert thing.

When I had to do the career narrative, I think it was for the C.O.L.A. grant, actually, and I realized, I said, “Wow, this is really funny.” But it seemed like my work broke down into decades in terms of genre, and that seemed almost synchronous with what was the kind of the media of the day. So I could say, on one hand, “Well, I’m not influenced, like, well, they’re punks and they’re hippies or whatever, that I have to feel I dress that way or take on those theories.” But in a broader level, when in terms of video art, I was in on that in the early seventies when it was just starting, and then in the eighties most of my work was performance. I was still doing photography then as well, but it was a lot of performance. And performance was very hot in the eighties.

In the late eighties, early nineties is when I started really becoming a filmmaker, which was actually harkening back to what I was doing in the seventies. Each thing was building on the other, but in terms of sort of what started to become hip in a certain way, although the filmmaking thing, in terms of having a certain kind of cachet was not necessarily in the art world per se. Although in the nineties there were artists like [Julian] Schnabel and Cindy Sherman and David Salle, all these hot painters, who were trying their hand at filmmaking, I don’t know, I think in the eighties and the nineties. I think Schnabel’s the only one, I think, who’s really—I mean, I think he’s a really good filmmaker. The other ones are like, you know, stick to your photographs and your paintings.

You know, the thing is here, I got into performance because my videotapes themselves were performative, and then people around me like David Antin, whose wife was Eleanor Antin, and both of them did performance, were encouraging me to

do it, because they saw that that's what the tapes were, performative. So that's how I ended up moving into performance. But there was some other idea I had about performance. Oh, shit. Because you had asked about— So, yes, it was part of the atmosphere that I was in— I had an idea.

COLLINGS: Did it have anything to do with the general milieu of the eighties?

MOGUL: Oh, I know, I know. This is the idea. The idea is, is that certain work is able to happen and keep happening because of the milieu. Okay, (*a*), because people around you who are your colleagues or your mentors are encouraging you in a certain direction, people you're having direct interaction with who you admire and also are doing something similar, which is different from doing what's trendy. I think this is about people you're having direct interaction with, with people who you really respect and admire.

Two, because there is a scene, and people want to see performance—

COLLINGS: Then there are venues.

MOGUL: Then there are venues, and particularly for something like performance. If there are no venues, I mean, you can be painting in your studio, fine, and you can be an artist who paints and you never get an exhibition, but if you want, you can keep still churning out those paintings and throw them on the sidewalk or whatever. But with performance, if there's no venue, there's just no way that you can do your work. It's like an actress who never gets a part or something like that. So there were all these venues that were coming up, all these alternative spaces that were interested in performance, and then there were a few performances I was able to take on the road, and in that way you get better.

Then the same thing with filmmaking, one of the ways that enabled me to cross over to filmmaking was the affordability, was the coming of Hi8. So when Hi8 came, I could afford to buy the camera. I never felt I could afford a Portapak.

COLLINGS: And also the image quality was not that great.

MOGUL: No, but people didn't think that. That's because you're looking back on it.

COLLINGS: I know. But even then, I mean, just to sort to attract you, it didn't have the colors and— Anyway, go ahead.

MOGUL: It's all in retrospect. There was this guy, I think his name was Skip Sweeney, and he made a videotape called *I Sold My Studebaker for a Portapak*, Portapaks they were expensive. I didn't make that commitment, and I don't know if that was lacking on my part. Perhaps I would have continued to make more videos through that time in the eighties, but I didn't make that investment or the financial commitment to buy a camera, because I have other colleagues who did. They've gone through all kinds of equipment.

So it wasn't until the late eighties, '88, '89, that I bought a Hi8 camera. But because of the technology, that allowed me to then make that transition back to video. And I had felt, in terms of performance, that I had really gone as far as I could go, I think, as an artist in that area. I wasn't going to go beyond the alternative spaces. I felt probably you really couldn't—I mean, it definitely was not a moneymaking venture, which I'm not an artist for that anyway.

I just kind of got worn out from doing it. I think I thought I was good. But by the time December of '87, when I did my last performance—I did many variations of *News from Home*, and I performed in a lot of different places, and it really kept getting

better and better. My final performance of it was the best performance of it. I did it here in Los Angeles, and that final performance was taped. And I think at that point I just decided that I didn't really want to do it anymore. It also took a lot out of me emotionally.

COLLINGS: I was just going to ask you how you felt after the performance usually.

MOGUL: Well, this is the difference between—I don't know if I've mentioned this before to you. I know I've said it to other people. When you have a good performance, there's nothing like it, because it's a real high. But if you have what you consider a bad performance or you don't connect to the audience, it is horrible, horrible, horrible, horrible, and you never can step back and really experience— You can never look at it, because it's you up there. Even if it's taped, it's not the same thing.

COLLINGS: Did you ever have times when the audience just wasn't kind of going with that [inaudible]?

MOGUL: Sure. You have no people in the audience. I mean, there's all kinds of experiences you can have, and, the thing is, you're just so vulnerable, I guess. You're just so vulnerable.

And the difference between performance, live performance, and making a film is like I can go around the country, like, with a video like *I Stare at You and Dream*, and I can be very clear, like, "Well, that's a good audience," "That's not a good audience," because I know what I am showing them every time is the same thing. But when I'm doing a live performance, I am not the same every time. I wanted to have

more control, and I think the other thing was, I think, I didn't have the need to perform live any more.

COLLINGS: You did have the need initially, though, right?

MOGUL: I don't know. I listened to David Antin, who encouraged me to perform live. I don't know. I think maybe—I'm guessing. I'm guessing. I think one of the things that was very useful about performance is that you do—I think it's been very helpful in terms of filmmaking, you get a sense of you're aware of a live audience and you're aware of timing— Well, I think that things should move along. So I think I got a lot out of it, and I don't know what the driving need was. A professor I admired very much thought that's what I should be doing, and I was able to do it.

COLLINGS: I wanted to ask you another question vis-à-vis performance, and this kind of like goes back to the sort of the difference between the cultural scene of the seventies and eighties. I don't know, I might be sort of off base on this, but I just wanted to ask you, you had mentioned in one of our earlier sessions about how some of the conflicts that came up, like in your family, not just your family, but in people's families had to do with hair, like facial hair, leg hair, length of hair, underarm hair, whatever, and that sort of goes to a certain kind of look that was popular in the seventies.

Then one of the things that happened in the eighties was that this kind of—

MOGUL: You should say for the—

COLLINGS: Yes. I'm pointing now to Susan's postcard of *News from Home* where she's dressed in a kind of a black cocktail party dress.

MOGUL: From the fifties.

COLLINGS: From the fifties, but it doesn't really stand out particularly as being from the fifties, because this kind of look sort of came back in for women's formalwear in the eighties, you know, the pearls and the hose, and it was a kind of a retro work, but it wasn't a totally parodic or ironic look. I'm just wondering what did it mean for you to switch from some of the bralessness and what have you of the seventies, to this more dressed-up eighties [Ronald W.] Reagan era kind of look.

MOGUL: Okay. Well, one, okay, so what you're looking at is an image that was probably taken in 1986, '87. The card was made in '87. The shots might have been done in '86. I am in a costume, because it's my mother's cocktail dress from 1957, and I'm doing a performance about my mother, which I guess sort of coincides with also what you're saying about what culturally was going on, which I guess was coincidental in some regard. I think, for me, when I look at that image, I guess I don't think of the—

COLLINGS: In an almost uncanny way, you're taking these dresses and things from the fifties, and this very much ties in with the Susan Faludi notions of the backlash in the eighties where she talks about fashion.

MOGUL: But what I'm doing is I'm wearing this dress and I'm reading letters my mother wrote to me in 1970 and '71, complaining about my underarm hair— And she's berating me, and I'm dressed in her cocktail dress— You know, I never even thought about that, that here I'm dressed like her, reading her letters about my inappropriate dress— I mean, that wasn't—

COLLINGS: Even in the eighties, when this kind of style is sort of coming back in the backlash sense that Susan Faludi talks about, I just—

MOGUL: See, I think on one level I was ignorant of that. I think on a personal level, I probably wanted to have a more feminine sexual persona than I had in the past, that that was— When I was in my mid-thirties, I had a better figure, was taking care of myself.

See, for me, what's interesting is, I think, after Larry— I mean, there's so many ways to analyze like why you create different works— What your appearance is that you project or that you feel comfortable with. I think I said to you when were talking about being in Boston in the seventies, I don't know if I mentioned, I had— The car accident happened in '69, towards the end of '69, and then the beginning of '70 I was at Boston, and the Women's Movement was very present. The Lesbian Movement was very present. I was shell-shocked by the experience, losing my first boyfriend, and it was very easy— I should say not easy, comfortable for me to take on a look where I was wearing my hair very short. I had put on a lot of weight, not consciously, but I think there was a lot of things where I did not consciously want to be attracted to, you know, be found attractive by men. I felt comfortable if somebody thought— You know, if other people perceived me as being a lesbian. And I think that was just a way of insulating myself from all my pain regarding losing somebody.

So this is here we are x number of years later, I slowly got to a place, not that I was even consciously thinking about that, but there was some kind of transformation where I wanted to have a female sexual persona. Like the way I'm wearing my hair there is pretty much the same that I, roughly— I don't have the bangs. But it's the same length, it's the same kind of overall look. So that's what I mean.

It's interesting like what's going on personal in your life and then what also maybe is in a social movement and whether the two of them happen to coincide— You're able to make them fit because it fits what your comfort level with relationships overall and maybe specifically. So it's so hard to answer these questions about the cultural stuff.

And I think also, you know, the thing about— I don't think it was a coincidence that the last live performance I did was a piece specifically about my relationship to my mother, because that whole piece, which I did over a two-year period and different permutations of it, was really about separating myself out from her, because in a lot of ways we had always been told I looked like her and I did things like her, and it was a way for me to distinguish myself from her. That's why I think maybe I didn't have the need, and maybe the only way to really express that was in a physical and performative manifestation as opposed to doing that on film. So when I say "the need," maybe I don't have the need to be on stage per se, but somehow the need to do that kind of work with that content was most effective for me as a performer.

COLLINGS: This is another question which might be completely off the wall, but I just wanted to ask it. |

MOGUL: That was interesting, because it made me think about things I never even—

COLLINGS: When I saw these images of you in the black cocktail dress—

MOGUL: Those shots were supposed to be a takeoff on [Richard] Avedon.

COLLINGS: Yes. Oh, I see. Okay.

MOGUL: They were supposed to be a takeoff on Avedon. I remember when I got this guy to shoot me, it was like we played the music *Funny Face* on while I posed. I

don't know if you know that movie *Funny Face* with Fred Astaire and Leslie Caron.

COLLINGS: I haven't seen it in ages, but, yes.

MOGUL: [sings] "I love your funny face." I don't know. To me, it was the fifties.

COLLINGS: Were you at all interested in these Robert Longo images of the men in the cities?

MOGUL: Those were in the eighties. What years were these?

COLLINGS: Well, this one is actually 1999. I don't know why that is. I remember seeing these in the eighties.

MOGUL: It shows you he hasn't changed his work much.

COLLINGS: Yes, maybe that's what that is.

MOGUL: It was '81.

COLLINGS: And this is a re-release, I don't know.

MOGUL: They look— Yes.

COLLINGS: But I just sort of see them as being— Here it is the eighties, and everybody has become very urbane and urban, and yet there has to be a way of kind of separating this look out from anything that feels very natural. And I just sort of saw something there, and I wondered if you were at all interested in Robert Longo's work at that time.

MOGUL: I have to say, I mean, I was aware of it, but what I was mimicking— I remember I told the photographer that I was looking for this kind of Avedon thing, because obviously he was taking pictures at that time. If there was any reference, that was what I was trying to reference.

COLLINGS: So it was a satirical reference?

MOGUL: Well, I think both. [laughs] That's very interesting. I think it was both. It

was a combination of— I think it was closer to homage. [mutual laughter] The middle image, when you see that, when LACE had their— LACE is an alternative institution in Los Angeles, and when they had their ten-year anniversary, they put a small image of that on their envelopes and some other stuff, and they said “Ten years of shameless exhibitionism.” [mutual laughter] Because they’re really noted for having quite a series of performance stuff going on there for ten years.

I really do like that time period of the clothing and—

COLLINGS: The fifties or the eighties?

MOGUL: The fifties. Those cocktail dresses, I mean, it’s a classic era of high fashion, which still is beautiful. So I had an excuse, because I was doing a piece about my mother, which is satiric, to also pay homage. So it wasn’t just homage for homage’s sake. [laughs] I could have my cake and eat it, too. I could make fun of my mother and look good at the same time.

COLLINGS: Yes. Well, I think this image on the far right is really just a fabulous pose. It looks like it could come straight out of *Vogue*. It’s really, really accurate.

Did you do a lot of these poses and then choose the ones that you wanted?

MOGUL: He just, like, took all these shots. The photographer was very good. Then I didn’t know how I was going to design the card, how I was going to use it, and then I ended up doing, I guess you’d call it a collage, using three images.

COLLINGS: Now, these shots were taken at a sort of a photo session or at the performance?

MOGUL: Oh, no, it was taken at a photo session. This is a whole like cool— With a really good photographer, sort of like a whole fantasy of a photo session— So that’s a

whole separate act from— See, now you’re making me think I wish I would have filmed it. [laughs]

Yes, I think that probably fulfilled some kind of that fantasy of being, you know, fifties, like Leslie Caron or Audrey Hepburn. But it is, like you’re saying, it’s a strikingly different image from me naked munching corn nuts, overweight.

COLLINGS: A lot of the eighties sort of style, with regard to women, I think, was trying to claim, to reclaim, but from a position of strength, the glamour of those earlier decades.

MOGUL: But I guess the thing is, and the reason why I sort of might seem like kind of “duh” when you ask me some of these questions about sociocultural is because these choices that I made started with— I mean, in both cases there’s a direct relationship between my piece *Dressing Up* where I go from disrobed to robed and I’m putting on clothing.

COLLINGS: [Referring to tape] I keep thinking that’s going to end. Okay.

MOGUL: There’s a direct relationship between *Dressing Up* 1973, where I go from disrobe to robe and putting on different clothing, munching corn nuts and saying how much we paid for them, because this whole shopping thing is talked about and references my mother. It’s like a history of the clothing in a short span of time, but it’s very much in the present. And then you jump to 1987, and here I’ve lost— I’m like fifteen pounds lighter and I’m dressed in a very— Well, actually, I am trying on many different outfits that are my mother’s, my mother’s cocktail dresses or leopard pants, and now it’s more explicitly about we, but I’m pointing out— I read my mother’s letters and then I comment on them. I model my mother’s clothes and

comment on them. So there's two characters. There's not this one big character whose "we" are doing everything in a singular way. It's the two of us, and they're starting to separate.

So in terms of the images you're talking about in the period, it's all coming out of, like, person— It may have similar ideas that you're talking about, but claiming a certain kind of beauty and femininity from a point of strength, and maybe that allowed me to do the piece that I was doing. But the piece *News from Home* came out of direct personal material, twenty years of correspondence from my mother. The fact that I had saved my mother's letters, my mother had saved all her clothing from that period, because it was beautiful clothing.

COLLINGS: But she doesn't wear it anymore.

MOGUL: She doesn't wear it anymore, and my mother and I have the same body, so I could get into all her clothes that she probably couldn't even get into anymore. So it came from that material which then somehow, by coincidence, synchronicity, whatever, also fit into the time, and maybe because of the time, I was able to do that kind of piece.

I'll tell you how *News from Home* came to be.

TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO

March 18, 2003

MOGUL: I'll tell you how *News from Home*, since you're asking all these sociocultural things now, and my mind is starting to work a little better, *News from Home* came to be. It began in 1985. I had been invited to do a performance in Santa Barbara, and I had in the back of my mind, "Gee, I have, like, all these letters I saved from my mother." Around this same time, my youngest sister, Pam [Mogul], had an anorexic crisis, and I started reading all these books about anorexia and all the theories about the relationship to the mother and blah, blah, blah.

So when I did the first version of *News from Home*, it was slides of the family. I had a friend reading excerpts of my mother's letters, and I would make comments on them, and I was not wearing my mother's clothes. This was in '85. And what I tried to do with the letters is, in between the different things she talked about, I'd pull out letters that she would write to me when my sister was four years old, and I would include things that were about Pam, which was very banal, and then sort of bring it to the present. So there was this thing about my sister, my mother writing to me about family stuff, and then trying to pull out a thread. It's almost like me, the oldest daughter, trying to understand, like, why is my sister going through this.

I did that version only once. I remember, in part—I haven't thought about this for a long time. I remember, in part, and this sounds kind of simplistic, but people at the end of that performance would ask me how my sister was, and that was like really uncomfortable. You know, "Is she doing better?" blah, blah, blah, which actually is

not unlike when people saw *I Stare at You and Dream*. “So, are you still involved with Ray?” I mean, it’s like when you do personal work, people want to know, “Like, okay, so what happened?”

COLLINGS: Yes, I was going to ask you, how’s Alex Sanchez?

MOGUL: You know, what happened next? So it started out trying to understand, like, my sister and I are both— Like one friend of the family, Lydia Sugarman, just calls us “the bookends.” She’s the first and I’m the sixth. And, actually, both of us are the two unmarried children, adult children, in the family. I mean, she was like seventeen or eighteen or nineteen then, so the fact that she wasn’t married wasn’t, like—

COLLINGS: Very remarkable.

MOGUL: —very remarkable. Right. So that’s where that began, where I think at that point I was kind of identifying with my sister Pam in a certain way. Pam is sixteen years younger than me. The crisis with my sister Pam allowed me to go back and look at my relationship to my mother, because I read so much about the different theories of anorexia and all these theories about what kind of relationship they had with the mother and blah, blah, blah, whether that’s true or not. But that’s what got me going in that area.

And then I decided that I didn’t feel comfortable with the weight of the material in regards to my sister. I felt that was too much of a— I couldn’t handle that responsibility, or I didn’t want to, and I felt maybe I was taking advantage of her.

And, obviously, anorexia that’s also considered a cultural—

COLLINGS: Yes, and sort of very much a women’s—

MOGUL: So that's what really got that piece going, that piece about my mother and I, so after that I took it in a comedic direction.

COLLINGS: Okay. Let's just kind of like shift gears a little bit. I noticed that you did a lot of teaching in the eighties, also.

MOGUL: In the late eighties, yes.

COLLINGS: Is that something that you enjoyed doing?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: And did you feel like you learned anything doing that?

MOGUL: God. I know yes, but ask me. But what?

COLLINGS: But what was it? No, sometimes people teach a little here and there, because they make some money and whatnot.

MOGUL: I'm putting teaching applications out, so anyone who reads the oral history archive— [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes. All these other people feel that teaching is sort of part of how they get their ideas, and I just wondered what your approach was to teaching.

MOGUL: Well, I mean, obviously it can be a very pleasant way to make money. I'm trying to get teaching jobs now again. I think you have to ask me something more specific. Teaching performance was very exciting, because it is so interactive and it makes the classroom— When I taught at CalArts for a year and a half as a visiting instructor, it was the first time I even taught performance, and I had to invent assignments and how I was going to run the class and how do you deal with—

COLLINGS: That's a huge challenge.

MOGUL: Well, also it's very scary for the students, so how do you create an

atmosphere where people can come up and get in front of a class and make themselves vulnerable? Vulnerable just in the sense of being up there performing, because performing is probably the most vulnerable. You're at your most vulnerable, you know.

I don't know if teaching has ever given me any ideas, in terms of my own work, but I think like that class at CalArts was a vital—I don't know what—I feel like I'm floundering here.

COLLINGS: That's all right.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: I think teaching was also an expression of that whole feminist art experience that I came out of. I think that's what I brought— In other words, what did I get out of teaching? Well, I got out of teaching what I experienced as the positive things that I experienced as a student, the need to create, the desire to create an atmosphere where people could make interesting work and find their own unique voice and not feel there was a cookie-cutter-mold way to do something, and I was interested in that. Like when I worked with abused children, teaching them photography, when I worked with them one-on-one, when I had them in the darkroom, and the excitement they had and the encouragement I could give them back, and I think anytime I've really enjoyed teaching is when you're able to get a student, whether they're a kid or a young adult, just so engaged and excited and wanting that connection with you.

Lately I've been going through, "Oh, why am I making art?" and "How am I making a living?" and "What's my work about?" and I'm struggling with this new

piece. I know there's certain themes that keep coming through my work, home and family, and there's also another thing which is related to teaching. I think a lot of my work is about the struggle, the desire to connect to another person. There's very much that trying to connect, that desire to connect, maybe the missing the connection. But there's always that great desire there.

I think teaching is an aspect where you can— Which is also like being an artist in the sense that maybe there's a way to connect to somebody through art, through making work. Maybe you're not the best friend to somebody, maybe you're not the best daughter to somebody, but as a teacher, which is like an artist in the sense that you can try to connect to that person, in through you you can help them see themselves better or understand themselves better in terms of making work, or just in terms of a sense of who they are.

The several semesters that I taught at CalArts where I had that connection with the students, I think it's very exciting and it's just emotionally fulfilling, almost more than artistically. I would have to really think hard to say if there was teaching that I got an idea for my own work. Possibly. I can't think of anything offhand. I'll think about that for the next time. But I think that's what's rewarding, is being able to connect with someone.

I think that it's very powerful emotionally when you feel like you've enabled somebody to feel that they're understood, that they're understood, that they're worth understanding— Can't live in isolation.

[Interruption]

COLLINGS: Okay. So here we are, sort of creeping up on the late eighties. Did you

decide to go to Poland and make *Prosaic Portraits [Ironies and Other Intimacies]*, or did you decide to go to Poland and a film came out of it?

MOGUL: No, no. Okay. I have to back up.

COLLINGS: Okay.

MOGUL: In 1988, I went to Eastern Europe for the first time. The reason I went to Eastern Europe is because in 1984 I went to Europe for the first time, and I went over, not literally, the [Berlin] Wall one day in East Berlin. Also in Rome met a guy, a young handsome guy who had escaped from Czechoslovakia. And maybe because of my own Eastern European heritage, I was intrigued with the idea of going to live for a month somewhere in Eastern Europe.

So basically, in 1988, I rented an apartment in Budapest, and I lived there for a month. Everyone thought it was so bizarre, both people here in the United States and people in Budapest. They all asked me the same question. Why are you here in Budapest? Do you have family here?" No. "Then why are you here, a single woman, what are you doing in Budapest?"

And, basically, what I did in Budapest was I had the names of an artist and poet, and I just met different artist intellectuals, and I just lived this daily life in Budapest for a month. Then two years later, the Wall comes down and everyone thinks it's the coolest thing to go to Eastern Europe. So I said, "Well." [laughs]

And at the same time, I was invited to present a proposal to the Santa Monica Museum of Art. They had an artist project series. So I thought, "Well, I'm going to say, since I've already been to Eastern Europe, now I'm going to go back with a camera." So I made a proposal, a very brief proposal. The proposal was accepted,

and so you got a small stipend to do the project.

Then I decided, “Well, I’ve already been to Budapest. I want to go to a different Eastern European country.” So I basically arranged the same thing. I started talking to people to find out who knows who, and I rented an apartment in Warsaw, Poland, and I stayed there for a month, and then I went traveling to other parts of eastern Europe— Went to Czechoslovakia and briefly Yugoslavia as well, and I was gone for six weeks. So that was specifically to make a video diary, and it was kind of a little bit risky, because I had really never made a video diary before.

COLLINGS: Okay. So was this the beginning of your sort of video diary keeping at all? You hadn’t been doing any of this kind of thing before?

MOGUL: In ’88, when I was at the Home for Abused Children, they had this really big camera that was attached to a big video deck. Basically, it was a stationary camera. I borrowed that, and I set that up on a tripod in my house, and that also has the seeds of [*Everyday*] *Echo Street: [A Summer Diary]*, actually. I started using this camera that I could only use on a tripod, so I would either put the camera on myself or put the camera out the window, and I had many views out the windows in that apartment on Echo Street.

So that piece was never a piece that I showed. It was called *Dear Paul*. There was a guy that I went out with briefly, and so I decided I was going to make a diary piece framing the date he left and the date he came back. So that was an early diary piece that I never showed, and I used aspects of it in a performance.

So 1990, this was the first time I had a mobile camera, and then, what am I doing? It’s like when I made the performance with *Waiting at the Soda Fountain*, I

just plunged in. Like here my first live performance was in the soda fountain with, like, a cast of twenty, and then this was like, “Oh, I’m going to go to a country I’ve never been to before, where I don’t speak the language, and just take the camera and go.”

COLLINGS: Because one thing, I haven’t seen the film yet. You’ve just given me the tape. But I did see a clip of it from your sampler. And then, of course, I’ve seen your other work. One other thing that really strikes me, and we’ll talk more about this, of course, as we go on, but it’s just the way that that camera just really seems to be ubiquitous. It’s like you get all of these really kind of odd off moments. One is just startled at the intimacy that this was even filmed.

MOGUL: What in particular can you think of?

COLLINGS: I think probably some of the really best examples for me are in *I Stare at You and Dream*, which we’ll talk about as a whole film later. But just from the clip of *Prosaic Portraits*, there’s like that little exchange with the guy in the train carriage. So many people, I think, would sort of have that exchange and then think to themselves, “Gee, I wish I’d filmed that. Wouldn’t that be neat?”

But in fact, you did film it, and it’s like the camera really does take on your point of view, and I just sort of imagined you going around with that thing glued to your face. [mutual laughter] I’m just wondering, I mean, is that something that you just started to do right off?

MOGUL: Well, I was on a mission.

COLLINGS: Or did you have to sort of work up your courage in terms of how much filming you were going to do?

MOGUL: You have to realize also, I had a lot of experience being a documentary photographer with a still camera. So I was used to the fact that you had to be— That is an aspect of being a photographer that's a little bit obnoxious, and sometimes when I listen to myself, I say, oh, my god, I'm being so like whatever, kind of obnoxious, you know.

Like the guy I'm filming now, sometimes he's sort of annoyed with me, because like I just have it plastered, I just keep it going, because I know from experience if you stop and you start, like if somebody walks into the camera's viewpoint or sits down and joins you, that you lose something. And here I was, and in a foreign country, it's actually a lot easier. I wasn't worrying about releases, and I knew I had a project I had to bring back. So that keeps you very focused, like you have this mission to do, and it's not like you're going to be in that train tomorrow. It's not like you can do a pickup. I probably didn't even think in terms of pickup shots at that point. I wasn't as experienced in terms of these different things. Especially when you're traveling, you know this is it.

COLLINGS: Okay. Well, I'm going to see the film in its entirety, and we'll talk about it in more detail, but just as a general question, for this film and also for your other work, I mean, what is your shooting ratio usually?

MOGUL: Oh, gosh. In *I Stare at You and Dream*, that was a big shooting ratio, and I was following the lives of three people plus myself. That was— I shot sixty hours of footage. In *Echo Street*, which was a half-an-hour piece, I shot about eight hours. Actually, it's funny, I think it turned out that *Echo Street*, which I shot over maybe an eight-week period from like Memorial Day to July Fourth, was a similar ratio that I

did for six months in terms of how many hours I was shooting a week, or something like that. And I think for *Prosaic Portraits*, I think I shot around eight hours. I'd have to check. So I don't know. I know that *I Stare at You and Dream* was sixty-to-one, but I don't know how the other ones calculate out.

COLLINGS: As I said, we'll sit down and sort of go through each of the films in particular, but also in general, do you shoot—

MOGUL: *Sing O Barren Woman* probably has a much lower ratio, because there's all these different scripted elements to it and even in the documentary section probably has a much lower ratio, because I wasn't following their lives. I had very specific things I wanted them to talk about.

COLLINGS: Yes, it's more of an interview situation.

MOGUL: I'm sure that has a much, much lower ratio.

COLLINGS: Yes, that's a very different kind of—

MOGUL: Although, interestingly, that eleven-minute piece has more cuts in it than *I Stare at You and Dream*, which is an hour-long piece. I think that *Barren Woman* has more cuts or the same, because it has such a different pace, such a different rhythm and musicology to it.

COLLINGS: When you do these more documentary pieces, do you have entire episodes or scenes that you shoot that are entirely not included?

MOGUL: Yes. Would you like me to elaborate?

COLLINGS: Sure, yes.

MOGUL: Well, what did you have in mind with the question?

COLLINGS: I think what I want to do is just kind of like hear you sort of talk

generally about your working method, and then we'll go to each film and talk about each film.

MOGUL: Okay. When you ask that question, the first thing that comes to mind was something that didn't get included at all in *I Stare at You and Dream*, and this was Rosie Sanchez and her parents becoming citizens, studying for the citizenship, getting interviewed, the verbal, the one-on-one interview which determined if she would be a citizen, none of that. So, the ceremony, the interview, practicing the test, none of that got into the final project. And that was also something, when I made the proposal, when I was talking about what the piece was going to be about, which is only a speculation with a documentary when you're following people's lives, I talked about the fact that Rosie and her parents, after living in this country for God knows how many years, were finally going to become citizens.

COLLINGS: So she was not born here, presumably.

MOGUL: Yes. But she had lived here since she was like six years old, and they all were legal with Green Cards, and ran businesses and stuff, etc. Basically, I think it was Proposition 187 is what pushed Rosie. She said, "Forget it." She and her parents were going to become citizens— Some of her brothers and sisters were citizens.

The reason it didn't make it in is ultimately the piece is more about our personal lives, and the public event or the interview wasn't relevant, I'm sure another filmmaker who had a whole different approach, that would have been something primary that they would have put in. But somehow *I Stare at You and Dream* is about my three friends and our relationships with one another and our relationships to our family. Somehow it just didn't fit. I don't know. Maybe I could go back and look at

it and see how it could fit. But it didn't move me or captivate me then as the other material. The other material, for me and for what I'm interested in, the other material was just so much more compelling and captivating.

I mean, somebody else could have had the whole perspective, 187, and the political position of Chicanos in Los Angeles or Mexicanos in Los Angeles. That would have been, you know, very interesting. So like that's why sometimes when you ask me these sociocultural things, yes, I was actually filming at a very particular moment where a great number of legal residents were becoming citizens because of the political climate. So I went along. I tried to see what I could get. I was a good documentarian and got it. But ultimately, it was not of interest to me.

COLLINGS: Yes. But is that the only thing that you shot, the only sort of episode that you shot that you didn't include, or are there many, many things?

MOGUL: Oh, sixty hours, obviously there's many, many things.

COLLINGS: Yes, but it is because the things that you shot are like covered in more detail in your footage or are there like other entire episodes like this one that you decided to eliminate?

MOGUL: Well, that was the first one that came to my head, because we had gone through so much effort to get permission to cover the process of becoming a citizen, and also it seemed like a dramatic— From the outside like it was a dramatic event. I mean, I finished that film so long ago—

COLLINGS: But when you're going in, do you know what that film is going to be about?

MOGUL: No. And my subject right now, Michael Mayer, he drives me crazy,

because he says, “I don’t know what this is about,” and blah, blah, blah, and, “You’re not telling me why you’re doing certain things,” and I don’t always know why I’m doing certain things, because my documentaries aren’t really traditional documentaries. They’re really about— They’re a combination of me trying to understand myself through somebody else, in a way. It’s seeing like how I’m similar and how I’m different from this other person, and where somehow— I pick people and I tend to film people where I identify with certain aspects of them. They may be sufficiently different, but then there’s some things, there’s some issues that I connect with, and how do they deal with home, how do they deal with family, where do they feel at home, who are they misconnecting to or trying to make connections to?

I make films because I’m trying to figure stuff out within my own self, and that goes back to the teaching thing, where maybe a student can see themselves in you or you can see yourself in the student, and, therefore, through some kind of mutual understanding that you can connect and then there can be some kind of learning that can take place because you have connected. Maybe also because a lot of time the student doesn’t think that you’re on their side, and I think when a student understands that you’re on their side, then maybe they can hear criticism better.

But criticism is very difficult for students to hear, because they think you’re against them rather than you being enthusiastic about what they are attempting to do— And so that’s the same thing with filming, is that, you know, what are the aspects of Michael that I see within myself? Here he has come to Los Angeles at the age of twenty-three from Israel, which is the exact age I came to Los Angeles thirty years ago, and he’s left his family thousands of miles from home. So it’s always like you’re

trying to learn something new as opposed to like most documentaries— That's why it's probably not even accurate to call me a documentary filmmaker, is because a lot people just have— Which is fine, they have an agenda. They want to tell you the life story of—

COLLINGS: Abraham Lincoln.

MOGUL: Yes. I was trying to think of that wonderful film I just saw about Bayard Rustin, and that's a traditional documentary, and it is a wonderful, wonderful film. But I think my documentaries are more like little journeys for myself, and they also can be tough journeys in terms of dealing with people, your subject.

COLLINGS: Yes.

TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

March 18, 2003

COLLINGS: Okay. Yes. You say in *I Stare at You and Dream*, I think maybe it's in the beginning of the film, "Over the last few years, my films have become diaries and journals." And I was just wondering—

MOGUL: I say that in the *Video Sampler* when I'm introducing the little piece I made about kids and when I introduce the scenes from *Prosaic Portraits*.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right. So, anyway, my question was, are they diaries and journals in the sense that you do a lot of this footage just for yourself the way one writes a diary or keeps a journal, or is that sort of more of a figure of speech that you are doing film in the traditional sense, film to be part of a film to be viewed, but you're doing it in sort of a diaristic or journalistic mode? I mean, do you ever shoot anything just for yourself, like, oh, I want to be sure to remember this or whatever?

MOGUL: No, I don't. No, I don't.

COLLINGS: All right, just a clarification.

MOGUL: No, I don't. No, I don't. I'm too project oriented. I don't think I could think that way.

COLLINGS: Okay. That's what I was wondering. That was my question.

Okay. So let's talk a little bit about *Everyday Echo Street*. I think the thing that really struck me is—

MOGUL: 1993.

COLLINGS: Yes, 1993. Is that there's that really strong sense of a locale, of having

a “there” there.

MOGUL: Oh, you’re so Gertrude Stein. [mutual laughter]

COLLINGS: I know. Really, it’s just so impressive.

But the thing is, it’s really just kind of like remarkable, because this is precisely the thing that people say that Los Angeles doesn’t have. You’ve got your post office, your gas station, the neighbors, the local grocery, and the restaurant. And I was just wondering, is this a kind of a neighborhood and kind of a sense of place that you created specifically for the film, or was this more of something that just kind of fell together because you, in fact, tend to inhabit your neighborhood in such a way that it creates a sense of place?

MOGUL: Yes, what you said, the second. Yes. I made the film because I realized that although most of my close friends, you know, artist colleagues and friends, all lived outside of Highland Park, and when it struck me I had been there at that point for thirteen years, that, in fact, I had inhabited the place, so that I made it a sense of place. I walked the streets. I had this conversation going with different people.

And actually, I’ve been here now in Silverlake three and a half years. I’m a fixture in the video store. They all know me in the video store, because I’ve become a little bit of a movie addict since I don’t have good TV reception here. So all the clerks in the video store know me. I know a lot of the people, not necessarily by name. I take walks in the neighborhood, so I do that. New people moved in next door recently. And my neighbors said, “Oh, Susan probably already knows who the new people are already.” So I think it’s part of my nature to do that, to create a sense of place.

COLLINGS: Now, when you were growing up in your suburb, was there really an articulated sense of neighborhood and locale? Is this something that you're comfortable with, or is this something that you cultivated in yourself?

MOGUL: Hmm. Well, I don't think—I mean, when I was growing up in my neighborhood, I lived in a really small town. I lived in East Norwich, and right next door was Oyster Bay, which was also a small town but a little bit bigger, and it had like more shops and things like that in it. But I really didn't like walk over there and walk through the town and get to know all the merchants. I didn't do that. It wasn't like something I did.

COLLINGS: But your mother didn't always go to the same market and that kind of thing?

MOGUL: Oh, yes, yes, but most people do. I think the difference is how you engage with the people that you're interacting with. Like I have a favorite clerk in the Mayfair over here, and when I happened to be in the store with a friend of mine, his eyes bugged open because I knew the name of the clerks and was calling them by name and having conversations with them. I don't know when I started.

I think it was just part of my nature as an adult, because I think when I was staying with my friend in Greenwich Village or something and he saw me go into a shop and I was already chitchatting with— He couldn't believe like how conversational I was with whoever was behind the counter. I think it's like part of my films, and I don't know how much of it has to do with also being a single person and/or that I'm moving around through the city on my own, and so there is that, the way I've talked about making the films that I do, that I was recently thinking there's a

desire for connection, that if you are moving solo—I mean, here I am. I work here alone a lot. I want to go out and have connection to people, even if it's just to say, you know, hello.

But I don't know when I started doing it, but I've probably been doing it for longer than I was aware of, and then what became very pronounced is in Highland Park I was living there for so long.

COLLINGS: Yes, because there's not an obvious connection between the people at the gas station, the people at the post office, the people at the building where you live, except through you.

MOGUL: And they're all in close proximity with one another, so you could actually walk those blocks and interact. You didn't even need to drive, if you had the proclivity to walk.

COLLINGS: But you could easily imagine a situation where the people at the one market, for example, never met the people at the post office. I mean, maybe used the post office, but never had a conversation with them in thirteen years.

MOGUL: Right, right.

COLLINGS: So the space is very much activated by your participation in it.

MOGUL: I think that's how—I think you have to create a sense of place. I don't think a place is going to do it for you. If you just go in and out and don't talk to anybody, then that's not going to happen.

COLLINGS: Right. Also I was struck by the fact, and this is kind of like the first thing that you said when you started talking about the film, about how there's no sense of an art world or art, whereas I know that you are very much a part of the art world,

and yet here's this film which is about your neighborhood and is very intimate in some ways, and yet that aspect is absent completely from the film. And I was wondering why.

MOGUL: Well, why? There's a lot of reasons. One, if you think about, well, where is it that you spend your time, it's in your house, it's going shopping, it's getting gasoline. Those are the things that you're doing over and over and over again. You're doing them several times a week. You're doing them daily. So that's part of the fabric of your life.

Going to an art opening once a month, twice a month, three times a month is not— It's a whole other thing. First of all, it's an intellectual activity, one. It's not a very filmable activity, you know. It's really not. Visually, shooting at an art opening, for example, is not particularly interesting— Now maybe I'll think of that. I'll try to shoot something at an art opening. But it's not an intimate situation, number one. It's a mass of people. It's noisy. It's usually at night, and the light is very low. There's nothing visually appealing about it, plus there's a lot of people there who probably don't even want to be filmed, and they might also object to the fact that you're filming that work, and why is their work being filmed on the wall. It's, like, intellectual. It's like filming an intellectual event.

COLLINGS: Yes. It really strikes me suddenly that one of the threads that seems to go through all your work of the different periods and different forms is that it really does have this kind of materialist approach where you are concerned with the real— The surfaces, the tactile, the real sensory kinds of experiences that surround your life, and that you're always sort of stripping away the kind of intellectual blur, the social

connotations that are hanging onto it.

In your *Dressing Up* thing, you're sort of like you're stripping this clothing down to its essence as fabrics that are sewn together and purchased at a certain price, and you're sort of like you're stripping the labels off of them, literally and figuratively.

MOGUL: That's interesting.

COLLINGS: And the same with the vibrator thing. It's like you're sort of stripping away all the sort of like erotic connotation, and you're sort of settling it down to plastic and batteries and the price of batteries, and I think sort of some of the same thing could be said for some of the things that you do with performances. But I can't really comment on them because I haven't seen them.

Then with this, it's exactly, as I say, in terms of your mind, in terms of where you are situated, you are a member of the art community, you—quote, unquote—“live in the art world,” but that's not a real place. The real place is Highland Park. It's this street. It's this grocery store. It's this gas station. And, precisely as you just said, these are the ways you spend your time, your actual concrete time.

MOGUL: Yes. Then I was thinking of like maybe the interaction with the guys in the produce store or in the restaurant, I'm not asking them to tell me how they make their burritos or where they buy their fruit or anything like that. You're seeing them in their different— Or the gas station guy. “Why do you go to Las Vegas?” “I like fun.” It's like we're just talking about stuff, you know, “Oh, I'm going to go to Lebanon,” just something about the exchange, which is not about— Where if somebody else would, like if Huell Howser would go in, he'd be, “Well, how did you make the burritos, and

where did you get the burritos, and how do you—.” It’s like a food show, or if it’s like, “How about the price of gasoline,” or blah, blah. But it’s more like the human exchange that you have in these places that you carry out your mundane activities.

So, yes, I think that’s right. I guess the closest I got to making work about the art community is when I did something which is about the art community in one sense, is *Sing O Barren Woman*, because those are my peers. Those women are all my peers. They’re probably mostly from the same class background. They are all women who don’t have children, like myself. We’re all of the same age. Most of them are in the arts. Then also I’ve made work about my family. But that’s probably the closest I’ve gotten to sort of doing something about the art— It’s almost intellectual.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right. Yes. It’s very different from your other work in that respect. Let’s sort of jump, leapfrog chronologically. Why did you feel like it was important to make that film?

MOGUL: *Sing O Barren Woman*?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Well, it was fun not to do something that was so personal, but also I could distance myself from, it was also a sociological issue. What was the question?

COLLINGS: Well, I was just going to say why was it important to make the film, but where did you get the idea?

MOGUL: Oh, that’s always the most fun thing, where did you get the idea, because it’s funny to make a list of how each thing came, like one was my sister’s anorexia, one was, gee, I’m here like for thirteen years in highland Park, how did that come to be, and all these little anecdotes like I have from being there.

I was at a conference, Jewish Autobiography. It was called Eye and Thou. It was a national conference here at USC [University of Southern California], Jewish Autobiography in film and video, and the first part was Eye and Thou, taking off on Buber's thing, *I and Thou*. It was E-Y-E- and Thou. There were five filmmakers who were presenting work. There were also academics involved. But the important thing is there were five filmmakers, Jewish filmmakers, who were presenting work, and I was one of them. It was like a two-and-a-half-day conference.

So we were hanging out, plus there were these academics who were also Jewish, and there was dialogues going on and presentations, and then it hit me like, I don't know, the second day in, is that all these filmmakers were mostly making work about family in some sense. There was the issue of family, and yet all but one were all single and, I think, childless. They were men and women, but they were all—

COLLINGS: So they were making autobiographical work about their family of origin or—

MOGUL: Different things. And it struck me, and I said at one point, we were having a discussion, I said, "Isn't it interesting, we're all making films about family, but nobody's making family?" And nobody said anything to me. It was just sort of like one of those comments; it just sort of sat there.

But then later on, Janis Plotkin, who still is the director of the Jewish Film Festival in San Francisco, she came up to me, and she's a single, middle-aged, childless woman. She said, "I think that's a great idea for a film," and so I thought, "Oh, okay." It was fun to have somebody else respond to you.

So that's basically the beginning, and I started researching the topic. So that's

sort of how it came to be. I don't know if I had also started to observe at that point that so many women that I knew were childless—

COLLINGS: Yes. And to whom was the film addressed?

MOGUL: Hmm. Well, I saw it as a kind of—I don't know if I can answer that directly, because I thought of it as a coming-out film. It's like in terms of like lesbian coming out, this was like a childless coming out, like "We're here, we're queer, and get used to it." It's like "We're childless." [mutual laughter]

And to me, there was an aspect of the film that was harking back to my feminist days where I was gathering a group of women together, and we were going to sing about how great it is to be childless. It was sort of taking off on that where it closes with a song and like, "Lots of chicks over forty never had a kid, we're not even trying, don't wish we did." It's like a march. It's like an anthem, you know.

So I wanted to address it both in that way and then also for personal experiences, but basically as a coming-out piece. Originally, I had an idea to do a larger piece, but I never could find funding for doing a larger piece, which really would take in all the reading and research I did, the sociological, the historical. I mean, it's a very interesting subject that has been written about as memoir, sociologically, psychologically, historically.

But I wasn't able to get funding to do a more expansive overview or in-depth piece on the topic itself, and so when I got an artist fellowship from the City of Los Angeles to do a new work, I decided that with the funds I had and what I really wanted to do would be a piece that was an irreverent piece, that was a coming-out piece, that would sort of like be in-your-face.

COLLINGS: Yes. What have reactions been to the piece?

MOGUL: Oh, it was interesting. It premiered and was on view at the [UCLA] Hammer Museum for, I don't know, one month or two months. It was part of a group show of all the artists who had received the COLA grants that year. At the opening— First of all, it's very unusual. I don't like to show videos in museums, for the most part, because it's like hard to watch a video in a museum setting. But at the opening, which was, like, packed, it's like people just were, like, glued to watching it, and they would stay for the eleven minutes, and I was getting reports from friends, "They're all staying there. They're staying there till the end."

And then some people, because I'm in my work, they recognized me, they came up to me, and it was interesting that people, because it was humorous— I mean, there were some very serious parts, but because it was humorous, it wasn't alienating to people at all, which was the experience I had when I was telling people what I was working on.

COLLINGS: Oh, really?

MOGUL: Oh yes. When I would tell people what I'm working on, I'd get one of two responses, like a blank stare, like, "Oh, right, that's fascinating," said sarcastically. I'm doing this piece about women who are childless by choice. Or I get a reaction, "Oh, I know someone who's like that, and, if you want, I'll get you their number," or whatever, or, "That's me." But it was like either someone was interested because they knew somebody, or you could see that it was a topic, whether it was man or woman, or it was just like it seemed very uncomfortable.

But I found that it seemed from my experience showing it at the museum is

that—and then subsequently a good excerpt of it was shown on KCET, and they gave me a one-minute interview on *Life and Times*—that it had a kind of broad appeal, because it combined humor with serious things. So I think more people were able to be engaged— That’s my impression.

COLLINGS: What about the women who participated in the film? Did they share with you any of their sense of their experience working on the film?

MOGUL: I didn’t have any complaints, which I was a little worried about, unless they complained behind my back. I’m trying to think of— That’s a while ago, too.

COLLINGS: Nothing really stands out?

MOGUL: Nothing stands out at the moment.

COLLINGS: Well, it sounds like everybody had a pretty good experience, then.

MOGUL: I hope so.

COLLINGS: Would you like to talk just a little bit about *Home Safe Home*, or would you want to just hold off on that until next time?

MOGUL: Sure, sure.

COLLINGS: Okay. You sort of mention in the beginning of it that it’s a commissioned piece.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Is that right, that you were commissioned by KCET to do a piece on safe spaces?

MOGUL: Yes, taking in the idea of safe.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: They had commissioned like, I think, three artists.

COLLINGS: Is this the first time that you had been commissioned to do a piece on a theme in this sense?

MOGUL: I think so. Yes. I mean, other commissions I got have been my own proposals, my own ideas, you know, like, “Oh, there’s a proposal for the Children’s Library downtown. What would you propose for Children’s Library?” which that could be any theme. Yes, I think, anytime I’ve had a proposal commission, it’s just like it’s never been theme oriented.

COLLINGS: But this one was?

MOGUL: Yes, yes. But this was, yes.

COLLINGS: How does that work for you to do that kind of thing?

MOGUL: Well, it was okay. I mean, I think it’s good having a framework. It had to be a certain length also, and then there was certain time to have it done in, and then we had access to the cameraman at KCET.

COLLINGS: Oh, really?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: So is that where you do the scenes where you’re in your bed?

MOGUL: They were at my home. The KCET cameraman came to my home. That wasn’t very comfortable for me.

COLLINGS: I thought that you came up with some very inventive sets and so that each time you appeared it was obviously the same, yet very different. I thought that was done very skillfully.

MOGUL: Oh, thank you. And I think Louie, the guy who shot it, did a good job. I am not comfortable being filmed by people I don’t know really.

COLLINGS: Okay. So this was really your first experience with that, then?

MOGUL: Well, unless I've been—You know, the times I've been interviewed.

There's a few times I've been interviewed on television, but at least if I'm interviewed on television or interviewed for videotape. I'm being interviewed. I'm not having to create a persona. So that doesn't bother me, really.

But this was really excruciating for me. In fact, that's why when I did the— In the shower scene in *Sing O Barren Woman*, where I'm singing this song and stuff and I'm like kind of half-naked there, and it wasn't just because of the nudity issue, I could have had a more experienced cinematographer film me that I knew, but I chose someone who I just decided to risk it on her, which she did a fine job, to risk it on her shooting me, because I knew I'd feel comfortable with her, and that was more I'd rather have funkier camerawork and me give a more authentic performance than slicker camerawork where I'm very stiff in front of the camera.

So I did not have fun doing that, *Home Safe Home*. There was time pressure, which I didn't like. I don't mean the time pressure to get it done, but there was time pressure in how many hours I could work with the cameramen. In fact, that is why I chose to do the whole thing at one location— That was like an example of having restrictions and being inventive. So I decided, I'm going to shoot the whole thing in the bedroom, because the bedroom's a safe place, and then we'll— Keep changing the set.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right.

MOGUL: But I wasn't that thrilled with my performance, because I'm best as a performer when I'm just really being myself. That's why I stopped performing,

because if somehow the whole environment didn't feel comfortable for me, I would be very stiff.

COLLINGS: I thought that your performance was really well controlled.

MOGUL: Oh. Well, at least we had takes to choose from.

But anyway, so I hadn't thought about that piece for a long time, but I think that I had to try to think about what I could do in the amount of time I had with the cameraman and primarily. I really couldn't stand the way the thing looked, my performance, so that's how I ended up combining the home movie stuff in.

COLLINGS: Because you didn't want some other stuff that you'd already shot?

MOGUL: Yes, I just thought it was very weak.

COLLINGS: You'd shot it in the studio?

MOGUL: Everything was shot in my bedroom.

COLLINGS: Oh, it wasn't a set in the studio?

MOGUL: No, it was the bedroom. We kept dressing my— It was like a hot summer's day, and I had my friend assisting.

COLLINGS: So the KCET cameraman came to your house?

MOGUL: Yes. I had him in my bedroom. [laughs]

COLLINGS: So your friend was assisting?

MOGUL: Yes, it was like this hot—And then we had the whole thing, lights were in there. It was like my little bedroom here, like where everyone was crunched together.

COLLINGS: So did you do all that shooting in one day, then?

MOGUL: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: That's all you had the guy for.

Page 208 missing due to production error

COLLINGS: Oh, that's interesting. That's very interesting. I'm glad you said that, because that's—

MOGUL: Oh, really? That's how they came to me. This wasn't the competition.

COLLINGS: You made Highland Park look like a safe place, so you must know about how to create a sense of safety.

MOGUL: Well, also, if you read the review by Howard Rosenberg, he talks about how most urban areas are portrayed as being places of violence.

COLLINGS: Did you feel safe in your neighborhood in Highland Park?

MOGUL: Yes, for the most part. I mean, sometimes I had— There was problems with neighbors sometimes, but, you know, for the most part, yes.

COLLINGS: You don't have any scenes at night in that film, now that I think about it.

MOGUL: [laughs] It's just looking out at the window.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Yes, I know I don't have any scenes at night. Well, it's not safe to go walking around the streets at night.

COLLINGS: Are you somebody that tends to go out at night, or do you tend to be more of a day person?

MOGUL: Well, probably at night I would be going to those art openings I wasn't going to film. [laughs]

MOGUL: There's not much of a nightlife in Highland Park for someone like me.

COLLINGS: Yes.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

April 1, 2003

COLLINGS: April 1st, Jane Collings interviewing Susan Mogul at her home in Silverlake.

All right. So we're going to talk first about *I Stare at You and Dream*, and I was wondering if you could first tell me a little bit about your friendship with Rosie [Sanchez], because having the friendship with her seems like it's a kind of a key.

MOGUL: Did we talk about [*Everyday*] *Echo Street*?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Oh, okay, because did I say that *I Stare at You and Dream* developed out of *Echo Street*?

COLLINGS: You might have said just that, but we just sort of saved *I Stare at You and Dream* for today.

MOGUL: Okay. So you wanted to ask about Rosie?

COLLINGS: Yes, just how did you meet her, how did the friendship grow, what did you hope for in the relationship?

MOGUL: Well, I met Rosie because I was a regular customer at her family's restaurant— It was owned by her parents and she worked there, kind of waitress, hostess, everything, a restaurant that did very little business. I once said to her, "Oh, the food is so good here. Why don't you advertise so you'd get more customers."

And she said, "Oh, it would be too much work for my mother." [laughs]
Which sort of reminded me of the commercial of that guy, why the guy doesn't

advertise in the Yellow Pages because he only has one rug to sell. What would he do if he'd sell the rug?

So it was a very kind of pokey little place, and just people who happened to know about it went there in the community, and there was a lot of pedestrian traffic there in Highland Park. So I was a regular customer there, and there was like one burrito I would get.

And then when I made *Echo Street*, that's how I really got to know Rosie, because that was a piece about my neighborhood, so it was one of the places I was filming, and it was more than just a place that I filmed. When I was commissioned to make *Everyday Echo Street* by Peter Sellars' L.A. Festival— They commissioned five people in different arts: dance, music, theater, video. I don't remember the last one. And it was not only supposed to be a project that was somehow an artist interrelating with the community, but it was also supposed to take place in a community venue. So they, the Sanchez family, agreed that I could screen the finished work in their restaurant.

COLLINGS: Oh, I see. Oh, we didn't talk about that.

MOGUL: So for a weekend when the festival— Oh, that's really annoying.

[Referring to background noise.]

COLLINGS: It's okay. There's nothing you can do.

MOGUL: Yes. It bugs me.

So the weekend when I was screening it, they had festival security people, and there were banners up, and this was in Highland Park. The family went all out, and they had more customers that weekend than they probably had all year. It's a very

small restaurant, but it had two little sections to it. So the back section, we created a screening room, and the front section was where people would get served to eat. They did a whole thing, actually, the Sanchez family, where for the first time they had like café seating outside in front of the restaurant on the sidewalk. So it was like a really big event, because the festival had a high profile, so people came from all over to the festival.

Plus, the other thing that might be of interest to you is, because this aspect of the festival, the commissioned projects, were funded by the Ford Foundation, so the Ford Foundation being what it is, you know, they don't really fund art directly, but they do things that are sociological and anthropological. So there was a sociologist that was tracking me in the project, named John Horton, who was a professor. I think he's kind of semi-retired.

COLLINGS: Tracking you in what sense?

MOGUL: Oh, he went around with me one day, and I showed him all the spots where I was filming. He'd interview me and ask me questions about my interrelationship with the people. During the festival, the two days when it was on, when we were having the screenings going, he had questionnaires. He did a report. He did a whole report.

COLLINGS: He would question the people in the audience about their—

MOGUL: Yes. He had questionnaires that he handed out and people filled out. The thing that worked so beautifully about the event—I mean, there is kind of a correspondence to that event and to my soda fountain piece.

COLLINGS: There is, yes.

MOGUL: But while the screenings were going on in one room, because the piece was thirty minutes, there were people who were hanging out in front and eating, and there were people inside. It was like in September, so it was really nice. It was really nice weather and everything. Actually, it coincided with Rosh Hashanah and Mexican Independence Day, around September 16th and 17th, actually, to be exact, of 1993.

COLLINGS: Yes, I remember that.

MOGUL: So he compiled the questionnaires and did, of course, what their race was and their age and, I don't know, he asked them all kinds of questions. So there was a report done on that.

So in other words, she was involved not only as a subject, and also some of her family members, in *Echo*, but then they also participated in being presenters. Part of the arrangement was that they got paid some kind of a location fee.

COLLINGS: Oh, wow. Do you know how much that was? Was it a token amount or a significant amount?

MOGUL: Why do you ask? Why do you ask?

COLLINGS: Well, just from their perspective, how important that would be.

MOGUL: Well, it was a thousand dollars, I think.

COLLINGS: That's a pretty significant amount.

MOGUL: For them, are you kidding? That was very significant for a restaurant that does no business.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes. No, I just didn't know if it was like fifty dollars, sort of token fee.

MOGUL: No.

COLLINGS: Yes, I see.

MOGUL: I'm almost positive it was a thousand dollars, plus whatever business that they did that day, and that was like three times— That was ten times more business than they usually did. So, in other words, they got a payment plus whatever it is that they took in those days for the event. Plus, I mean, the relationship was such that they would have done it without a fee, I think.

COLLINGS: Yes, of course.

MOGUL: Because obviously it was good advertising and everything like that. Plus, on top of that, the *L.A. Times* did a feature story on the project. So before the thing got presented, of me and Rosie and her sisters and her mother, a really wonderful photograph that was printed in the *L.A. Times* in the Calendar Section, so there was a really nice feature story.

COLLINGS: Right, right, absolutely. It sounds like a lot to me. [laughs]

MOGUL: I wasn't getting paid that much. I got paid an artist's honorarium. So I think it worked well all around for everybody.

But it was like the soda fountain thing where there was some event going on, there was like some art thing going on, at the same time people were interacting and socializing, and people had a great time at that event, because it was more than just a screening.

COLLINGS: Oh, it sounds great.

MOGUL: Plus you had the people who are in the film, like they were serving you. People in my Highland Park neighborhood, which is typical, there's a certain quality of certain people of not leaving their neighborhood for various reasons, not being

mobile, not feeling comfortable in leaving their neighborhood.

COLLINGS: Oh, it's so common.

MOGUL: So there were people who came, who normally wouldn't come to an art event like this, because it was just down the block and they were in it.

And then Eddie "The Animal" Lopez, who was in *Echo Street*, I mean, he's like someone probably in and out of jail, and drunk and stuff, literally, during that weekend, he was walking down the block, and we literally pulled him in so he could watch himself, because I sent the tapes to everyone. But still, someone like him, you never knew where he was living, so we literally pulled him in. And then he was such a showboat, just when one of the screenings was happening, because we had multiple screenings, so then he gets up, "This Susan Mogul. You should hire her." He starts giving the whole, you know, heavyweight wannabe champion of Highland Park schtick. [laughs]

It was on a Saturday and Sunday, there could have been like eight, probably a total of sixteen screenings.

COLLINGS: I'm surprised you weren't shooting video at the screening.

MOGUL: Oh, no, no, no, no. I was tired. I wanted to have fun. I wanted to have fun.

The piece was finished a few days before the event— You know, because the commission happened like at the end of May or something. I shot from May 31st to July 4th, and then I was editing. So it was a good event. I think it was good event for everybody. It was very festive.

Then you had people coming, and it was an incredible mix of people, because

you have people who are into art events, and they'll go anywhere, and then you had the people from the neighborhood. It was like the soda fountain piece in the sense that the people on screen were there, who were mixing with the people who were the audience. So I was very pleased with that. That was a nice event.

COLLINGS: It sounds fabulous.

MOGUL: Yes. So that certainly created a bond with Rosie and I.

COLLINGS: Absolutely. What did she say about herself in that particular piece when she saw it?

MOGUL: I can't remember. Rosie isn't that forthcoming, and I have no memory of that, because later I was filming her so much more for *I Stare at You and Dream*.

COLLINGS: Yes. How old was Alex [Sanchez] when you did the event at the restaurant?

MOGUL: I barely knew Alex then. I barely knew Alex then. When I started shooting *I Stare at You and Dream*, Alex was about eighteen, nineteen.

COLLINGS: When you started shooting that?

MOGUL: Yes. But do you want to know more about Rosie in *I Stare at You and Dream*?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: When I was filming Rosie, she had some kind of lump. It was just some kind of fatty lump thing that was starting to grow that needed to be— It wasn't serious, but I was telling her, "Why don't you have this taken care of, so you'll look good—" because I know, basically, most people on camera are concerned about, ultimately, in the end, how they look. Usually that is the bottom line, is how they

look.

I mean, one time I made a mistake and showed someone footage, and he was upset. He wasn't being filmed; it was his daughter. The footage that he was freaked out about was, the way his garbage can looked. That's why you never show anybody anything. I mean, I couldn't believe that this was something about his garbage can. So you don't know. So I was thinking, she's being filmed all the time, take care of this already. But she didn't.

But what she ended up being concerned about once the piece was done and when I had the premier screening, she didn't invite her family. She wanted to see it first, and what she was concerned about was what her family would think, which was sort of very much about who Rosie is. She wasn't concerned about how I presented her; she was worried what her parents would think about what she had to say.

COLLINGS: Right. And particularly the scenes like when she's with the boyfriend and things like that?

MOGUL: The scene where she's talking about that her parents didn't come visit her in the hospital when she had Alex, and that her father stopped speaking to her when she got pregnant, and the fact that she was talking about that. So she was very concerned about how they would respond to her kind of, I guess, airing the dirty laundry, and I don't know what else she might have been concerned about. But I know she was concerned about that. Although obviously she wasn't that concerned because she "aired the dirty laundry" to me, and that was way long in the process of filming. That was towards the end of filming. We filmed for six months in *I Stare at You and Dream*. I was filming her on a regular basis.

You have to understand when we went into *I Stare at You and Dream*, she already knew that *Echo Street* not only had been presented in this public way, first at her family's restaurant, but that was *Echo Street*, which wasn't as personal, wasn't focused on her specifically, but it also had aired on television a year later. So she was very much aware of what she was doing.

Subsequently, *I Stare at You and Dream*, after the premier, which was at USC I had a screening there with a big catered event. After, it was on television, and that's when her family saw it, maybe a month later after she saw it for the first time. And what happened was, her mother apologized to her after seeing this on television. And her mother explained to her that the reason she didn't come to the hospital when she gave birth was because they had some other meeting with the aunt. But anyway, the thing was, it was like the opposite of what she had expected. Her mother both apologized to her and explained to her kind of what happened.

COLLINGS: Wow. Yes, that's huge.

MOGUL: Yes. So it had almost the opposite—

COLLINGS: Yes, she had a good experience.

MOGUL: She had a really good experience, yes. I think some other family members might have had different experiences, but you have to realize, she has, as you might remember from the film, she's got like ten brothers and sisters. I mean, I have enough myself with five, so, I mean, there's going to be somebody who's going to be unhappy. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Right, right. It's inevitable. The probability is high.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: So you were saying that you were filming her for six months.

MOGUL: Yes, along with Alex and Ray.

COLLINGS: Yes. But is that like daily or all day? I mean, what's the shooting ratio here?

MOGUL: Well, I shot for six months on a regular basis, and I shot sixty hours of film.

COLLINGS: Sixty hours of film. So that's like 60:1, basically.

MOGUL: Yes, and over six months, I forget how many hours it meant per week. I don't know.

COLLINGS: How would you decide that you were going to be shooting? Did you have a schedule or was it like certain events were going to be taking place?

MOGUL: It was a combination. Ray, it was like, "Oh, you're going to be at Mrs. Decker's?" Ray [Aguilar] was a contractor, builder, so I knew he was doing a project at this lady's, Mrs. Decker, this eighty-year-old woman's house in Highland Park, so I could get him working. Or something was always going on— Ray's life was always like a crisis. Something dramatic always seemed to be happening in Ray's life. Like, he was going to go to court for somebody he punched out or something. There was always something to try to catch up with, with him. So, yes, there were different events with him, and everything was kind of unpredictable with him, so just trying to catch him.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, yes. Because at one point you can't reach him.

MOGUL: Yes, his phone's disconnected. Then as you find out what's going on, then he was rebuilding his mother's house, so it was like, "Okay, I want to go over there."

So it was just always trying to figure out what was going on in his life, because something always was, that was changing. I would try to keep up with that.

And then Rosie was like the anchor. She was always there at the restaurant, and I lived two blocks from the restaurant, so I could always go there anytime. She was like filler. It was like almost filler, you know, or I could go in and tell her what was going on with Ray, so whatever. She was like almost home base there, two blocks from my house. So I would be there quite often, and then she would tell me, like, if something was going to happen.

And then Alex, she worked at Thrifty [Drugstore], she had her poetry readings, and she was job hunting. Some of the things, actually, that I would plan to film of Alex, for example, like, say Alex was going to go job hunting or we were going to go to a restaurant together or something, I would go to her house first. Now, Alex was never ready on time, and it turned out so I always had to wait for her. I was waiting for her to get ready, to get dressed, or whatever. She's ironing things, so she's never ready. Actually, that's where I got the most interesting material with her. It was almost like the events we were going to, like the job interview or whatever, those never turned out to be particularly interesting, and they never made their way into the film. But all the domestic stuff, like, always ended up being—

COLLINGS: Where she's doing her makeup and she's looking for a shirt in the dresser.

MOGUL: Or the ironing and then she gets a phone call, the guy who's apologizing, so that's all stuff where I'm waiting for her because we're going someplace. The poetry reading I did keep in.

COLLINGS: I think it's a just absolutely fabulous film. Really, I just admire it so much, and I'm just really just overwhelmed by the intimacy of it and how you managed to have your camera there in these very sort of intimate moments where she's just sort of chatting away. Rosie, Ray, and Alex all seem to be really oblivious to the camera. They must have been really used to it. Is that how that happened? I mean, how was it that—

MOGUL: People always asked me this about— With my stuff. They said that also about *Echo Street*, although *I Stare at You and Dream* is a more personal film. I think there's a couple of factors. One is, there's no crew. It's just me and it's a small camera. That's very, very important. I've even seen that recently in somebody else's work, who always usually works with a crew, and I saw a film he did recently where it was just him, and I noticed the film had a whole different feel to it. I mean, I wouldn't say it was personal to me, because he wasn't interviewing people who were his friends. So that's another thing.

But just that alone, one person with a camera, so this guy who doesn't do personal documentaries, but he does make documentaries, I noticed a big difference in his work when he was using a small camera and it was himself and no crew, versus stuff he's done with crews, big difference in the feel of the interview and the feel of the film. So that's one thing.

Two is, I'm making films about people I already have established relationships with, so—

COLLINGS: Because it's almost as if there's eye contact, and yet your eye is through the camera. I mean, when she's talking to you when she's putting on her makeup, for

example, I feel that there's eye contact, which is just— You know, it's just astounding.

MOGUL: I don't know what to say. I guess people feel they can— I mean— Well, maybe they're looking— I don't know. I have the camera in front of my face, so I guess they know what to do.

So that's the other thing, is the friendship. And then what was the— There was a third thing, but I don't know what the third thing was. But those are the two main things.

COLLINGS: Was there ever any sort of point where you, like, talked with them and kind of got them to agree to be filmed in this very intimate way, or was it something that you just kind of like found yourself working into sort of without anybody really ever discussing it?

MOGUL: It wasn't discussed. Well, you know, Rosie and Ray were in my—

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Had brief appearances in my other films, and they'd seen another film, so they knew kind of what my filmmaking was about. I don't know if they realized it was going to be as personal.

Also, because I got funded by ITVS [Independent Television Service], they also got a stipend, which they were surprised to find out, and I think they all said they would have done it without.

COLLINGS: Yes, I'm sure they would have. Was the stipend like something significant, or was it just a kind of an honoraria-type thing?

MOGUL: Rosie's was a little more. I don't remember, but it was— I don't remember

anymore. That was because it was funded by— I had funds also in that case, and then also the restaurant also got some money for the location.

COLLINGS: That's wonderful. I just wanted to ask you—

MOGUL: So these are the sociological questions so other people who aren't interested in film—

COLLINGS: No, no. It's just kind of like the larger context for the film, because it really is an astonishingly intimate portrait, and I'd just be interested in how it all came together.

MOGUL: But, no, there wasn't a discussion. Oh, the third thing. Why do I get that kind of intimacy? One, the camera. Two, these people are— I'm in a friendship with them. I think they also know that in my films that I've made, I think this is a subconscious thing, that I've made myself vulnerable. I think that also might be a factor.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's a very interesting point.

MOGUL: That might be a factor, I don't know.

But the third thing I was going to point out is, I don't interview people. I'm not interviewing them. I'm just filming what's happening, and we're having conversations. So it is kind of like an improvisation. You just don't know what's going to happen. You go over to the house, and something happens or doesn't happen. It's interesting.

COLLINGS: Do you always film when you would go over, or was it just kind of like you decide sometimes to film?

MOGUL: Oh, no, it was because I was on a mission. I had a job. I had a film to get

out. I had a contract. Oh yes. It becomes strenuous, because then like in the project I'm working on now, I tend not to talk with Michael, who is my subject for this new film, about anything, because I want to save it for the film. [laughs] It's a little bit weird, because I'm like, "Maybe this will be a good conversation for film."

COLLINGS: "We'll save it for later, then," yes.

MOGUL: I won't talk. I'll have these phone conversations. I won't talk about anything, because I want to wait till I see him in film. So I think that also gives the film an intimacy, is that.

As the shooting schedule of *I Stare at You and Dream* was coming to a close, that's when I did say, "Okay, there are things I've got to start asking Rosie." And one was, she also was keeping a diary because that was possibly going to be something that we were going to use. She was keeping a diary.

COLLINGS: Which she started for the film, or had she been doing it previously?

MOGUL: I think she had some diary, and then I asked her to keep it for the film. So then at some point she showed me the diary, and there were things in the diary that she had never really said to me, but they weren't that clear. So that's when I started thinking about the whole thing about what happened when she got pregnant, because she had never, like, talked to me about that, you know, how the family responded and that whole story.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's a great—

MOGUL: So that was something. So the key things, the key sort of pivotal things that were, like, life-changing things in everybody's life, I really didn't ask until like towards the very end of the filming process. I didn't ask Ray about— Well, I knew

Ray's story about meeting his father in prison. But it was interesting, because then I said, "Wouldn't it be interesting if we go up to San Quentin." I didn't know why. I didn't even know if we could get into the prison, which we couldn't. We could go on the grounds, but we couldn't film in the prison or get in the prison.

But because of Ray's excitement about going up to the Bay Area, suddenly—I've known Ray for years. He tells you everything. The first time he meets anyone, he tells you that prison story, because he knows it's such a great story, and he's a showboat and he loves to tell stories. But what he held back and let me know about once we were going on this trip, was the letter from his father. That I never knew about, so that also, it was interesting what he revealed to me at towards the end of the filming process, and probably was triggered by the event of going up to San Quentin.

Rosie, it wasn't till the final, you know, the end of the filming where I asked her about the issue about what happened when, you know, "You got pregnant." And Alex I didn't start pushing, it wasn't till the end, about whether she wanted—About what was the deal with her father that she never met and what were her feelings about that. I didn't know that her grandfather also had stopped talking to her. So that was something I think she revealed on her own. Alex, of everybody, she was the one—I mean, I have to probably say that on many levels, Alex I was always closest to, felt more of a kinship to as a fellow artist—Although she was a lot younger, I think we both saw ourselves in each other as artists.

So I waited for the personal stuff, really kind of the crucial things, that was something where I was, "Okay, now I've got to go after that," where in the past I wouldn't be going after something. But it seemed like really—It was important. Like,

each character in their early twenties had some very significant event that happened to them: Ray meeting his father in prison; Rosie becoming pregnant and the rift with her father; Alex, she was more of a question mark; my car accident which happened when I was twenty. So there were these events in regards to loss that were mirrored with all the three middle-aged adults, and Alex was sort of the—

COLLINGS: The one who had to make her way through this—

MOGUL: At that point we don't know. She's nineteen. She's the wildcard.

COLLINGS: Right. Yes. So, having just seen the film a couple of times, I can't think whether those kinds of scenes where you're sort of prompting and saying, "So what is it that you were saying about your mother not coming to the hospital?" or something like that. Are those cut in, all bunched toward the end, to sort of reflect the order of the shooting process, or are they interspersed throughout? [Mogul laughs.] You don't remember. Okay. Scratch that. Okay.

All right. Let me just ask you a sort of a question about how you set up your shots and things. You have one particular scene where Rosie is talking about what she would have done differently now. She would have informed the father that she was pregnant, for example. And she's dusting all of these photographs and knick-knacks and things. Is that kind of setup something that you would prompt her to do, or was she just on her own dusting and cleaning off photos and—

MOGUL: Okay. [laughs] I think it was her day off, and it was something that she does normally. If I had wanted to, if I had asked her, she would have sat on the couch, and I could have had her sitting there talking, but I don't like to film that way. I think it's very uninteresting. I think the person becomes— See, that's another way to create

intimacy, either intimacy or disarm your subject, is to have them engaged in an activity, because then they're not so focused on speaking. There's another part of their brain working.

It's actually an acting technique, too, that you should be, like, doing something. I mean, that was part of the reason in my salad piece in *Design for Living*, it's like I'm doing an activity and talking, because then it makes you more—

COLLINGS: It makes the delivery more natural?

MOGUL: Yes. Also, the focus just isn't on the speaking.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes. But then the scene, for example, where Alex is—

MOGUL: Probably why I have Michael driving.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: It's an activity.

COLLINGS: Yes. So the activity where Alex is ironing or digging through the drawers for her shirt, that was entirely what she was doing?

MOGUL: Yes, yes. You're breaking it down.

COLLINGS: What about the scene with Alex?

MOGUL: Which side is staged. [laughs]

COLLINGS: No, no. It's just really fascinating to sort of see how this all came together, because it's got so many elements, and they're just all balanced really nicely.

What about the scene with Alex and the bath? And also, I'm just kind of curious, like, where your instincts lie. Because there's a lot of just sort of instinct in terms of how you frame shots, what you choose to include, that I'd just sort of like to be able to sort of sketch out the parameters of that. What about the scene of Alex in

the bath, where she's in the bubble bath and you've got that very close shot of her face? How did that come about?

MOGUL: See, a lot of the stuff, the way I work, is— That's why you need good subjects, too, because a lot of it is instinctive, is a combination of instinctiveness, one of the things that I respond to, coincidence. I don't know what Alex and I had done that evening, but she ended up spending the night at my place, which was not a typical occurrence, but for some reason she stayed over. I don't even remember why. So she was taking a bath at my house in the morning.

COLLINGS: So, of course.

MOGUL: So there you are. Although I think I remember one time at her place, maybe taking— Trying to film her in the shower or something. But so that's how that happened.

COLLINGS: Yes, because she's very sort of relaxed and dreamy in the bath, and it's a very beautiful scene.

I'm also struck by the tattooing scene where you've got that very close shot of the tattoo itself. To me, it seems sort of emblematic of the whole film because the tattoo is permanent, it becomes a part of your body, it's kind of painful to get it, and it's an emblem of transformation. But at the same time, it has its own special beauty as well, and you can see the pain, the traumatized skin around the tattoo, the red traumatized skin. I was wondering what your thinking was when you included that particular shot.

MOGUL: [laughs] What was happening?

COLLINGS: Okay. But why did you— You've got like a really tight shot on the

tattoo in the skin, and I'm just wondering what are you thinking when you do something like that?

MOGUL: I think when you shoot, I mean, shooting documentary is so different from shooting something that— In fact, I've never done that. I don't know if I would be even any good at it. If I would do a fiction film, I'd probably have somebody else shoot it, and then I could plan out the shots and direct it, which I tried to do with the underwater stuff, have those shots planned out, because I wasn't shooting. I wasn't shooting it. We had an underwater camerawoman.

But one thing about video is—and sometimes I'm at fault with this—is because I know essentially video is a close-up medium, really, because it's usually associated with television, so I have a tendency anyway to do things close up. I have to be very careful to get wider shots and longer shots. I have a tendency sometimes, almost to my detriment not to have cutaways or wide shots, I don't have any establishing shots. Like I think I have one or two establishing shots of Armando's Restaurant, Rosie's restaurant. I had sixty hours of film, and I only had one establishing shot of Armando's. Which is probably why things tend to seem so intimate, is because maybe I do tend to kind of get close up.

Because I have a background as an artist and stuff, I'm looking at things that look visually interesting. In a viewfinder, you really can't see things very well— If you have like a nice big long shot, it's really hard to see in a viewfinder, in a small camcorder, all that stuff. So you can see better what you're getting when you're shooting something close up.

So then what was I thinking when I was doing that? Well, she's getting a

tattoo. I want to get a good shot of the tattoo, and I'm trying to get a shot of the tattoo artist, my friend John Harb.

COLLINGS: Oh, he was your friend?

MOGUL: Well, yes, he was becoming my friend, you know. His shop was two blocks from my place, too. He was just a few blocks from the restaurant. So I got to know him because I was in a minor car accident, and he did the bodywork, and that's when I found out he also did tattoos. So I was the one who made the connection between Alex and John.

COLLINGS: Oh, okay, because he speaks pretty revealingly about himself in that scene.

MOGUL: Well, I didn't know him that well, but when I first did bodywork with him, he was very open with me about stuff, for some reason. But so like, I think, when you're filming, when I'm really doing a good job filming, it's like you kind of lose yourself and you just start doing it and it's not like thinking. Sometimes you're thinking strategically, and sometimes what's fun about doing something like the tattoo is like there's this whole process that's going on, and you're just trying to keep up with the process and respond to it and find interesting things in it, and I'm not thinking about symbolic stuff.

COLLINGS: So you've got sixty hours of film, right? Now, were you doing any editing during the shooting, or were you just kind of stashing stuff away and—

MOGUL: Just logging it. Just logging it, looking at it and logging it. I was just focused on filming, and then I had an assistant and she would log it and I would look

at it.

TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO

April 1, 2003

MOGUL: This should be like for a DVD, the making of.

COLLINGS: Yes, exactly, yes.

MOGUL: How's it that you're asking all these questions?

COLLINGS: Why am I asking all these questions?

MOGUL: No, no, no. I guess I'm wondering about the direction of your questions.

COLLINGS: Well, I just want to know how the film came to be.

MOGUL: I don't mind answering them, because this is the first piece that we've talked about where— Maybe I wasn't aware before, that you're sort of not asking about the ideas of the film or telling me how you respond to the film, but you're wondering about all the ways in which it was made. And I'm curious why.

COLLINGS: Well, because we need to get in the interview some of your work process and thinking on a sort of a nitty-gritty level.

MOGUL: Okay. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Today is the day for that.

MOGUL: Okay. [laughs]

COLLINGS: So, did you sort of know when you began the film that it was going to sort of focus on this theme of fathers?

MOGUL: I knew it was going to focus on— That there was a theme of loss. I didn't know that the absent father was going to become such a thread, because you also had the co-starring characters, like, not the main characters, ended up telling stories about

their fathers, like, John Harb, the tattoo artist. I mean, he tells the story about not knowing his father, and then Alex's professor talks about having a father that ignored him, which, I mean, all those things were completely unexpected.

And then I had my footage, which when I was editing, I thought, "Oh, this would be perfect," where I'm telling my father, "Look at me, Dad. Dad, look at me. Dad, look at me." And that was footage that was taken several years before, that had always struck me as footage which seemed like nothing at the time when you were shooting it.

COLLINGS: But it's so perfect here.

MOGUL: But then you see it. But I remember that always resonated with me, that clip. I mean, that's the thing with this kind of filmmaking, is that you shoot— Sometimes you're aware of what you're getting at that time, and sometimes there's stuff that you're shooting, and you go, "My god, what do I have here?" So you don't always realize what it is that you get.

COLLINGS: So you decided to bracket the film with the dollhouse footage.

MOGUL: That was, in part, also with my co-producer Don Oppen, who worked very closely with me on the film. He's basically made a living for many years as— He's basically my age; actually, exactly my age. And he writes screenplays, and so he gave me feedback throughout the entire making of *Stare*. At the end, when I was in my rough-cut stage of *Echo Street*, he gave me some very helpful feedback, and I really liked the process of working with him.

So then when I was doing this piece, I wanted to work with him again on, like, a formalized level, so he was co-producer, and he was particularly active. I mean, he

was active on various levels from the beginning, but in terms of the creative aspect, especially during the postproduction stage, in really creating a story. I remember that he was really big on the dollhouse. I probably would have to give him credit for the dollhouse stuff.

COLLINGS: So how does your editing process work with a film like this?

MOGUL: What did you want to ask about the dollhouse?

COLLINGS: I just wanted to ask you how you made the decision to put that in.

MOGUL: Well, I think Don was very encouraging about using me as a four-year-old with this dollhouse that I'd gotten for a present, and my father putting it together, because he thought it worked, and that does bracket the film, because he felt like there were a lot of things about home in the piece, plus you have Ray, who has this strained relationship with his mother and he's trying to repair her house. I don't know what other things we have strictly about building a house.

COLLINGS: And also the arrangement of one's life, because that's what little girls are doing with the furniture. They're sort of arranging a space and creating narratives to fill the space.

MOGUL: Yes. And then it also fit because it was me and my father at an earlier time. Actually, I never thought about this till now, but there's this whole theme of the absent father, yet it opens with a little girl and her dad, and they're trying to put this house together. And it also is a way, since I'm kind of in a certain level in the background in the film, it sort of allows me to open up the film as the filmmaker, and connect me to all the other characters. Then it allows me to go back and show that other home movie footage of me and my family members later on. So it sets things up for me to be in it.

It sets things up to go back to some of that home movie footage later. What you set up in the beginning is very important. I keep learning more, you know.

COLLINGS: With a film such as this, do you edit sort of the beginning and the end and then you start filling in from the edges, or do you edit from kind of the center and then fill out?

MOGUL: Oh, no, no. The opening and closing of a film are always the hardest to do, and I think they always come at the end. And I think those things are always changing. I think those things are always changing. So it's like, with this film, I had never worked with so much footage before. With *Echo Street*, I had ten hours of footage. Here I had sixty hours of footage.

COLLINGS: It's enormous, enormous.

MOGUL: So, first, after the shooting was done, I just started going through all the tapes and just writing about what I saw that was of interest to me. I did a lot of writing, just started writing. I watched everything again, and then I just started writing about it and what I thought I saw and what was happening.

Then we just started going through and making assembly edits and just picking out stuff that was interesting, and I always do that, is just get assemblies and just assemble stuff that's interesting. Then because there's so much stuff— And then you had, like, four different people, me being the fourth person, although not having that much footage of me. Then we did— I think this might have been Don's idea also. I did character edits.

COLLINGS: Where you sketch the parameters of a character?

MOGUL: Yes. So then I would just take all the stuff that was interesting of Rosie

and start cutting, and just start cutting scenes, Rosie scenes, and then doing Alex scenes and Ray scenes and stuff like that.

COLLINGS: Is there any scene in the film that, for you, is kind of like the center of gravity of the film? I mean, maybe not; I'm just curious, just wondering. It's not a leading question. Just pure curiosity.

MOGUL: Gosh. Center of gravity. It's almost like I know—I mean, I have favorite things in there. I don't know. What seemed for you?

COLLINGS: I don't know. I don't have a— That's why I said it's not a leading question. I just was wondering.

MOGUL: No, I was just wondering, is there a scene that struck you?

COLLINGS: Well, for me, so many of the scenes all need to work together, and I was just wondering if there any sort of like “aha” experience-type scenes for you. Really, it's not a leading question.

MOGUL: You know, I think now I almost have seen it so much.

COLLINGS: Too many times, yes.

MOGUL: And then I've made excerpts for when I apply for grants a ten-minute segment. I didn't even know there was a ferry in San Raphael that went from San Raphael to San Francisco and that's where I got that footage that's so nice of Ray on the ferry with the gulls and the wind blowing. That was something that was fortuitous to get that footage, which also was another thing of the water, which is another thing, a recurring motif with the water.

When we were in San Quentin, Ray was really very difficult to work with, and he wouldn't read the letter up there. Then in postproduction, I got him to my

apartment one night and got him to read the letter. So he was sitting there with the voiceover mic reading the letter, and the way he would only really feel comfortable was when he would sort of preface the letter, “Now I’m going to do the letter. Now I’m going to read it to you,” and blah, blah, blah. It was sort of like his way to get into reading the letter. I think that was something he came up with himself. And I had excerpted the letter. I’d made it shorter than what it was, which he was fine with.

Here I was asking him to read his father’s letter. This was planned. You know what I mean? This was a setup. He had to sit at my desk. He wanted the lights low. I really had to direct him, and we had to do different takes. I mean, it’s not like a moment of gravity, but that was— I mean, working with him was always incredibly difficult, and this was something that I normally wasn’t doing, which was directing a voiceover, which I also know for myself is very difficult to do. I can appreciate that.

So I was really pleased that I was able to get him to do a good voiceover, that I got it to work with the footage of him on the ferry that passes San Quentin. That’s at the end of the film. What happens there is something that I could see extending in another film that I still haven’t managed to do, which is what happens at the end, Ray starts taking over, in a sense, because he’s telling you how he met his dad, so he’s speaking to me. He’s speaking to the filmmaker, you know, “And this happened and that happened,” blah, blah.

But then when it transitions to him out on the boat, and he’s saying, “I didn’t know about this letter,” blah, blah, blah, you’re getting it in voiceover, and it almost is like he’s taking over the role of being the filmmaker.

COLLINGS: Yes, and he does purchase a camera, doesn’t he?

MOGUL: Oh yes, and then he's purchased the camera. Yes, that's part of it. And then he's purchased the camera. And to me, after seeing that happen, I would love to make a film, and probably the only way to do this would be really to do it as a fiction piece where the subject— There's a shift in the film, and then the subject starts taking over and becoming the filmmaker. I mean, that's something that I would like to do where roles are reversed and things shift.

So that's not a moment of gravity, but I think it's an interesting idea where things shift. I think that also when he bought the camera, that also speaks to the interaction between subject and filmmaker in the film, that roles can be very fluid, that the potential is there for change.

COLLINGS: Yes, absolutely, yes. How did you—

MOGUL: Am I shouting?

COLLINGS: No.

MOGUL: I feel like I'm shouting. [laughs]

COLLINGS: You're not shouting.

How did you decide on the title? I think this is kind of like one of my sort of last questions on the film.

MOGUL: You don't know? Or you just want me to tell you? [laughs]

COLLINGS: I want you to tell me, unless you want me to take over the interview.

[mutual laughter]

MOGUL: See, I'm being a difficult subject. It's the last interview, so I must be having—

COLLINGS: I noticed that.

MOGUL: I'm having separation anxiety. [mutual laughter]

Well, this was the first film or any piece I ever did, whether it was performance or whatever, I was going crazy with a title. I couldn't come up with a title, and I would just make lists of titles, and Don would hate the titles, and I wouldn't like the titles he liked. This is Don Oppen, the co-producer. And it was just driving me nuts. It seemed like if it was only about one of the characters in the film, you could come up with a title. You know, you could come up with a title for an individual. What was going to work or kind of represent all four people, reflect who they were? So I was really not satisfied.

So I happened to be on the phone with— Became kind of friendly with Alex's teacher, Sam Eisenstein.

COLLINGS: He seems like such a sweet guy.

MOGUL: I wouldn't call him sweet. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Oh, really?

MOGUL: I mean, interesting and fun to talk to, right? And I call him up, and I guess I brought up the subject. He says, "Well, you know, right now I'm working on this compilation of students' works, and there's this poem by Alex." And he read it to me, which I wasn't aware of it, and he read it to me, and one of the lines was, "I stare at you and dream." And I just thought it was perfect. One, the words were coming from the subject herself. And also I thought that it felt like it represented an aspect of everybody in terms of longing, and I think that for me, for Ray, for Rosie, for Alex, there was this sense of, like, longing and this unrequited something. So when I heard it, I just immediately felt it was right.

Then Don hated it. He hated it, absolutely. He said, “It sounds like—.” What did he say? It sounded like those women doing the dishes poetry, or something. I don’t know. I’m misquoting it because it was so many years ago, but he had it stereotyped with representing some kind of a school of poetry or writing that he found very uninteresting or clichéd.

So then I kept going through more and more titles, and then one day when we were doing a rough cut, I had put up the title. I mean, I was the head person. But I really had a lot of—I still do—a lot of respect for Don. I had typed in the opening credit in a rough cut *I Stare at You and Dream*, and he goes, “I guess you’ve made your decision.” [laughs]

COLLINGS: Well, it also works, you know, in terms of the dollhouse, too, like sort of you arrange the furniture in the dollhouse, and then you sort of stare at it and imagine all these little things. And it also has sort of resonances of Hollywood, too, you know, like the perfect family, the perfect relationships, the perfect—

MOGUL: *I Stare at You and Dream?*

COLLINGS: Yes. When you stare at a film and dream, and then we all need to sort of measure the reality of our lives and relationships against these perfect families, these perfect relationships, and here the film is set in Los Angeles, Hollywood. So for me, it just works just so perfectly on every level, and coming out of a poem of Alex’s, it’s just—

MOGUL: Well, that’s the thing that was so nice, that here Ray’s picking up the camera, Alex’s poem, and then I became aware of it through Sam, her teacher, because that was something—I mean, she would share things with me, but anyway, I

didn't know about that. And also a young poet isn't necessarily going to think—

COLLINGS: "Oh, use my work," yes.

MOGUL: You know. And also this might have come— I was at the end of postproduction, so I don't even know how much contact I had with Alex, because I was just completely immersed with that. I mean, that's the part about the whole filmmaking process that was so interesting, is just getting all that interact— Getting the stimulation. Which is why I think I make these things that you might call documentaries, is because you're getting to respond. You're getting input from somebody else.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right. It's collaborative in that sense.

MOGUL: Yes, it's collaborative in that sense. I mean, I have the final say.

COLLINGS: Yes, make no mistake.

MOGUL: Yes, I mean, it would be fun to do something that became very collaborative. Because I think that I would probably be doing fiction films if it was all coming from me.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes.

Okay. Do you want to take a break?

MOGUL: Yes.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: Or you can frame an interesting question.

COLLINGS: No, no. I'm just going to ask you. *I Stare at You and Dream*, Susan, what's it about?

MOGUL: *I Stare at You and Dream* revolves around four characters. It revolves

around my friendship with a woman more or less my age, Rosie Sanchez; her daughter, Alex Sanchez, who was around nineteen at the time; and Ray, who was my on-and-off boyfriend. And everybody lived in the Highland Park area, and so it revolved around our lives. Also, Rosie and Alex knew Ray, and I met Ray because he went to their restaurant. So there was already kind of this network of these four people.

It grew out of *Echo Street*, in which Ray and Rosie already had small parts in that documentary. I was aware of the fact that there were aspects of all our lives that mirrored each other in certain ways, and they all mirrored me in some way, although I was the white woman, Jewish woman, coming from a middle-class background living in this low-income Latino area for like eighteen years, and Alex and Rosie and Ray were low-income Latino. Where I felt Alex was the artist, so she was kind of a mirror for me in that way, Rosie was the devoted daughter, where I was the prodigal daughter; and then Ray, well, Ray was the on-and-off boyfriend.

Ray also was— As I think I might have mentioned before, that all of us, the three adults, had had losses, significant losses or dramatic changes in relationship to family, at the age of twenty-three, which colored our lives in terms of the fact that actually all the three adults were all single, were all single adults. Rosie had never been married. I had never been married. Ray, I think, might have been married, but never— He sort of was living this very free-spirited life.

So, basically what it was about was, for me, in part, was about loss, was about home, was about family, was about how our past informs our present. I think if you were to say that was what it would really get down to, was how the past informs our

present, and sort of an investigation of that through watching people's everyday lives interact and intertwine and then slowly it peels away and you start slowly finding out about things that happened in the past.

You were saying that you didn't think it was a soap opera, and you're probably right. I think I'm thinking it's a soap opera in the sense that it's episodic and it has that "And then back at the restaurant, Rosie [inaudible] from Fernando." But, hopefully, it's not mawkish, which is something that I sometimes think that maybe people might respond to it in that way, that they might think of it as mawkish and that I'm crying on camera. But I think it probably, hopefully, isn't mawkish, because I don't know what you would say, is that I don't think it's about self-pity in any way, but I think it's more about this trying to understand how we are, why are we the way we are— You know, why are we living the way we live today? I don't think anybody in the film is presented as victims, but they're people who are able to articulate who they are.

COLLINGS: Yes, I think that's a good way of putting it.

MOGUL: You've thought of something.

COLLINGS: Well, I was just going to ask you, when you applied for the grant to do the film, what did you say the film was going to be about?

MOGUL: Some of those things. It was more detailed in talking about— It was actually a production agreement. It was funded by Corporation for Public Broadcasting, ITVS. I got funded by ITVS, so it was a production. It was like more than a grant. It was actually a production agreement, so it was very, very good.

You know what? That's what was very surprising, is when I went back to look

at the grant application, I mean, it's more articulate than what I'm saying right now, but it was surprising how much of what I said I set out to do I did. Because, basically, in applying for the kind of documentaries I do, which aren't investigative or biographical, but they're following people's lives, I knew everybody's back story so well, I was able to kind of project what it was about and describe the characters and who they were and what each person's struggles were.

COLLINGS: Right. Because you had worked with them previously.

MOGUL: Yes. So it was similar. I think the surprises in doing the film are the details that fill the thing out. You know. I didn't plan ahead that we were going to San Quentin, things like that, and I didn't know about Ray's letter. I didn't know that Rosie's father had stopped talking to her. But there was enough stuff in terms of the back story. Then you didn't know the tattoo artist is going to appear on the scene.

COLLINGS: Right.

MOGUL: You know, in terms of like different things, because I'm both the friend and the documenter, I kind of helped. I was like the matchmaker, the Jewish matchmaker, for this.

COLLINGS: For the tattoo scene.

MOGUL: For this girl to get a tattoo. [mutual laughter] John always wanted to give me a tattoo. That wasn't for me. I, all of a sudden, got very religious. No, Jews don't get tattoos. [laughs]

That's my experience in terms of making these documentaries— Well, *Echo Street* and *I Stare at You and Dream*, I think also because a number of people were involved, that things start to happen. There's lots of coincidences that happen and

things that kind of feed the film and feed the subject of the film. You could call the thing where I'm finding other people with absent fathers coincidental, but you could also say that you're focused on your project so much that you have your antennae out, and so then you're paying attention to these other things.

I'll tell you one little anecdote.

COLLINGS: Okay.

MOGUL: How did I know John Harb never met his father?

COLLINGS: I don't— Yes, exactly.

MOGUL: His father didn't show up till he was twenty-something. Well, when they're doing the tattoo, I didn't know John all that well.

COLLINGS: Yes, I'm sure.

MOGUL: The only reason he was going to be on film was because Alex was getting the tattoo there. So he's giving Alex the tattoo, she wants to take a break, and she's brought herself a Middle Eastern falafel or pita bread or some something, hummus. So John asks what she's eating, so she tells him, "It's hummus."

He goes, "What's that?"

And I look at John, and I said, "How can you not know what that is?" Because I knew that he was half Lebanese and half Latino. I said, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you know?" Because, see, me being a bigmouth, "What's wrong with you? Why don't you know what a Middle Eastern sandwich is? You're half Middle Eastern."

He goes, "Well, I never met my father," or, "I didn't meet my father until I was twenty. I don't know that side of the family."

COLLINGS: Wow.

MOGUL: So it's sort of like—

COLLINGS: Coincidence.

MOGUL: It's a combination of, like, not being so proscribed in what you're doing, and also the thing that I have to remember now with the film, what I have to remember is to be myself, because I often find that when I start, if I try to become the interviewer or the filmmaker too much, then you can get in trouble, and then I think people pick up on that, that you're not relaxed and you've got an agenda.

COLLINGS: Yes, for sure. Okay.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE

April 1, 2003

COLLINGS: So, *Prosaic Portraits*. Let's talk just a bit about that. *Prosaic Portraits [Ironies and Other Intimacies]*, that was your first documentary, really, right?

MOGUL: Yes, yes, it was.

COLLINGS: You knew you wanted to go to Eastern Europe, I recall.

MOGUL: Right.

COLLINGS: and you needed to be funded for the trip, and so you thought you'd make a documentary, is that—

MOGUL: No, no, no. No, no, no. No. The Santa Monica Museum of Art, I don't know if they still do it, but under the direction of Tom Rhoads, from the very beginning they would have artists' projects, and they would fund, say, five artists a year to do projects. So I guess I was invited to apply, and so that was the idea for my project, was to—I finally owned my own videocamera, had gotten one the year before. It wasn't like I wanted to go to Eastern Europe and this was funds for it. I wanted to do a project, so I came up with the idea for this project.

COLLINGS: Was that your first trip outside the United States?

MOGUL: Oh, no, because I'd been to Eastern Europe two years before.

COLLINGS: Oh, you had, I see. Oh.

MOGUL: Oh, see, I had been to Eastern Europe before. I had gone in '88. I think I might have told you. I went in '88 to Hungary. I lived in Hungary for a month, in Budapest

COLLINGS: Oh, yes, okay. Yes, I guess I was confused because I thought that was part of the same project.

MOGUL: No, no, no, no, no. In my application I was building on the fact that I already had experience and had contacts in Eastern Europe, and so, therefore, now I wanted to go back and make a film about these people that I knew in Budapest. But then when they funded the project, then I thought, “Well, I’ve already been to Budapest. I think I want to go to a different country in Eastern Europe,” and so that’s what I did.

COLLINGS: Once again, it seems like you just get right in there, and you meet all kinds of people. But, of course, it’s not the same kind of very personal thing that you’ve done in some of your other films. It’s more general discussion about the place.

MOGUL: Yes. But also what is similar, like, ends up being similar, is that I’m filming myself also in the apartment. I’m not staying in a hotel; I’m staying in an apartment. I have an apartment where there’s no water. I’m dragging the hot water into the bathtub, and I’m fascinated with just the domestic idiosyncrasies of the place, which is what I always am interested in, is all these different—I only have two bathtub scenes, so there’s a bathtub scene there, and I have Alex’s bathtub scene. Maybe I should start making more bathtub scenes and cut a bathtub sequence.

COLLINGS: Right.

MOGUL: So, I mean, this is, in a way, it’s not like the soda fountain piece at all except for the fact that I just have this idea about doing something that I’ve never done before, and that it has a certain kind of risk involved in the sense that—I mean, I’m not even thinking about that at the time, but there is a risk involved. I’m going to do a

project. I've never really done a documentary before, but I think I'll do it in Eastern Europe first. [laughs] You would have thought that somebody— Like I would have done *Echo Street* first, like something in your own neighborhood, and then you'll go and do something in Eastern Europe. Well, I came up with the idea of doing Eastern Europe first, number one, because I got invited. I had been there two years before. That was in '88 before The [Berlin] Wall came down, and then I was invited in '90 to make this—To apply to do a project.

And I thought, "Now everybody wants to go to Eastern Europe now. Now it's so cool to go there, so I'm going to play on the fact that I've already been there and was interested before it became hip." So that was part of the motivation, and also I was going to be able to build on before and after. But I hadn't done made a documentary before.

So, in fact, when I did *Echo Street* when I came up with the idea to do *Echo Street*, I said, "Gee, I'm going thousands of miles to make a documentary in Eastern Europe, and I have all these connections." "Connections" meaning connections not in the sense of networking, but, you know, I'm very connected to this place. I should be making a film about this place that I know so much about.

COLLINGS: Yes. Right. Did you get a chance to visit any, like, extended family members or relatives or anything when you were—

MOGUL: I don't have any extended family. There's no—

COLLINGS: There's nobody at all that's just in any way—

MOGUL: They were killed. The closest I got to anybody's family— My family either left or the ones that were there were killed early on in Riga, I believe.

COLLINGS: Do you know what town? Did you visit the town that—

MOGUL: I visited Bialystock. I think you see me there for two seconds with some guy who's singing— But I went to Bialystock. My father's parents were from Bialystock, and they left when they were five or six. So I went there. Then there were some photographers who I was given the names of. They took me outside of Bialystock and drove me all around to some of those villages.

When I went to Krakow, my very close friend Ken Silver, had a cousin who he never met, his mother's cousin, I met him. He took me around, and I think you see me sitting at the dinner table with him.

COLLINGS: They're serving soup. Yes.

MOGUL: Yes. And he was passing as a Catholic. His children didn't know he was Jewish. His wife did. And he survived because his mother was Jewish and his father wasn't. I stayed with him and his wife and kids for a few days, but that's the closest I got to any family, because there's no family there.

COLLINGS: Were your parents interested in the fact that you were going?

MOGUL: I don't think so. [laughs]

COLLINGS: I just wondered if they were connected in any way to, like, genealogy or interested in sort of family heritage in that sense.

MOGUL: But it really wasn't—I mean, it wasn't really a family heritage. How did you perceive— What did you think of the tape?

COLLINGS: Let's see. Well, once again, you've got a delightful female character as a sort of a centerpiece for the tape. What is her name, again?

MOGUL: Oh, Margozata Potocka.

COLLINGS: Oh, I just love her. She's such a—

MOGUL: She is an actress.

COLLINGS: She is, is she?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: Actually, she reminded me very much of a woman that I knew when I was in China, who was quite idiosyncratic and had a lot of life in her and just had figured out all of these sort of ways to get around the various bureaucratic obstacles to living, and just did it with a very light heart. And I suppose there are just countless numbers of people like that in these kind of totalitarian—

MOGUL: She comes from a family that's very well known and respected in Poland. She's not wealthy herself, but her family name is equivalent to Rockefeller, supposedly, in terms of her background. Then also people knew her there because she was an actress. So she has celebrity in Poland, which made it a lot of fun to go around with her, which is why they let us get in front of this long line for gasoline.

COLLINGS: Oh, really? You see, because that's one of the examples. I was just thinking of something this friend of mine in China had done. Of course, she's nobody, and that was just sort of her way.

MOGUL: She's kind of a somebody, because sometimes people would come up to her. She's somebody there.

COLLINGS: So she really did get in front of the long line using her name. It wasn't using her jokes and things.

MOGUL: I don't know if she used her name. It could have been either. She's very charming. She's very charming. Who knows? Because she's speaking in Polish.

COLLINGS: How did you get hooked up—

MOGUL: I met her in L.A. for literally two seconds, and I told her I was coming to Poland, and so that's how.

COLLINGS: So she just decided to take you around and introduce you to certain things?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: What were you sort of expecting to be able to do with this film before you went in?

MOGUL: I had no idea. That's why I said it was sort of like the soda fountain piece. There's some projects—I mean, I don't remember the last time I've done something like this. Maybe it's time for me to do something blindly again where I just jump in and do something new. But I didn't know. It was just like, "Okay, I'm going to bring my camera and do this." I had no idea.

COLLINGS: Were there any people that you shot that you decided not to use in the film?

MOGUL: Oh, god, I can't even remember. I can't remember.

COLLINGS: Do you show the people sort of in chronological order, in terms of how you met them or—

MOGUL: Oh, god, I don't even remember. This was a piece where I was new. I hadn't edited that much. Everything was kind of an experiment, in a sense. But I think it really is a precursor to what I ended up doing. I think it was an early building block to *Echo Street* where you see— Like, you see the best girlfriend, you see the flirtations with the guys.

Oh, there was somebody— You know, there was somebody that I didn't use. I only was allowed to film her hands. She was the mother of an artist I knew here, a Polish artist, Krystof Wodiczko. She was an older lady and really kind of reminded me of my great-aunt. I think anyone who has an Eastern European accent reminds me of my great-aunt if they're of a certain age and they have the right accent. Very interesting, intelligent woman, but she wouldn't let me film her. I only could film the teacups and stuff. Irena Wodiczko.

It seemed like what was interesting about going to Poland or living in Warsaw for a month was, you know, I had the best girlfriend. I had the men to flirt with. There was the older woman, sort of the maternal figure. Within a short time, I sort of started creating a little bit of a family network. So I probably could have made an *Echo Street*, a true *Echo Street* if I had stayed longer.

COLLINGS: Was there ever any sort of moment where you just kind of said, "Oh, I love doing this. I'm going to keep on doing this from now on"? Because your work after that film has all been sort of this kind of diary documentary style, hasn't it?

MOGUL: Yes, yes, that's why I decided to show it to you. It's really not been shown very much at all, and I suppose it's not— I mean, I don't know, what do you think about the quality of it?

COLLINGS: Well, I mean, obviously, it's not like *Echo Street* or like *I Stare at You and Dream*, because you don't have the intimate connections with these people. Just exactly as you said, if you had stayed longer— And I think it is kind of interesting to look at it and compare it to those films, because it just shows you what a role the intimacy does play in *Echo Street* and *I Stare at You and Dream*, because you've got

the same filmmaker, you've got the same method, in a sense, but you're missing that really intimate connection and knowledge with the people, and it just comes off really differently as a result. I mean, it's more like other things I've seen, whereas something like *I Stare at You and Dream* is just so intimate, it's so unusual.

MOGUL: Also I don't think I had the skills yet of structure, in terms of telling the story, of telling a story as well, or knew really what the story was. I think you could create something very personal, basically it's a travel diary. I think that probably I would have to reveal more of myself—

COLLINGS: Yes, because that's what a diary is, after all.

MOGUL: —in that work for it to— Anyway, I just thought it was interesting in terms that it was a beginning towards that, towards the diary documentary mode.

COLLINGS: Do you think you needed to go out of the country to begin that process, or was that just a coincidence?

MOGUL: I think it might have been— You know, that's an interesting— My first answer is, well, maybe yes, because then you're sort of forced to keep shooting everything, all your experiences, because you know you're only going to be there once. You have to; you have to keep doing that.

On the other hand, based on my other work, home is always where I've started with, like the *News from Home*, the letters from my mother, going back to my parents' home and making photographs there. Before I had my own camera, I was filming out the window. Prior to *Prosaic Portraits*, when I didn't own my camera but I was borrowing one that was an immobile camera, I was filming out my window and filming myself. So I don't think that it had to be, especially based on the way I've

worked before, but I think it sort of just threw me out there.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, exactly. Why did you name it what you did?

MOGUL: I don't know. I came up with that, *Prosaic Portraits [Ironies and Other Intimacies]*, probably because I knew I wanted to do something that was like about the everyday.

COLLINGS: So that's the "Prosaic," yes.

MOGUL: So that later you see that *Everyday Echo Street*.

I knew when I was in Hungary—I met all these different people. I guess I associated Eastern Europe with people being ironic. I don't know. I don't know where I came up with it.

COLLINGS: Yes, well, just wondering.

MOGUL: See, that was where I came up with a title, it was so easy.

COLLINGS: Just like that.

MOGUL: It wasn't a struggle.

COLLINGS: Yes. Was there anything you missed about Eastern Europe when you came back? Is there anything you sort of miss about it now, anything special there that you don't find here?

MOGUL: I liked the Eastern European people.

COLLINGS: What do you like about them?

MOGUL: That they're melancholy and— Well, the ones that I know. It's kind of that blend of the melancholy and ironic. I was mostly, in both cases, hanging out with artists and intellectuals. That was sort of, I guess you'd say, an elite group more than the everyday Hungarian or the everyday Pole.

There was some good food in Poland. I don't know. I wouldn't want to live there. It's a difficult place to live, and I don't like the weather there, but I just enjoyed the people. God, it's been so long since I was there.

COLLINGS: Yes, sure. I think those are the only questions that I had about that. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about that?

MOGUL: I guess, in terms of being a Jew, and in terms of being a Jew in Poland, I guess stuff that I didn't talk about in *Prosaic Portraits* was the experience of going to— Coincidentally, when I was in Hungary in '88 and Poland in '90, it was both during the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, just coincidentally. So in both cases, I went to synagogue one time in Budapest and the other time in Warsaw. Budapest has many synagogues and they have Hungarian rabbis. What was striking about being in Warsaw, Poland, on Yom Kippur, whether it was Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah, was that they had to import a rabbi from New York.

COLLINGS: Oh, that must have been rather frightening.

MOGUL: And that most of the people who were in the synagogue were tourists, Jews who happened to be in Poland during that time, foreign Jews. In other words, the Jewish population was so—

COLLINGS: Just this frightening absence.

MOGUL: Yes, exactly. I don't know why I didn't include that, but that was very striking.

I visited one concentration camp when I was in Poland which can't help but be horrifying. But the things that were the most striking to me as a Jew were the absence of Jews, and I didn't include that at all in the tape.

COLLINGS: Yes, the tape is rather light, really. It's sort of fun.

MOGUL: Yes. That struck me very much so, not to see any. Basically that you felt the absence there. There was a young guy in my tape, sort of reminds me of Michael in *Please Return My Flag*. He's the guy who says, "To be or not to be" in like twenty-five different languages. He's so charming.

He took me to a Jewish community center, because this was after The Wall came down, and Jews felt more comfortable about being Jewish, those who had maybe one Jewish parent. We went to a community center, and there was this rabbi who had been imported from, actually, Rockaway, which was where my mother's from.

COLLINGS: How funny.

MOGUL: He was teaching Jews about the holidays, Polish Jews, which, I mean, the most basic thing that any Jew who's not even religious in this country knows, and that was like another example—

COLLINGS: Did you film that?

MOGUL: No, I didn't. I didn't film that. So that was another form of absence.

COLLINGS: But you chose not to deal with this. You didn't film any of this subject matter?

MOGUL: No, I didn't. I didn't film going to temple. I don't think I filmed the Jewish community thing. The only thing that I filmed in terms of absence, or a— Well, it was a secret. I don't know if I mentioned that that guy who was fifty years old who I'm at his house and the soup is being ladled—

COLLINGS: Yes, that's in the film.

MOGUL: Do I say that he keeps being Jewish a secret? I cried that night. That really

struck me.

I think that I probably wasn't— Like I talk about storytelling skills or whatever or what you're emotionally ready to do. I don't think I was ready to address those things in a way that I could feel comfortable doing. Maybe I just didn't know how or I wasn't prepared.

COLLINGS: It seems that a lot of your themes are developed through character. It seems that you would need to identify people who could carry those themes.

MOGUL: That's a good point. I think that I like to find people who can be articulate for me. I don't want to carry the whole story. I get stimulated when I find people with whom I can identify or with whom I have empathy. And that's a very good point. If there's nobody to carry the story, I don't think I want to take that on unless I have my own story in which I can— Their story is going to be stronger. I can possibly elaborate on my experience of them or my having a story, but just to say I went to synagogue and—

COLLINGS: Right. You don't have the character to carry that.

MOGUL: Maybe, I mean— Yes. Especially with the stuff with Jews and the Holocaust and everything, it's gotten so hackneyed, also I probably wanted to stay away from it.

But I think had I been more experienced and had thought it out, I mean, I have the Christian guy taking me to the Jewish cemetery. There's probably, now that I'm thinking about it, there was different things that I might have started to tie together in some way.

COLLINGS: But also, I mean, you probably just would have needed to know the

people better, since you work so well with people that you know.

MOGUL: Yes. I don't think I had a specific focus, which probably would be one critique of the film.

COLLINGS: Well, not really. It's a travel diary. I don't think it pretends to be anything that it's not. So I don't think one can really—

MOGUL: No, but I could have, if I had wanted to or made a decision to there, there could be a point where I could have gone off on this whole thing about the absence, not through the concentration camp seeing absence, but the absence in terms of like you go into a restaurant and there's no Jews in the country, but on the menu you can order Gefilte, Jewish-style fish, which is like there just like all these little things. But it didn't seem like enough.

COLLINGS: Yes. That's kind of what it's like in New Zealand. There are not that many Maoris around in many of the areas, but so many of the towns have Maori names, and many public signs are in Maori and English.

All right. Now, *Please Return My Flag*.

MOGUL: Very good. That's the working title. By the time this gets printed and whatever, it may have another title.

COLLINGS: Okay, working title. I guess I wanted to ask you a couple different questions here. Okay. You say in the beginning of the film that you wanted to make a film about the men in your life.

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: I guess, just generally, I would ask you why. [laughs]

MOGUL: So I can figure out why there's no man in my life. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Okay, is that the answer? All right. That was easy.

So given that, how did the film begin to be about Michael, or is it going to be about more than just one person by the time it's done?

MOGUL: It's primarily going to be about Michael Mayer and my friendship with Michael Mayer.

COLLINGS: But was that what you planned going in?

MOGUL: No. Right around the same time, a few weeks before, I had filmed Howard Rosenberg, who's a TV critic, who's favorably reviewed my films. So I thought, "Here would be an interesting man to film." So I did some shooting of him, but I also realized after I filmed Michael, that Michael just was so interesting to film, and I realized that I had a closeness with Michael that I would never get that kind of thing with— You know, Howard is very charming and personable on film, but he's also a celebrity. He's been on TV a million times, writes for the *L.A. Times*.

COLLINGS: Certain kind of persona that you can't kind of get underneath.

MOGUL: Yes, I don't think so. I don't know. I might film him again. Michael, I'd just been friends with for a few years, and I just took to him like water, and I was surprised to see how interesting he was on camera once I got the footage from the first day. That's why I just kept wanting to film him.

COLLINGS: Is there anything that you can say or that you feel like you should say about the differences in working with men, Michael and Ray, versus Rosie and Alex?

MOGUL: Yes, it's beginning to become very apparent that men are a bitch to work with. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Really? In what sense?

MOGUL: Well, Ray is a difficult person, number one, I mean very difficult, plus we had this on-and-off boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. But he's a difficult person, so it was always difficult filming him, because you never knew his ups and downs, whether he'd let you, whether he'd give you— He'd always let me film him, but he often gave me a hard time about it, and I never would know when.

COLLINGS: That's a pain.

MOGUL: It was more than a pain; it was painful. And he was very unpredictable.

Shooting Rosie and Alex was like nothing. I mean, it was very easy. When I filmed the women from *Sing O Barren Woman*, now, I wasn't following their lives. I only filmed each one of them, was filmed twice, once for the song and once for the thing. So that had much more parameters, so it's maybe not fair to include them, because I wasn't following their lives. They knew I was coming to their house, I was going to ask them about being childless, they had agreed to it, and then the thing with the song. So it was very— Everyone knew exactly what was happening.

But now I've been filming Michael, and now Michael is always giving me a hard time.

COLLINGS: You mean like making arrangements and canceling them, or saying, "Don't film this, film that"?

MOGUL: Yes. He doesn't usually cancel. I mean, he's done that, but that's okay. "Don't film this, film that." "Get the camera away from this." There's all these issues. There's no comparison between Ray and Michael. One is a very stable, responsible person, and the other one isn't, Michael being the stable responsible person. I think, in both cases, with both these guys, there's issues of control, and I

think here it's a woman filming a guy.

It's interesting, because I did this short piece, like a five-minute piece for the Silver Lake Film Festival, a commissioned piece called *A Piece of Work*, which is about a friend of mine, Ken Mate, who is my age, and I just filmed him. I shot the whole piece in one day, so that was pretty proscribed. But I know, even with him, in the course of filming, "Don't follow. You should keep the camera here. You shouldn't follow. Let me pass through the camera." I mean, at some point he was giving me— For the most part, that day of shooting him for eight hours went very smoothly, but just even— He was sort of like giving me instructions on not what content, but, like, how to do it better.

COLLINGS: What about this Polish woman that you said was kind of like a Rockefeller? Did she ever do that with you?

MOGUL: No, no. Her name was sort of like that. No. It's interesting that you ask that question, because, like, I just filmed Michael the other day. We've done very little filming the last number of months. I filmed him the other day. He's moving from a small apartment to a larger apartment within the same building complex, and then as soon as the shoot was over, "Oh, there's that shot you got at the end, you can't use it because my arm is in it," or something like that. I don't know if he thinks I got his— He's got psoriasis on his hand. But it was like—

COLLINGS: Now, you say in your rough cut that he saw some footage and he really freaked out. I was just wondering what it was that he didn't like about it, if you know.

MOGUL: Oh, he wasn't very clear. He said that some things were out of context, but he really wasn't clear about it. That's when he took a break for a while. He wasn't

really clear. I mean, it's funny, he's had this— Like, he keeps doing it, but he's always fighting me.

COLLINGS: Yes, it sounds like it.

MOGUL: Which is sort of why do you agree to do something if you're going to fight the person all the time? And then I wonder why I'm doing it, but now I'm so deep into it.

COLLINGS: Yes. Does he remind you of anyone that you know?

MOGUL: Probably all my relationships with all men. Although he's gay, it's the same thing. It doesn't make a difference if they're gay or straight. But I am going to be filming other men in the male montage section. I'm just starting to work on that now. But it's going to be revolving around— He's the central character.

COLLINGS: And what is the significance of that sort of like repeated motif about the door slamming? Or maybe *significance* is the wrong word. Why do you like that?

MOGUL: Oh, I don't know. I had doors slamming in *Barren Woman* where the people were— I don't know. Maybe I'll get rid of it.

COLLINGS: Yes. I just wondered.

MOGUL: I don't know. I don't know. You're asking me all these questions, but you didn't even set this up.

COLLINGS: What?

MOGUL: This is about an Israeli gay guy who lives in L.A.

COLLINGS: Oh, yes, yes. Please set it up.

MOGUL: Michael Mayer is a friend of mine. We've been friends for several years, and then I wanted to do a film about men in my life as a way to make an indirect

autobiography, and I thought also maybe it would be a way to kind of get at what are the relationships that I have with men, brothers, fathers, friends, and why isn't Susan Mogul with a man and why is she living alone?

And Michael was one of the people I started out filming, who now he's thirty, but I started out filming him like when he was twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and he's an Israeli guy who came to go to film school here and decided to stay. So he's an Israeli living in the diaspora, and also he's kind of interesting in the fact that he almost has no Israeli accent, and he can pass as straight. He can pass as American. So it's kind of interesting in that regard as well.

COLLINGS: And how did you meet him?

MOGUL: At a film conference.

COLLINGS: I think, for me, one of the things that's most striking about this rough cut that you showed me was that you used—

MOGUL: So this piece is in progress right now.

COLLINGS: Yes, of course, yes. Is that you used subtitles in the film, instead of your own voice, whereas in your— Are you going to put in your voice later?

MOGUL: No. I am using text. I want to have the text animated and then I want to have like some kind of musical stings underneath so my voice appears in that you get a sense of my voice through language or text.

COLLINGS: Because it just seems like your presence is not really there, whereas in some of your other films, you're one of the main— Like in *I Stare at You and Dream*, there's the four characters, as you say, whereas in this, I don't get that palpable sense of your presence. I was wondering what your thinking was about that. Or maybe

that's going to change. I don't know.

MOGUL: Well, that's what I have right now. I was interested in the idea of having the text. You see me a little bit right towards the end when Michael and I are having lunch together. I used text in this little music video I did, and I wanted to see if I could develop an attitude and personality with that. It sounds like you didn't like it.

COLLINGS: No, no. It's absolutely not that. It's just I'm very curious about this striking difference.

MOGUL: Well, in the fall, for the Freewaves Video Festival, they invited artists to do karaoke videos, which meant, like, take a popular song and then make a tape. So I picked "Sweet Talkin' Guy." Did I show that to you?

COLLINGS: No.

MOGUL: Oh, I can show that to you today, if you want.

COLLINGS: Okay.

MOGUL: I did "Sweet Talkin' Guy," and then because it was supposed to be a karaoke video so you could sing along, I had text that I animated through the song, and then I went through footage of all these guys I dated, and it was cut with them in the tape and I'm in the tape, and then you have the text that's moving and flying in and out. So it was a different way. I'd never done that before, and I liked the idea of developing that where text, if you have text that's large and then it gets smaller, it recedes, and just different— How you could create a personality with text. If I keep going with that, I'll probably work with someone who's professional in that, so I could really do something interesting with the text.

COLLINGS: So it sounds like that was almost like a prototype for this larger piece.

MOGUL: Yes, and I had never done that before. You could do that with Final Cut Pro and so on. Every time I do a new piece, I like to challenge myself esthetically, too. But you said I'm not palpable.

COLLINGS: Well, it's just striking that your absence in this piece—

MOGUL: But you hear me. You don't hear me talking to him?

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, yes.

MOGUL: But it's just not that much.

COLLINGS: It's just not the same.

TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE TWO

April 1, 2003

MOGUL: You said it's not the same, but I think now in this section where Michael is dropping out of the tape, I think you're going to see this male montage, which I'm about to embark on and start doing shooting of all these different guys just briefly. I think my presence is going to come more to the fore in this next section.

COLLINGS: Well, that would be very interesting.

MOGUL: So it will harken back to this fact that I started out doing a film about men— You know.

COLLINGS: I'm certainly not saying you have to make it like your previous films. I'm just curious about the difference.

MOGUL: Well, that's what Michael keeps saying, "Where are you? I thought it's about the relationship. Why aren't you in the film? What's the story? I thought it was supposed to be about you and me. Now it's just about me. Why? What are you doing? I don't know what you're doing. Are you keeping it secret from me?"

"Well, when I showed everything, you freaked out, so now I'm keeping it secret."

COLLINGS: Yes, that's right. You learned that lesson.

I know that it's just a working title, *Please Return My Flag*, but what's the resonance of that?

MOGUL: Well, there's a scene in the film where Michael pulls up. We're driving

through this residential section, actually a very tony residential section, I think somewhere in Beverly Hills, and there's a sign out. He pulls over, he walks over, and then there's these flags hanging. There's one that says "Please return my flag," because somebody stole some kind of antique flag these people had, and so it said "Please return my flag." Michael makes some cynical remark about everybody's freaked about 9/11 stuff, and this guy in L.A.'s just worried about getting his flag returned.

Then I thought of that as a title for now, anyway, that Michael—I mean, one of the things that's interesting to me about Michael is that he's Jewish, he's Israeli. I've really never been friends with an Israeli, may never be friends with an Israeli again after this. [laughs] He is also a guy in between places, you know, so he's not in Israel, but he's like someone in between homes. And I thought the idea of a flag representing your home and please return my home, please return my flag, I don't know, it just seemed like it could have different meanings.

It's interesting that Michael came to Los Angeles at the age of twenty-three, which is when I came to Los Angeles, and he moved thousands of miles away from his family, too, at the same time that I did.

COLLINGS: It's interesting, because, as you said earlier—

MOGUL: At the same age, not the same time.

COLLINGS: Yes. As you said earlier, so much of your work has to do with the home space, and I think you said, "I always start from home," and here you're doing a piece where the home space is not delineated. It's sort of not known, and I think it's—

MOGUL: Because, what, because we're in the car all the time? Is that why you're

saying it?

COLLINGS: Yes, yes.

MOGUL: You're leaving out a lot of stuff. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes, because you're in the car all the time, and as you said, you just did this piece, this segment where you're moving from one apartment to another, you don't have that sense of the home base that your other films have, where you're doing monologues or direct address, thanks to the camera. So really there is no home space, there is no home base, in the rough cut so far.

MOGUL: Well, that's why I'm at a place right now. I mean, this has been a hard piece for me to do in terms of— Once it got to a certain point last June, then shortly thereafter Michael dropped out and didn't kind of reenter. I also became at a loss of what I wanted to do with it, where it was going. So it's just only until a few weeks ago I started thinking about that we were possibly not going to be in the car anymore, and that when I heard he was moving, I really wanted to get to film that move, because I did want to go back, I did want to start to go back to the idea of home, and start pushing that.

So this has been like the opposite of doing *I Stare at You and Dream* where I started out really knowing what I was after, and this has been all instinctive. Maybe you could say—I said I haven't jumped in. I mean, it is something I just kind of— It's not like just going off to Eastern Europe with a camera and not knowing what I'm doing or not having a plan.

COLLINGS: Should I turn off the tape recorder?

MOGUL: Yes.

[Interruption]

MOGUL: I was proceeding on this piece about Michael with instinct, because I just was so taken with how interesting he was on camera. I mean, he had just such an interesting perspective on Los Angeles, and I thought some of the ways he would argue with me on camera were very interesting, that he would also, like, argue with me on one hand, and then in some cases show empathy towards— You know, be very perceptive about things.

I mean, he said something, like on the first day of the shoot, which I haven't figured out how to incorporate it. When we were filming, at that point we thought, oh, my father might have cancer, and it turned out not to be true. So anyway, at the end of the day of the first shoot, we're back at his house, and he said, "You know, you lost Larry," referring to my boyfriend who was killed in the car accident like thirty years ago, whatever. He said, "You lost Larry, you're getting ready to lose your dad," and he goes, "I think you're counting on me to be one of the guys who don't die on you."

And it was just like I was just sort of like blown away by his comment. Michael says things both humorous and— He always— He confronts. I mean, it can drive you crazy, but he constantly is confronting things you'd never even think to confront, like— I can't even think of something. Like talking about a cement factory, "This cement factory reminds me of Israel," or just— I can't think of examples. He just will go after things you'd never even think of going after, and he always seems to have an unusual perspective on things.

Like you were saying before, you said, "Well, maybe in Eastern Europe you never had a character to explore some things," and here I found this character, but I

didn't know what I was going to explore. I also felt a certain kind of— It's been very interesting to film somebody who has a completely different experience of being Jewish. Israelis have a very different experience of being Jewish, because everybody in Israel is Jewish, so there's not an embarrassment about being Jewish, which a lot of Jews have.

I was kidding with him the other day. He was wearing— His pants were kind of slung low like a lot of kind of Latino gangsters wear, and I said, "Oh, you look like a hot Chicano."

He goes, "What do you mean I look like a hot Chicano? I look like a hot Jew." And I was pointing out to him that Jews always love to be told they're any other ethnicity but Jewish, and how refreshing that somebody who is just— It's a given. Being Jewish is a given. He was saying, in Israel, he said, "Yes, all the criminals are Jews. All the cops are Jews." He goes, "It's a special land. Everybody's Jewish." And he grew up with everybody— I mean, anybody he interrelated with was Jewish. So that's very interesting to me, how someone where you have a certain kind of common language, you have a common background on one hand, yet at the same time, such a different experience. In other words, he didn't grow up as a minority.

COLLINGS: Right, right, right. It sounds like that could end up being what the film is about.

MOGUL: What?

COLLINGS: This experience. The contrast between your experience and his experience.

MOGUL: Yes, I mean, I haven't really articulated it. I don't know how it— In some

recent footage I was trying to bring that out. Maybe it's something that I will have to, I don't know, use in text. I don't know. But to me, that's one thing that's interesting, but more than that is who he is and how he perceives the world.

My girlfriend, this young woman who's basically Michael's age, who has worked with me on different projects, Elise Ludwig, she was one of the people who suggested I film Michael. She said, "The two of you have such an unusual relationship, because you're so much older than he, and he's younger."

Then I was thinking about it, and I said to her, "Well, you're the same age as Michael," because I'm friends with her and we do stuff together. I said, "Why don't you think you and I have an unusual relationship?"

She said, "Well, because he's a guy." [laughs] But I think there must be something else that maybe she hasn't articulated, and I don't know what you perceive from on camera what comes across, if anything.

COLLINGS: In terms of the relationship?

MOGUL: Yes.

COLLINGS: To me, he seems kind of like a younger brother kind of figure, but a younger brother who— And really, this is just something I'm saying. It's not— But he seems like a younger brother who kind of feels like he has higher status than you because he's the brother and you're the sister. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: You know what? My friend Miriam Cutler, who's been a composer on many of my projects, and actually she's become my friend because we've worked together, and now, even when she's not composing, I like to show her stuff and get her

feedback while it's in progress. She said, "He uses you like a mentor, but he doesn't treat you like one."

COLLINGS: Yes, well, I know, what I'm talking more about something that is relative to me than is relevant to your film.

MOGUL: But I normally wouldn't show— Since you've been doing such an in-depth interview, I decided to show you this work in progress because the last few months I've really been struggling with, you know, where am I going with this. The last time I had filmed him was in October, and even then had been a big gap, and then I just started filming him a few weeks ago for the first time in like a long time.

That's when I also figured out, like, we've got to get out of the car, that now this film and relationship has to move in some other direction where— But I like the idea of being in the car, because it is about being in between. When I started thinking about doing something in the car, I was thinking about that like it was like *Echo Street* on wheels.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: But I wanted to show it to you also because I've been in an in-between place with it not knowing where I was going with it, which now things are starting to solidify for me in certain regards. So I thought that you might— Since you've been looking at all my work and interviewing me, I was really interested to hear what you had to say about it.

COLLINGS: Well, maybe I'll tell you more about my views off tape, because—

MOGUL: I was always saying that I just sort of was figuring this thing out as I was going, because it did start out with the idea of portraits of many men, and I had done a

short piece the year before. Oh, yes, before I started filming Michael, in August 2001, I had done this piece called *A Piece of Work*, which is a five-minute portrait of Ken Mate, and that's someone who lived in Silverlake and it was a series of Silverlake portraits for the Silverlake Festival. So that was sort of actually the beginning, oh, wouldn't it be interesting to do a series of portraits of guys and see what it would look like, the collection of men that I know, and what would that look like all together.

COLLINGS: What do you see— Is there a relationship between this film and the feminism of your earlier work, or do you consider this to be a break from those concerns?

MOGUL: We didn't talk about *Barren Woman*, did we?

COLLINGS: We did, yes.

MOGUL: We did?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Oh. I think that my work, by default, is kind of feminist. Obviously, in *Barren Woman*, I think that *Sing O Barren Woman* is feminist in the sense that it's exposing a certain kind of female condition, the childless woman, you know. She also has a place in society, you know.

COLLINGS: Let's hope so. [laughs]

MOGUL: So you can say that that's very out-there feminist.

But I think that because I'm the woman behind the camera, I think because I'm single, that there's always this— See, I don't know if feminist is the— I think my work always has a very strong female perspective, because I'm in the work, and there always seems to come up the fact that I'm this single woman. Now, I don't know if

being a single woman makes you a feminist.

COLLINGS: I don't think it does. [mutual laughter]

MOGUL: I would agree with you, except it seems that it does sort of always cast a little bit of an unusual perspective. I know this other curator who's looked at my work, and he's said that he's noticed that there's always the issue of being single. That's not necessarily feminist, but the issue of being single. In fact, this woman who bumped into me who said, "Are you that seventies artist?" she said, "Oh, I haven't seen that film about you being single on *Echo Street*." [laughs] So that was interesting. She pointed that out.

I think the other aspect, I think, I don't know if you want to call it feminist, but it's like you're seeing this woman who's a middle-aged woman who's like, oh, she's flirting with this gay Israeli guy. I mean, what is she? There's always these issues of whether it's, like, prominent or as a subtext of a woman pursuing some kind of relationship. Now, I don't know, is that feminist?

COLLINGS: I don't know.

MOGUL: But I think it's just showing an unusual woman. [laughs]

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: It's showing someone who's not following— I mean, in the sense that if you were to make a case for it being feminist, I mean, it doesn't really make a difference. But it's showing a woman who is outside the norm and is not following like the normal— She doesn't seem to be unhappy. We don't really know. But she's sort of like outside the norm following her own path or trying to figure out what the path is, and that then becomes defined as like this so-called independent woman. And

as an independent woman, does that make her a feminist, or is she just someone who is revered by feminists because she's aggressive with— Not that many women go around with a camera and film people, too.

COLLINGS: That's right. That's right.

MOGUL: That's another thing to talk about in terms of intimacy, is the woman who is using the camera. Now, is that by definition always feminist? How are we defining feminist? The woman with the camera? So that can also be used as a ploy to charm people and get stuff that— You know, the difference between— What is the difference, like I'm saying that Ray was difficult, Michael's difficult, even my friend gave me— It's sort of like would he tell a man like what to do with a camera? Is it because I'm a woman? Is it because I'm a close friend? All those things. But also as a woman with a camera, you often can get strangers to talk to you, because it's not as threatening sometimes.

COLLINGS: Well, yes, and it's true, too, when thinking about it, that the sequences with Ray in *I Stare at You and Dream*, while being quite close and being quite intimate, they don't have that same closeness that the ones with Alex and Rosie do, for sure.

MOGUL: You don't think?

COLLINGS: I mean, not— No. Because just precisely because he is kind of exerting more of a pressure on, like, for example, at one point he's telling you, "You're going to have to put the camera down, because I need you to help me with this sack of cement," or whatever. So it was just an example of a sort of a directorial presence coming from him.

With the one with the flag, because of your presence in this rough cut so far, I don't really feel it like I do with the other films. It's almost like *Please Return My Flag* is, like, coming from you, it's, like, from your point of view, you know, please return my— If you could think of feminism as having a flag. [mutual laughter] It's just sort of fanciful, but—

MOGUL: I guess I'm bringing up this whole thing about a woman with a camera and a woman alone, is *Echo Street* and *I Stare at You and Dream*, are those feminist films?

COLLINGS: Well, I think they are in theme. I think they are in theme because I think they articulate issues of women's experience and ways that family, the institution of the family is experienced by women. Like in *I Stare at You and Dream*, the way that the grandfather censors Rosie for having this child is sort of the position of the larger society, but you're showing from the other side of this how that impacts women, what the lived results of that kind of censor are on women. So I would call that feminist.

Are you still a feminist, do you think? I mean, are the issues of feminism of the seventies still important to you, or have you changed, gone beyond that maybe?

MOGUL: Like what? Which issues in particular?

COLLINGS: Why don't we scratch that. Maybe we'll come back to it in a different context.

MOGUL: No, I was trying to think. No, because I think that I'm not through yet. I think my presence in this piece now is going to come more forward, and I think that there is going to be— In this male montage that's coming up, there might be— I don't know if there's going to be a critique of men or a critique of my projection onto men.

I think there'll be some kind of—I don't know. I'm about to embark on this section.

But I think it's also interesting for somebody, for a woman, to explore in the same way like I try to explore myself through Rosie and Alex and Ray, to explore myself through a young Israeli gay guy. Now, that may or may not become apparent in the film, I don't know, but there's some kind of journey going on.

My friend Miriam Cutler was pointing out, she said, "Well, you know, there's a reason you're filming him. There's this tension between you."

I said, "Well, he's a friend."

She said, "No, there's more than that. There's some tension that's going on there." So I think there's something that's probably unconscious of, like, why, because it's become more and more difficult. It's become difficult working with him for me, and then especially not knowing what I've been after, but he'll continue to— He dropped out and then he came back and then I started— So there's something that I'm trying to figure out here.

COLLINGS: Yes, yes, for sure.

MOGUL: So, I don't know. I think that's kind of unusual. I don't know if women try to figure out who they are through a guy.

COLLINGS: Sure they do.

MOGUL: What?

COLLINGS: Yes, I think they do, yes.

MOGUL: You do?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Women try to figure out who they are through a man?

COLLINGS: Yes. Not exclusively, but I think it's certainly one avenue, don't you think?

MOGUL: No, but I'm wondering. Do people do that overtly in films or books?

COLLINGS: Oh, no, I mean in life.

MOGUL: Oh, I'm getting so confused. [mutual laughter]

COLLINGS: That's what a marriage is, I thought.

MOGUL: Figure out who you are through a guy?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Really?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: [laughs] I'm not sure about—I'm trying to think about, I mean, the whole thing is something a woman's film—I guess I'm kind of interested in the question about the feminist, or what's the difference between a woman's film or a feminist film, you know, and then if your work is autobiographical, you know. Yes. I don't know if—

COLLINGS: Well, maybe we could do a little sort of pick up or something when this film is finished and come back to this question.

MOGUL: Basically what the question is even if you leave out "feminist," you're really asking me what the direction of my work, is in a sense.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: I think that it keeps revolving around home and family, and I think that the piece with Michael. I mean, look what happens. Here I'm making this film about him, and he loses his mother, and he had lost his father. That's kind of a coincidence.

Here he's at the age of, like, he just turned thirty. He lost his father at the age of twenty-three, and he'd lost his mother last year at the age of twenty-nine. I mean, kind of weird, considering that I did this other project where I was following people's lives and there was loss of parents at a young age, and here I am old enough—I don't think he treats—I am like this big sister that he tries to boss around, and he is the youngest of two older siblings.

And he lost his grandmother a few years ago, so he's been having a lot of loss, and yet he handles it on the outside in a very brusque way. So I have a feeling that it's almost— And he likes my films. He's a big fan of my work. And I think that he unconsciously feels that there's something going on there also.

I'm not being very articulate about this, but I think that I have been—Like, so much of the work is about loss and family and estrangement from family or distance from family and trying to figure out how to create a new family or some semblance of family, or the difficulty of connection. I was thinking a lot about that word lately, the connection, difficulty of that. So that is in the film with Michael as much—I mean, the whole feeling about the desire to connect and not being able to is in *I Stare at You and Dream*.

I think, in a way, what's going on with the Michael piece and why it's so much more difficult than *I Stare at You and Dream*, even though *I Stare at You and Dream* was difficult because of Ray and then it was just a very intense project to work on, but I knew what it was about. This piece is almost an enactment of trying to connect to somebody, I think.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's very interesting, yes.

MOGUL: That's the difference. So here, in *I Stare at You and Dream* you have people who are interacting with one another. The only person there where there was tension with was with Ray. I don't have tension between me and Rosie. I don't have tension between me and Alex. So you've got the tension between me and Ray, and then there's also the past that we keep. It's the past and the present, and there's a lot of characters; it's not just focused on one character.

Where here you have this one character that I've focused on, and then I'm trying to both document his life and our relationship, so it's much more intense than *I Stare at You and Dream*. And there isn't like a clearly defined role, because he's not my boyfriend. He's not a friend friend because of the age difference. I'm not a family member. What am I? What are we to each other? And that's where it sort of brings up that whole idea of, like, surrogate family, your surrogate family and what roles are you each playing? So it's like how are these two people going to connect?

In *I Stare at You and Dream*, Ray's the on-and-off boyfriend. Alex, we clearly understand, like, we're both women who are in the arts and there's an interrelationship of maybe mentor-mentee. That's more accepted. There's not tension there. Rosie is like the best girlfriend. But here, it's not— What is our relationship to one another?

COLLINGS: Yes, I think that's an interesting point. It's almost as if the other films have as their centerpiece connections and making connections.

MOGUL: And the loss of connections and connections that could have been.

COLLINGS: Yes, and then this film is almost like that aspect of it abstracted. It's about trying to make this connection to him, him breaking the connections, occasionally dropping out of the film, returning to the film. The thing that made the

other films work were the connections. This is showing you almost more the process of connection and what is the nature of connection.

TAPE NUMBER: X, SIDE ONE

April 1, 2003

COLLINGS: All right. I think I want to just sort of wrap with— I have two questions. Is there anything you miss about the seventies?

MOGUL: No, I don't— Like what?

COLLINGS: Well, I was just thinking about you had talked a little bit about the sense of community when you were making art in the early seventies, that kind of the sort of feminist community, the sense of working with likeminded people.

MOGUL: I don't want to go back. I'm not interested right now in working on a community in building a building or something like that or building an organization. I think one of the things, which I was going to say, yes, maybe I miss youth, and meaning that when you're younger— I mean, just before I was talking about being a single adult woman. When you're younger, first of all, most of your friends are also single as well, and so there's not the differences in time issues and all that.

Also, people just when they're younger, because they're not so entrenched in their jobs and things like that, or when I was younger, people had more time for one another, and so what I would like more in my life is more like what I enjoyed when I had my phone conversation— I made a phone appointment with my friend Miriam so I could talk about ideas for this project, that I finally came up with some ideas that I thought would really work, and I just wanted to kind of brainstorm with her on how I actually would interview these people that I wanted— How to develop this idea. So, finally got the idea for moving one place to another. So she spent about an hour and a half

on the phone with me, and I really got jazzed, and that just really just put me in a whole other mental place. I've thought about, like, organizing maybe evenings here with people just to, like, look at films together and talk about them or look at each other's work.

I mean, I have not organized something like that, but that is probably the only thing that I miss, is I like that kind of artistic intellectual stimulation in terms of work, of looking at somebody's work and discussing it and getting ideas off of one another. I do that like a little bit maybe on a one-on-one with some people, but that probably in terms of community, having people that you feel are likeminded, have similar— Not politically likeminded, but share a certain kind of esthetic or— I can't think of the word to use.

As I think I said to you much earlier, the seventies were right after 1969, and 1969 in August is when I lost Larry. So, mean, that was like a great time to have community for me in my life and just to be totally involved in something. But the seventies was also— That was the time right after Larry. I never really want to go back to any place.

I don't how much, when I get down to it, if I was thinking about the seventies, if I was getting actual artistic— I mean, I obviously was getting artistic— Whether it was direct artistic stimulation, I was stimulated by the atmosphere, and that's enough. Sometimes you get some funny ideas about projects with people's interaction in the parking lot and you observe things. Or last night, I went to the movies with my friend, and we were eavesdropping. I've known Diane for years, but we're just starting to spend time with each other again. She was eavesdropping. It was these two men,

middle-aged— It was so funny because he was speaking like a girl in the sense that he was telling about how he kept calling up this woman and leaving “nice” messages, and then finally getting a date with her and then not hearing from her again. And we were just sitting there eavesdropping. It was just like today I was e-mailing her about it. I don’t know, it was just like the eavesdropping was more interesting than the movie, you know? It was, like, interesting material, and this guy, we knew what he looked like, and I see him, he’s in the Producer’s Guild, so it’s like— So you can get ideas for material in a lot of different places.

I think probably in terms of feminism in the seventies, because you’re interested in people who were influenced by the seventies, I think that what it did, was that period of time in that community was, to use a cliché, was to give me a support system. I don’t know how much it was actual, on one level, artistic stimulation.

I think it was a place to make work in an environment where people were really interested in what I was doing and cared about what I was doing. It was like having the ideal family. For some people it wasn’t the ideal family; it was this horrible family or it was a recreation of their horrible— But it was kind of this ideal family of a home base in which to show your work, get feedback, and then go out into the world. So I think that’s kind of how it functioned for me, is it became this base in which to— It was a place of nurturing and support— Yes.

COLLINGS: Okay. This is kind of impossible to answer, but—

MOGUL: I didn’t really answer this question too well, either. I feel like it’s like the end of this interview and I should be giving like some fabulous answer about—

COLLINGS: No, no.

MOGUL: Probably the things when I was going into detail about the seventies probably is more—

COLLINGS: Yes, that really sort of sketches things out, but I was just wondering if sitting here in 2003 there was any certain aspect of the community or your experience as an artist then, that you could really point to as being different from today in which—

MOGUL: Yes, but the thing that's so hard to answer— What's the difference between being twenty-three and fifty-three?

COLLINGS: Yes, of course.

MOGUL: Your concerns are, you're asking yourself different questions at this point— Now, because of the change in terms of video, we talked about this, I can own a videocamera and a system, not because I'm that much more solvent than I was when I was twenty-three; that hasn't changed very much. But the equipment is very affordable, so I can make films much easier than I could back then. So that's much better.

COLLINGS: That's fantastic.

Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you'd like to put on the record?

MOGUL: No. I thought you said you had another question.

COLLINGS: That was my other question.

MOGUL: Oh. Do I have any other things?

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: Wow. Well, I do other stuff besides film. We haven't covered everything.

COLLINGS: Yes.

MOGUL: This woman is a very good interviewer. [mutual laughter] You get so embarrassed. Is there anything you think we haven't—

COLLINGS: No.

MOGUL: Say the premise of this was women filmmakers.

COLLINGS: Yes, let's just—

[Interruption]

COLLINGS: Okay. Susan, I just wanted to thank you for being really a fabulous interviewee.

MOGUL: Wait a second. I have something to say.

COLLINGS: Okay.

MOGUL: I'm going to miss my therapist Jane Collings. Now she's turning me off.

[mutual laughter]

[End of interview]

PROPER NAMES LIST

- A Piece of Work*, 262, 274
 Acconci, Vito, 125, 126, 128
 Aguilar, Ray, 181, 219, 220, 221, 224, 225, 226, 234, 236, 237, 239, 240, 242, 244, 260, 261, 276, 280, 281
 Albetta, Frank, 17, 103, 104
 Allyn, Jerri, 153
 Alpert Award in the Arts, 167
 Antin, David, 147, 150, 151, 168, 172
 Antin, Eleanor, 87, 147, 168
 Ardovino, Patricia, 14
 Avedon, Richard, 175, 176

 Baldessari, John, 84, 87, 108
 Belden, Bonnie, 16
 Benglis, Lynda, 47, 48, 82, 98, 124, 126, 129, 130
 Blate, Edwin (uncle), 30
 Blate, Nat (grandfather), 28
 Blate, Seth (uncle), 29, 30
 Blate, Sonia (grandmother), 28, 40
 Bocian, Gwen, 18
 Brauner, Paul, 25
 de Bretteville, Sheila, 89, 111, 113, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 135, 141, 142, 163
Bridal Staircase, 135
 Buchanan, Nancy, 96
 Buckley, Tom, 103
 Butler, Connie, 131

 California College of Arts and Crafts, 81, 82
 California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), 46, 47, 79, 80, 81, 82, 85, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 98, 99, 108, 109, 110, 113, 116, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 129, 130, 136, 142, 147, 161, 163, 167, 182, 183, 184
 Chicago, Judy, 47, 81, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 97, 108, 109, 110, 111, 113, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 134, 136, 137, 138, 141, 163

 City of Los Angeles Cultural Awards Grant (COLA), 168, 203
 Columbia Broadcasting System, 140, 143, 164, 165
 Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 22, 243
 Cottingham, Laura, 92
Crisis in Capitol, 141
Cunt and Cock, 134
 Cutler, Miriam, 272, 278

Dear Paul, 186
 Demetrakas, Johanna, 88
Design for Living, 152, 153, 155, 156, 165, 166, 227
 Dewhurst, Colleen, 49
Dressing Up, 47, 98, 99, 124, 126, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 152, 154, 155, 178, 199

 Eisenstein, Sam, 239, 240
Everyday Echo Street:
 A Summer Diary, 186, 188, 194, 208, 210, 211, 215, 218, 221, 233, 235, 242, 244, 249, 252, 253, 255, 273, 275, 277
 Eye and Thou, 201

 Faludi, Susan, 173
 Farsakh, Shakir, 30, 34
 Feminist Art Program, 47, 76, 79, 80, 81, 83, 88, 89, 91, 99, 108, 109, 116
 Feminist Studio Workshop, 90, 91, 92, 108, 110, 111, 118, 124, 125
 Fiedel School of Creative Arts, 21, 23, 52, 104, 106
 Ford Foundation, 67, 212
 Fortang, Leslie, 23, 52
 Freewaves Video Festival, 265
 Fried, Elsa, 22
 Friedberg, Benny (great-uncle), 43, 46
 Friedberg, Lea (great-aunt), 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45

- Goffman, Irving, 83
Golden West College, 165
Gordh, Bill, 151
- Hack, Bruce (cousin), 29
Hanhardt, John G., 133
Harb, John, 230, 233, 244, 245
Harvard University, 49, 54, 61, 67
Havens, Richie, 103
Hollywood Mogul, 142
Hollywood Moguls, 124, 140, 142
Home Safe Home, 204, 206
Horton, John, 212
- I Stare at You and Dream*, 171, 181, 187, 188, 189, 190, 194, 210, 216, 217, 218, 221, 224, 240, 241, 244, 253, 254, 264, 269, 276, 277, 280, 281
Independent Television Service, 222, 243
- John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, 44, 138
Johnston, Jill, 94
Juhasz, Alexandra, 165
- Kaprow, Allan, 82, 94, 145, 147, 150
Kaprow, Vaughan, 94, 97
Klick, Laurel, 83, 85, 122
- Lacy, Suzanne, 83, 85
Landerson, Louis, 75
Life and Times, 204
Lifson, Ben, 161, 162, 163
Long Beach Museum of Art, 86, 147
Longo, Robert, 176
Lopez, Eddie, 215
Lopez, Yolanda, 149, 150
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 155, 177
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 125
- Ludwig, Elise, 272
- Mandel, John, 110
Mansuri, Shabir, 143, 145, 165
Mate, Ken, 78, 262, 274
Mayer, Michael, 191, 192, 224, 227, 257, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 267, 268, 269, 270, 272, 274, 276, 279, 280
Metzger, Deena, 96
Mogul is Mobile, 100, 124, 142, 146
Mogul Video Sampler, 155, 194
Mogul, Jess (brother), 2, 31, 32
Mogul, Kim (sister), 2, 4, 32
Mogul, Mark (brother), 2, 32
Mogul, Pam (sister), 2, 31, 180, 181
Mogul, Sandy (brother), 2, 32, 49
Mogul's August Clearance, 162
Morel Farsakh, Andrea (cousin), 29, 30
Morel Farsakh, Morel (cousin), 29
Morel Greenberger, Phyllis (cousin), 29
Morel, Eleanor (aunt), 29, 30
Moses Mogul Parts the Hollywood Hills, 141
- National Broadcasting Corporation, 32
News from Home, 154, 170, 172, 179, 180, 254
No Exit, 49
Not For Sale, 96, 136
- Ochs, Michael, 103
Ochs, Phil, 103
Oliveros, Pauline, 152
Oppenheim, Regina, 40
Opper, Don, 233, 234, 239, 240
Paxton, Tom, 103
Please Return My Flag, 257, 259, 267, 277
Plotkin, Janis, 201
Potocka, Margozata, 250
Prosaic Portraits, 185, 187, 189, 194, 247, 254, 256

- Raven, Arlene, 111, 113, 120, 124
 Rhoads, Tom, 247
 Rosenberg, Howard, 260
 Ross, David, 86, 87
 Rubenstein, Elaine, 17, 19, 63, 103, 104
- Salle, David, 84, 168
 San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, 201
 Sanchez, Alex, 181, 216, 217, 219, 220, 221, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230, 233, 236, 239, 240, 241, 242, 245, 248, 260, 261, 276, 278, 281
 Sanchez, Rosie, 190, 210, 211, 216, 217, 220, 221, 222, 224, 225, 226, 229, 235, 236, 239, 242, 243, 244, 260, 261, 276, 277, 278, 281
 Santa Monica Museum of Art, 185, 247
 Schapiro, Miriam, 88, 89, 108, 109, 110, 283
 Schnabel, Julian, 168
 School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 71, 73, 81, 108
 Schuldt, Holly, 106, 107
 Scott, David, 103
 Segal, George, 94
 Segalove, Ilene, 95, 134, 147, 157
 Sherman, Cindy, 168
 Shifreen, Dawn, 81
 Shor, Mira, 110
 Silver Lake Film Festival, 262
 Silver, Ken, 250
Sing O Barren Woman, 189, 200, 206, 261, 263, 274
 Smith, Barbara, 96
Southland Video Anthology, 87, 133, 147
 Sugarman, Lydia, 181
- Take Off*, 98, 99, 124, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133
 Taylor, Larry, 66, 67, 68, 70, 74, 80, 84, 100, 107, 117, 142, 174, 270, 284
 Tufts University, 72, 73, 108
 UCLA Hammer Museum, 203
 University of California, Berkeley, 66
 University of California, Davis, 81
 University of California, Los Angeles, 149, 203
 University of California, San Diego, 146, 147, 149, 150, 164, 165
 University of California, Santa Barbara, 85
 University of Michigan, 54, 55
 University of Southern California, 201, 218
 University of Wisconsin-Madison, 53, 54, 55, 57, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66, 73, 77, 78, 95, 102, 103, 104, 106, 107, 108
- Video Data Bank, 131
 de Vries, Leni, 105
- Waiting*, 93
Waiting at the Soda Fountain, 186
 Wegge, Ronald, 16
The White Papers, 96
 Whitney Museum of American Art, 133
 Wilding, Faith, 93, 97, 109
 Wodiczko, Irena, 253
 Wodiczko, Krystof, 253
Womanhouse, 80, 88, 89, 92, 97, 109, 135
 Woman's Building, 85, 86, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94, 110, 111, 115, 122, 124, 125, 146, 162
 Womanspace, 83, 88
- Yarmolinsky, Sally, 61