A TEI Project

Interview of Nancy Angelo

Table of contents

1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (March 15, 2011)

GORDIENKO

This is Andrey Gordienko conducting oral history interview with Nancy Angelo on March 15, 2011.
Hi, Nancy.

ANGELO

Hi, Andrey.

GORDIENKO

The first simple question, when and where were you born?

ANGELO

Okay. I was born on October 8, 1953, in Carson City, Nevada, in the USA.

GORDIENKO

Really. Was it like a small town or urban community?

ANGELO

It was an extremely small town at the time, in a western state, in Nevada, so it was very--well, it's the state capital, but it was very small. Other than a little bit of gambling--but the state capital was the main income of the area, and a certain amount of ranching in the area around it. So there were probably, I'm guessing, but around ten thousand people at the time I was born.

GORDIENKO

Where you lived with your parents, was it mostly a working-class neighborhood, or more like a middle-class area?

ANGELO

Well, it was such a small town, there wasn't a huge amount of class difference. But I would say it was in--everybody sort of lived right there together. My father [Homer Angelo] was a lawyer in a small town. He'd moved to Nevada from the San Francisco Bay Area. As a child he had tuberculosis, and his grandmother [Elizabeth Glenn Angelo O'Brien] lived up there, and the dry desert heat was good for the health, so he moved there and lived there for a chunk of years as an adult, and he had a very small community law practice at the time.

GORDIENKO

Right. I'm assuming, because it was a small town, you guys owned a house.

ANGELO

Yes. Well, right before I was born, they actually built a house. They didn't own a house before that, but my father had had a dream, and he had friends help, and they built a house.

GORDIENKO

I see. What was your father's name?

ANGELO

His name was Homer Angelo.

GORDIENKO

And your mother's?

ANGELO

Her name was Ann Berryhill Angelo.

GORDIENKO

I see. Can you tell us more about your parents? Were they religious people, or did they have strong political interests or views?

ANGELO

They were not particularly religious. My father was sort of anti-religious, agnostic. In fact, when I was a little kid, my mother would give us money to go to church and put it in the collection plate, and he'd say before we left the house, because he wouldn't go to church, "Spend it on comic books." But my mother was Protestant, a Presbyterian background.

Basically, they were both from families who had been in California for a very long time. California is a new state, the US a new country, but part of my family came during the Gold Rush on my father's side, and my mother's side a generation or two before her, and they were from hard-working people. They both were the children of divorce, and their mothers had been impoverished after they were divorced, and worked very hard to support their children. My grandmother on my mother's side [Helen Huntington Berryhill Heilman] was a concert pianist by training, but she gave that up because she couldn't make a living at it and travel and raise her four children. So she taught piano and did everything she could in little pieces of work to raise her kids in Berkeley.

And my father's mother worked as a secretary, and then she became the first woman journalist to cover hard news for a California newspaper in the early part of the twentieth century, in like the 1920s. He grew up living in boarding houses and hotels so that the staff could take care of him and his brother when their mother was at work, so they were from both kind of--and I think they were attracted to each other because they both knew divorce at a time when people didn't divorce very much, and they kind of had to make their own way as kids. They were very hard working. They worked their way to get educations. They worked their way through college, and my father worked his way through law school, and hard-working people.

GORDIENKO

Thank you. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

ANGELO

I have one brother [Alexander Guest Angelo, "Alex"] and one sister [Christiane Angelo Kropp, "Christie"].

GORDIENKO

Wow. What kind of things did you guys do together for fun or on weekends?

ANGELO

Well, we lived in Carson City until I was seven, and then my family moved to Europe, and so our lives changed dramatically at that point, and what we did was very

different. When we lived in Nevada, we had, like most people, a lot of people did, we had two funky old horses, and we used to ride horseback. We would play out in the desert. Right behind our house it was sagebrush. All the neighbor kids, we'd go out into the desert and we'd look for animals and play games and make up plays and sing songs. It was a very outdoor, wild, in the West, in the desert kind of a childhood, up until moving to Switzerland. That's very different.

GORDIENKO

You went to Switzerland when you were a small child?

ANGELO

Yes, when I was seven.

GORDIENKO

Did you get a chance to attend school there? Or was it just for a short time?

ANGELO

No. We moved because my father was interested in practicing international law, and during World War II he had worked with the--he served at Guadalcanal until he got malaria, and then he joined the Canadian Liberation Forces, and he worked with them on the liberation of the Netherlands, and also with General Eisenhower. He had a passion for world peace after his experiences in World War II, so he wanted to move to another country to help generate world peace in whatever ways he could.

So he didn't have work. He moved and wanted work with the U.N. This was in 1960, and he didn't quite find work with the U.N. It was very scary. We had very little income. We found a little tiny apartment above a store in Geneva, and little by little he got work, and throughout his life he both taught international law and practiced. And eventually he worked with the Common Market as it was developing in Brussels, so we lived in Geneva a year and then we moved to Brussels, and we lived there until I went to high school, and they sent me back to high school in the United States so I would learn to be American, because I had forgotten I was American. I went to international schools, where I took half my school in French and half in English, and I really mostly identified a lot

with, well, mainly with Belgium. That really felt like my home.

GORDIENKO

I see. So you learned to speak the language?

ANGELO

I learned French. I didn't learn Flemish, just little bits of Flemish, but not much. But French--I was a bilingual child.

GORDIENKO

How many years of school did you attend there?

ANGELO

I attended the equivalent of third grade all the way through till high school, and then I went to high school here in California in Ross. It was a girls' school, and I was a day student for a year and a half, and then I lived there. It was near family, so my parents wanted me to be close enough to family, but I could live there, so they could still--my father still worked in Europe. And then he was also on the founding faculty of the UC Davis Law School, and so he would go back and forth. But I went to high school here in California, and I'd go back to Europe in the summertimes. And after I started college, I went to college for a while, but then I left college and I went back to Europe because I missed it, and I went and worked in Switzerland for a year.

GORDIENKO

I see. Well, actually, I'd like to still learn more about your family background, and it sounds like your father was a very accomplished and busy man. Would you say you were closer to your mother or your dad at the time you were still growing up and attending elementary school?

ANGELO

Probably closer to my dad.

GORDIENKO

Was he a kind of role model for you, who influenced your views on life?

ANGELO

I think so. He was a kind man, and I can remember him reading aloud to me and taking me on walks and pointing out things to learn in the natural environment. He loved nature, and he taught that to us, and he was fun to be with. He was

very calm and peaceful for the most part. My mother was more sort of high--she was a more difficult person.

GORDIENKO

I see. Did you guys ever talk about politics, I mean, during the dinner table?

ANGELO

Yes. Well, my father was passionately nonpartisan, so he refused to join any political party. When he was a little kid, his great aunts were staunch Democrats, and they were delegates to the Democratic convention at which Franklin Roosevelt was first nominated for president, and he always joked that one of his great aunts went to the bathroom during that vote and gave him the paddle, and he got to raise it and vote for FDR. But he didn't like what he saw about partisan politics.

Generally, in his sense of the world, he was--well, he wasn't exactly a pacifist, because he did fight. He was in the Army during the war, but he really felt that a lot--you know, if you had to call him today, you'd probably call him progressive, but with a particular kind of stamp of his own. He was fiercely independent. He was certainly not conservative politically, and he had a lot of trouble with Republicans. I think he would have defined himself as anti-fascist, you know, if he really had to. But he didn't really fit into the U.S. political system very well, and he wanted to use means of helping people come together to make the world a very different place. So he gave me an activist message from an early point, and my mother did too.

GORDIENKO

Just curious. How were responsibilities sort of divided around your household, and what did such division of responsibilities teach you about work and maybe gender roles even?

ANGELO

Okay. Well, from when I was very little we had chores to do. We had lists, and we each had to do them. So there were two girls and a boy, and I was the youngest. My brother was in the middle. We all did pretty much similar chores, except my brother not so much in the kitchen. My father was the main cook in our family. When he grew up in boarding

houses, he didn't get to eat home-cooked food, and he was the first boy in the history of the Berkeley school system to take home economics. He did it because he wanted home-cooked food, and he could cook it at school but not at home. So he was the person who cooked in my family, and he was an incredible chef really. Out of that my brother became a chef.

And my mother was always a little--how do I say it? She was a little bit incapacitated by--she wasn't clinically depressed, but she had a rough time in life, so my father was more capable and he did a lot more. We all learned to clean and do things. As soon as we moved to Europe--I think it's true for a lot of immigrant children--I knew French better than my mother. I would go shopping with her. I would negotiate to the world and help my mother, because she didn't know how to do that. So we all learned to work very hard.

In terms of sex roles, my brother was the favored child. There were high expectations put on him that he would excel, and they worked very, very hard to give him the very best of everything. The messages to me was, I should learn a trade in order--if I ever got divorced, I could support myself. That was my parents' experience. They were the children of impoverished women after divorce. But the assumption was I'd get married and I would have a husband to support me, unless I was divorced, and then I would have to work. So it was a middle-class assumption of the 1950s and '60s, and it never quite fit for me, because I came out as a lesbian when I was twenty or so. But I think I knew from when I was a very little kid I could never imagine myself getting married. [laughs] It just didn't fit in my scheme of things.

I knew that I could cook. I knew that I could clean. I could keep a house. Actually, when we first moved to Switzerland, one of the first things I did was I went around to the stores in downtown Geneva to ask for a job, because my family was in financial difficulty, and I offered to wrap--at that time, they didn't have shopping bags. Packages were wrapped in paper with string, and I offered to wrap the packages, because I was really good at wrapping when I was seven,

and I went to store after store that said, "No," and they just sort of looked at me like I was insane, an insane American child. Finally in one store a woman said to me, "In our country, we don't hire children to work." Somebody had to tell me.

So I knew that I would have to work. I would try to do whatever I could, whatever skill set I had, and when there was financial difficulty from an early point in my family, I tried to pitch in. But I always thought my brother would do whatever he wanted in life. I knew my parents would try to get us educations, because education meant everything to them.

GORDIENKO

Yes. So it sounds like you had to learn some kind of independence at an early age--

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

--and help your family--

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

--you know, be understanding. But would you say sometimes you were a rebellious child, or mostly complying?

ANGELO

You know, Andrey, the truth is I was a very sick child. I lost my eyesight when I was ten. I have a chronic inflammatory illness, systemic lupus. They didn't know what it was then, but I lost my eyesight. It went to what was called 1 percent vision. My family lived in Belgium then, but they didn't know how to treat it, so I got sent back to Switzerland and I was in the hospital in Switzerland, in the County Hospital of Geneva. They had an eye clinic, and I was there for a month, and then I had to go away into the mountains to an outpatient clinic for a month, and then every month for years I went and had shots in my eyes, and my vision came back. It would come and go with the treatment with steroids. I was sufficiently ill, and I had a condition where I would get

infections frequently, so I didn't get to do a lot of things that a lot of kids did. You know, I was different from other kids.

GORDIENKO

Yes. So I'm just wondering whether you've had a degree of freedom and independence to pursue interests and play games--

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

--or you were kind of constrained by all these difficulties you had to face as a child.

ANGELO

You know, there's a certain way--actually, when I got involved with my partner Nancy McCauley--we've been together now twenty-seven years--she used to say to me, "Where was your mother when you were growing up? Was she taking a nap?" Because I'm sort of like a wild child with a lot of independence. My father ended up traveling a lot for his work. My brother and sister were older and were off, and I had a huge degree of independence.

In fact, both in Geneva and then in Brussels, I used to just take off on public transportation. I can read a map now. If you give me a map, I'll find my way anywhere. I would take the trams and I would go explore parts of the city. I loved Belgian history. I studied it deeply, and at the time we lived there, Brussels was still reconstructing after the war. There were parts of the city that were bombed out, and I would go and inquire into them. I would try to learn. I would go by myself, and I learned how to be very fierce, so I got to be a certain age and if like men would try to pick up on me or something, I would scream and yell at them and, "Leave me alone." I'd often be out into the late evenings, and I used to take myself to the museums. I would sit and look at the art and really engage with it, and I just adored both the ancient art museum, which is not ancient in American terms, and the modern art museum in Brussels were places I would go frequently by myself.

I also went to the movies a lot. I made myself a fake ID, because the movies you had to be largely sixteen to go see,

and I just made a thing that I typed out, and I would take it and show it, and I'd go to tons of movies. I'd go with my friends, but I did have a lot of independence. Until I lost my eyesight, I read several books a week. I've always been a big reader. And then even as my eyesight came back, I could read with things very close to my face. I was just passionately interested. I mean, I had gone from living in the desert in the U.S., where no one even thought about there being anything beyond that. It was this mentality where this is the world. And then I got to move somewhere where my friends were from countries all over the world, and I was in just these incredibly interesting places, and I got to study and learn and explore.

So I did have a lot of independence. I did create things on my own. I would go out and explore. I wasn't rebellious in the sense of--you know, I could have been rebellious and no one would have noticed.

GORDIENKO

I see.

ANGELO

It's kind of, you know, I was independent. What they were afraid of was that something bad would happen to me healthwise, so I had to be very careful for myself, but that was in my self-interest.

GORDIENKO

Yes. At what age did you have to get treatment for the eyesight problems?

ANGELO

Starting at ten.

GORDIENKO

And at what time did it improve so that you could resume your explorations and studies?

ANGELO

Well, I was gone out of the scheme of life for probably about four months, and then I got a tutor to bring me up to speed for school, and then every month for several years until I was in high school, I would have to go away to the doctor for several days and have shots in my eyes, and then I'd have a hard time reentering. It's actually a very punitive system.

They gave us a hundred math problems a night, and I was gone for three days, so when I came back, I had to hand in three hundred math problems, and for every day I was gone they would take ten points off the possible score. So if I got all three hundred right, my maximum score would be 70 percent, and I had to do it with shots in my eyes and my eyes hurting and having trouble seeing, so I was failing. It took me--there was a period there where even when I came back, I couldn't--just trying to keep up in life was very difficult, and adjusting, and the kids would make fun of me. They'd call me Dracula, because my eyes would be all bloody after the shots, and it was very unpleasant.

So I'd say that I probably lost a year is my guess. But at the same time, my solace was in going--during that time--so I didn't grow up in a religious family, but I used to also take myself to the old gothic churches in Brussels, and there was one in particular in the Grand-Sablon that I loved. I would go and I would take my little money, and I would buy candles, and I would light candles, and I would lie down on my knees at the altar and just cry, as a little kid. And that was solace. I had no notion--I'd sort of look up--it was the beauty of the architecture and the presence of place, with the light streaming in. It was so beautiful, and I felt comforted by those places. So I guess I still explored, but I didn't--it wasn't with the same intensity of, you know, the world was my oyster.

GORDIENKO

I see. I also grew up in Europe. I know that students there don't really get to specialize in certain subjects. They have to take math and literature like everybody else.

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

But it looks like you were over the incline towards art and leaning towards aesthetic experience.

ANGELO

Very much so. And that came through my mother's family, my grandmother, who had been a concert pianist. There was

this real love of music and love of art and culture. Yes, that meant a lot in the family.
Also when I was there in school, some of my teachers and my friends were American Jews who wanted to help reestablish a Jewish presence in Belgium, because after the Holocaust, most people, most of the Jews who lived in Belgium had been deported to camps and killed, or had left the country and found safety somewhere else, and so those people influenced me very profoundly. I had a particular teacher, Eileen Marcus, and she took us to learn more about Jewish history in Belgium. It wasn't my own religion. My family was Christian in its origins, but more agnostic. But she took us to temple. She also--there was a Nazi prison camp in Belgium near Antwerp called Breendonk, and it was mainly--it wasn't an extermination camp. It was a holding camp where politically progressive communist-socialists, homosexuals, Jews, gypsies, people who were considered undesirable by the Nazis were taken there, who lived in Belgium, and then they were either sent on elsewhere, and it was the only camp in that area that was left exactly as it was the day the war ended, so there were actually blood stains on the floor. There was clothing left exactly where people left it. There were dishes on the tables and playing cards, and it was kept open by somebody who had been an inmate, and it was one of the most profound experiences. We used to have to go there every year. It affected me very, very deeply in a sense of wanting to make sure that that kind of treatment of people didn't happen further.
So in the terms of a political outlook, that was also an influence from a very early age in a visceral way. Also because it was a country that was recovering from war, and our family friends and--you know, one of our dearest family friends, her brother had been given TB in a holding camp by the Nazis in Lille in France, over the Belgian border. And she had walked on foot and hidden for months on end. It was very present in our lives that this was the effect of war and of the fascism of Nazism; that presence was very strong. So the message from the parents was that art and creativity could be a way to elevate the human spirit, that it could call

forth the best in people, it could give expression to voices that were stamped out, and that you should try for that and try to contribute in the world where you would fight the oppressive factors and contribute meaningfully, and the arts was a good way to do that.

GORDIENKO

Yes, I can see that. Arts for you was not just a matter of style or form, it was kind of closely bound to politics and history, right.

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

So apart from the teacher, would you say anyone else in your family or your school kind of influenced you in your interest in art, or kind of shaped your views? Or was it mostly like an independent exploration?

/

ANGELO

Well, you know, the experience in school was very negative around art. Like I can remember once, during that time after my eyesight had been going, there were a number of months where I tried to tell people, "I can't see very well." And nobody really paid attention to it till I started running into things and falling off the curb and failing in school. I would sit like this [demonstrates] to try to write. So during that time I remember I had a class with art, and the teacher asked us to do self-portraits, and she gave us big huge pages. I did a picture where my self-portrait was in the lower right-hand corner. It occupied maybe 5 percent of the page. And she couldn't--I got in trouble for wasting paper. So, you know, messages about art and creativity were not really helping you bring things out. It was more teaching you how to do the right thing and comply with something. So I never grew up with a sense of myself as a creative person other than how I could interact with the world and my environment.

GORDIENKO

I see. Was it a public or private kind of school that you went to in Europe?

ANGELO

Well, it was an international school, so it was private. There's a whole association of international schools around the world. So I didn't go to Belgian schools or the Swiss school. They gave as closely--the educational model was a British one on part, but then it was Belgian on the other side, because it was French and English.

Actually, in Geneva my teacher--actually, that teacher was probably one of the biggest influences in my life. Her name was Lilias Ashford. She was Scottish. She taught at the International School of Geneva, and she remained a family friend for well into my adulthood. In fact, she introduced me to a man I was engaged to marry at a certain point. And she had the capability of integrating art in education in the third grade, so she had me direct a play, and I got to--we also had a garden and we grew food, and we would write stories, and she always loved the stories I'd write. They were very fanciful. We'd take a lot of walks out in nature, and we'd study the archeology, and all of that was very integrated. And she could see something in me that she nurtured. She very much encouraged me.

The next encouragement of that I really got was when I was in my university years. I didn't get a lot of it other than Mrs. Marcus, but she didn't see so much in me and encourage it as she wanted all of us to change the world. You know, it was a different motivation.

GORDIENKO

I see. So when you were still in school in Europe, did you also have to participate in some clubs, extracurricular activities, or you mostly tried to keep to yourself?

ANGELO

Let me remember back. I remember that I was asked to open a store for the students when I was in about the--it must have been the sixth grade. So I did that with a friend, and we sold candy at the recess, and it made money for the--because the school wasn't on a street with stores. It was away in what had once been an old chateau that was broken down, and then they built prefab buildings, so the kids couldn't buy things. That wasn't really a club. We did singing.

It was mainly through the courses, the classes, the things that I loved--I loved history. So I didn't grow up learning American history. I still don't know very much about it. But I knew a lot about European history, and particularly the strains of European history that derive from France. That was very much alive to me, and then I would go out and explore it, but I think it was probably more independent. Yes.

GORDIENKO

And it was international school, so I'm wondering if you spent time with American children or European children.

ANGELO

Yes. Yes. I actually found the American children very irritating. Many of them had the attitude of, "The world should be like us. I'm not going to learn French. Where is my Hershey bar?" It was a very kind of superior attitude that was very insular, and I found it difficult. I had other American friends. So in my family, this is what I learned immediately. "This is not your home country, but you're going to make it your home. You're a guest here. You have to learn everything about this country. You're in a rich place. This is an opportunity of your lifetime, and it's to your benefit to learn everything you can from the people you meet and the setting." So learning French, that was not an optional thing. For a lot of the American kids, that was optional. For me it was a requirement and to learn it thoroughly.

This also coincided with the early part of the Vietnam War, and my family was opposed to that war, and I was ashamed to be an American. I was in the middle, as a young kid, caught in some anti-American demonstrations. It was to my advantage to pass as European. So I could speak French so well that people didn't know I was American, and I was embarrassed by America. My friends I had--Tarik Tenali was Turkish; Haru Christopolis was Greek; there was Eiko Hirohata was Japanese; Carol Wagner was American; Barbie Duff was American; Tomas Sobrodsky was Polish. Kids were from all over. They were from all over, and I have no idea where they are. You know, sometimes I wonder, like, what are their lives, all those kids? What did they go on to in the

world? I have no idea. But I liked that. I liked knowing kids from all over.

GORDIENKO

So even at that time, you were beginning to develop expectations about your future. Did you think you were just going to stay and live in Europe for the rest of your life, or go back?

ANGELO

Well, I was very much in the present, and it was a very traumatic thing in my family when my parents made me leave to come here for high school. I didn't want to come, and I didn't want to go to a boarding school. They gave me a choice of two schools, one of which was coeducational, the Athenian School. It was based on the model of Kurt Hahn and Outward Bound. And then the girls' school, Katherine Branson School. Then I got into both, but then they said, "You have to go to this one," which was the girls' school, because they thought I'd be better protected. I didn't want to come. I was miserably unhappy.

Up until that time, also, when I'd come to the U.S. in the summertimes, kids would say things like, if they knew I'd been in Greece they'd say things like, "Did you ride in a chariot?" I mean, it's like does nobody know about the rest of the world here? I was scared to come into such an insular world where there was not much knowledge of the whole world. And I was very unhappy when I had to start high school here. For a long time--it took me a very long time to get rooted enough. I didn't really have--when I was growing up, I didn't have great images of my future. I didn't think about what would--I was very much, "Let's survive this."

GORDIENKO

I see. So at the time when you were still in a European school, you didn't have expectations about your career, what kind of profession you will have in the future?

ANGELO

Not really. I can remember at one point thinking what will I do, and my parents had asked me, and all I could think of was that I would live with my brother and take care of his children, because I knew I wouldn't get married and have

children of my own. I used to cook for my brother and his friends, because my brother was sort of the little prince in the family, so I would like try to wait on my brother. I wasn't really encouraged, and I'm not sure my parents knew that I would okay healthwise.

GORDIENKO

By the way, I forgot to ask, what is the age difference between you and your brother?

ANGELO

My brother is two and a half years older, and my sister is six years old than I am.

GORDIENKO

I see. And what are their names, may I ask?

ANGELO

My sister is Christie [Angelo], and my brother is Alex [Angelo].

GORDIENKO

I see. Going back to school experience, you said that education, even art education, was not particularly a positive experience in Europe, but when did you start taking art classes, in Europe or in high school in the United States?

ANGELO

The high school I went to had a very set curriculum, so I had no choices really, except, well, they did. At a certain point you could take a few little electives, but the art was not really very good. I did take a ceramics class, but I took--it was the first African American history class, and I took an incredible class on Russian history, actually, from this wonderful woman, Mrs. Azar, who was Russian, who just happened to come, and a class in Japanese history, and a sociology class. Those were things, but mainly it was a college-preparatory track and rigorous academically. More of what I did in high school was I actually, I didn't really mean for this, and it wasn't a real ambition, but I ended up taking leadership roles, elected class president several times. I started the independent study program for the school. It was the first they ever had. And so I did a project on euthanasia. My grandmother had just died of a stroke, and my uncle died of cancer, and I was really

interested in the question of, was it okay to allow people to take their own lives if they knew they were dying and they were facing pain? So I interviewed people who were clergy in all different religions, and I went and visited all these different places, so I did that project around euthanasia. I started the community service program for my school, where on Wednesday mornings juniors and seniors would go and do work in the community, and I worked with people who had had strokes.

The worst thing was I tutored kids at the public high school, which was a nightmare because I had to go in my uniform, and they thought we were weirdo kids. But it was a good program that I started, and then I raised money for that community service program. We actually raised money for a Quaker organization that set up a halfway house for prisoners to get re-acclimated to being in society, so I was very drawn to the Quaker religion.

Also during my high school years, I was--as much as I was allowed to be in this really very formal strict girls' school, boarding school--I was an antiwar activist against the Vietnam War, and we would sneak out and do demonstrations. So that was more the thrust of my life than art making, and it was a good thrust. That's when I rebelled. So I got an early acceptance to go to college at Vassar College, and everybody wanted me to go to an Ivy League school and have this very big, grand education, and I didn't want to go, and I rebelled, and I went to UC Santa Cruz, which at the time, it was the hardest of the UCs to get into, and it was an experimental college. It was pass, no record. It was just a foment of creativity and challenges to education. The hippies were older than I was, but it was sort of in the hippie era, and UC Santa Cruz was in that direction, so that's where I went.

GORDIENKO

I see. Well, I'm actually still interested in this kind of transitional moment when you had to leave Europe and come to the United States. I mean, you had to sort of integrate yourself in this mostly homogeneous society of American students. Were you happy to make friends with them? Or

were you kind of feeling a little bit alienated after that time spent in Europe? Or what kind of friends did you have?

ANGELO

Well, it's interesting. On some level, although my father would have been horrified if he had known this, it was probably a good choice that it was a girls' school, because my underground, hidden little lesbian self was probably very happy there, because I loved girls, not in an overtly sexual way, but in an affinity way. Also there was a certain thing, because we were all sent there and we didn't want to be there and it was so repressive. Like you had to have a list of people who were allowed to call you. You could only leave four days a year. You had to sign in when you went from one building to another. They watched you all the time. It was like being in a prison setting. It was from another era. And so we all had something in common because it was so repressive, so I found friends. We were like kindred spirits, and we were going to try to find our own way. It took a while to make those friends, but once I made them, they were like sisters.

And some of them I didn't like so well, some of the people there. I did like the schoolwork. I liked it academically. I loved what I got to learn. I've always loved to learn. I mean, I could be in school my whole life, so that was a joy. But I did feel like--I felt like I had to survive in a foreign world. That's what I--and so it was to my advantage to figure that out as quickly as I could. I had to adapt, and a lot of the time I'd look around and I'd think, "What planet am I on?" You know? "Where have I--?" But I had no choice. I had no agency. I had no money. I had no skills. I was still a child. I couldn't go out and support myself. I couldn't make my way in the world, so I had to adapt and I knew that, and I knew I was fortunate. In the scheme of things, Andrey, I've had a privileged life. I had food on the table. I had a place to sleep, and I had opportunity created academically to learn things. So that was joyful.

GORDIENKO

I see. I have a couple of questions about your studies. I mean, usually in high school, students begin to kind of orient

themselves, discover what subjects they like. Were you mostly drawn to history? Or you were beginning to think about other career options? Or also, what kind of classes were your favorites? What kind of teachers were your favorite teachers at the time?

ANGELO

It's true that I love literature, and I loved poetry. I didn't understand it, but I loved explicating. I had a teacher, John Hall, who later died of AIDS, who had a way of making history come alive. Also what I really loved was French, because I spoke it so well. So they let me take French. I took AP French when I was a sophomore, so I was with the upperclassmen, and that was mostly French literature, and I loved the literature. I mean, I still can think of--because it was in the era when you would memorize poetry and stuff, so sometimes I'd sit and I'd get to roll the poems off my tongue, and I still savor that. Daniel de Gunton, he was Swiss, he was our French teacher. Then I went and I took my French classes at Dominican College, which is now Dominican University here. It's a Catholic university, and I took college-level French courses in high school, because I knew more than the other students. That was all very fun for me, because it was more serious engagement with--it wasn't all about grammar and conjugating verbs. It was reading literature and studying history.

I didn't do well in math. In geometry they let us get help from someone, as long as we wrote, "Someone helped me." So my homework for almost a year said, "Kerry Munger helped me." Kerry Munger got me through geometry. Every night she would help me figure out my theorems and my problems. I liked algebra okay. The science--I think it was more the history and the literature that grabbed me.

GORDIENKO

The person who helped you, was she a tutor or a friend?

ANGELO

She was a friend.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see.

ANGELO

She was another student, and she--you know, this year is my high school's fortieth reunion. It's actually a time I can't go to it, but she always organizes those. She's the librarian here in the Marin County Library System, so she's always had that helpful--it's funny to see she's still helping people find what they need all these years later. She was a very kind person. So the friends were good friends. We would help each other a lot.

GORDIENKO

That's great. It looks like at the time you were more interested in being involved with the community and partaking in social services. Did you prefer that to other kind of extracurricular activities such as athletic clubs or art clubs that high schoolers would normally participate in? Or you just had no time for that kind of stuff?

ANGELO

Well, you know, from the time when I was really little, people were afraid that something bad would happen to me with exercise. So you can see now I'm a large person. It would have been really great for me if people didn't have that fear for me when I was little. So when I was very little, my family, we were Sierra Club members, and we did a lot of hiking. When I got into high school, I played field hockey and volleyball, and I enjoyed that, but I wasn't very good and I had to be careful, and I couldn't see all that well, because I was still going through the vision problems. I did archery just to see, even if I can't see, could I master hitting a target with a bow and arrow? I actually was pretty darn good at it. It was more like setting intention and getting really quiet and clear. I could do that all alone. I liked swimming. But I didn't really join clubs and do that. Most of my stuff with other people was in the community stuff. And the art was pathetic. There wasn't really much offered.

GORDIENKO

If I may ask a personal question, did you date in high school, or it was not--

ANGELO

Well, at the time I thought of myself as a heterosexual person. I did have a major crush on the son of a friend of my

aunt's. My god, I loved him so much. But I didn't get--we were restricted. We couldn't see anybody. We were closed in there. You know, I loved my friends, but I didn't see any of that as romantic. There were two girls who ended up one of them getting expelled and we didn't know why, who were involved with each other romantically and sexually, and that all was a big huge drama and stuff that had a big impact. I mean, we probably don't want to go into that whole world, but so there were girls in my school who were involved with each other, but I didn't feel any of those pulls. I was more interested in boys.

They had mixers with boys' schools where what you'd do is you would sign up for a dance, and you'd say how tall you were, and then how tall a boy you wanted, and then they'd match you up, and then they'd have these dances. It was a nightmare. It was so unpleasant. These poor boys. Like they'd arrive and, you know, based on height? I mean, this is sort of pathetic.

GORDIENKO

Wow.

ANGELO

It was very archaic. So I wasn't in touch with that. So that kind of blossoming didn't happen till later for me.

GORDIENKO

I see. So at the time, you were not really thinking about the issues of sexual orientation. You didn't have any friends who were explicitly, openly lesbian or gay?

ANGELO

Well, the one who was, was expelled.

GORDIENKO

I see. Wow.

ANGELO

And we had a class called "Senior Class" that was about sexuality, and they showed us--I'll never forget this film. It was all about the horrors of being gay, and they showed people, men together and women together dancing in a basement bar. And the dean of students, who later I found out was a lesbian, and she was involved with Senorita Arrizmende, the Spanish teacher, she told us, "Don't be a

lesbian. My roommate in college was a lesbian, and she killed herself. It's a terrible thing to do in your life. Stay away from them." And then I found out--so in my high school teachers, she, the dean of students, the Spanish teacher, the French teacher, my English teacher, they were all gay; the geometry teacher. They were lesbian or gay men, all of them, but it was so unacceptable at the time. So it was a repressive environment. It was a punishing environment.

GORDIENKO

I see. So you refused to go into Vassar College, right?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

You picked a different university.

ANGELO

Right.

GORDIENKO

How was that experience like? I mean, was the environment completely different? People who attended were completely different from the sort of students you encountered in high school, or was it still pretty much the same?

ANGELO

No, it was very different. The shock for me was that you were completely on your own in a really chaotic environment. So it was at the height--I graduated from high school in 1971, so it was the fall of '71. It was just--the hippie movement was just at a point where there were bad things starting to happen, so the ideas of the peace and love were starting to fall short in a way. The Vietnam War was escalating. So the things that I experienced was, first of all, the kids. So I was with boys and girls, and I was probably the only one of my friends who hadn't been sexual. There was a lot of pressure to be sexual. In fact, my roommate locked me in a room with this guy who she thought I ought to have sex with, and he and I were so embarrassed, and we just sat there and looked at each other and said, "Oh, my god, can we believe this?"

It was a huge drug--in fact, I had a friend who, when he dropped acid, he picked up a huge andiron that people used

to hammer, blacksmiths making iron, and he threw it off a balcony, and it just missed--we had preceptors who lived in our dorms, and the preceptor had a two-year-old child who was down there, and it just missed the child. I ended up babysitting my friends who were having bad trips. I didn't do drugs. For me, I had enough illness in my life. I had had so much medication, not anything that would affect behavior, but I just felt like, why would you put a drug in your mouth? You know? I couldn't do it. And I also had a very vivid internal life. I was kind of an emotional, sensitive person, and so I would babysit all my friends who would have--like my friend who tried to jump out a window and ripped off her clothes and then urinated on all of our records, and kids who'd run down to the meadow and do--it was a wild time. That tail end of the hippiedom, it was a sense of freedom, go wild.

For me, the things that I very quickly got into--I found a boyfriend eventually, and that was okay. But it was actually--after the first year, I went to Denmark to study photography, and I was so relieved to go back to Europe, even though I didn't know Scandinavia. That was the flowering for me, because in that photography school was very small. It was in Jutland in a town called Fjerritslev. It's called Praestegaard, and it's no longer there. It was a very small school, and the teacher said to me, "You have an eye, and you develop this eye." I went with my brother, and my brother was more the impetus, and it was the first time in my life that he didn't get the strokes and I did. He loved photography, but the teacher said, "I'm afraid you don't have the gift for it, but your sister has the gift." So it was an encouragement that was amazing to me.

I also took filmmaking classes. I was in Merrill College, which was Third World Studies, which was where I felt my affinity, because I felt--growing up in Belgium in the times when the Congo became independent of Belgian colonialism, and most of Africa started to become independent, I was really aware of the bounds of colonialism and independence, and Third World Studies really interested me, the whole negritude movement in writing and poetry and music on the parts of

the voices from Africa and from people of African descent throughout the world really interested me, and that's where my study was in college. But when I got into it, then I just fell into these film classes, and I ended up seeing probably twenty, thirty hours worth of film a week in my film-history classes, and I started taking filmmaking classes. I had the best time making films. It just opened up the whole world to me.

And that was where at UC Santa Cruz it was this time of great foment. Along the other half of it was the antiwar work, and the college was built so that nobody could organize politically. After the Free Speech Movement in Berkeley, they had designed UC Santa Cruz so that there was no central organizing place, really for the students. It would be very hard. So the one place you could go was the amphitheater that was carved out of rock. It was very cold and wet and not that fun. But still, we were able to organize and do all of our demonstrations and the stuff we were trying to do politically in the town, and that meant a lot.

I was determined not to become a felon. I did not want to get arrested. I didn't want to lose my passport. The ability to leave this country meant the world to me. I didn't want to do anything that would prevent that, so I was very careful not to do anything that would get me in trouble with the police, so there were bounds. It was all peaceful demonstration for me. That took a lot of--like that and the filmmaking.

And I reached a point where the other thing that happened that changed my life was a friend of mine, not a close friend but a friend in the dorm, was murdered by a serial murderer. UC Santa Cruz--the town was a little bit in the grip of insanity, to tell you the truth. In a short period, there were two serial murderers, both of whom I knew people they killed. One of them had murdered a whole family, and the daughter in the family was at summer camp, and she ended up--her whole family was murdered, and she was friends with friends of mine, and that family adopted her and took her in, and I was very impacted by that.

But I was more impacted by my friend at UC Santa Cruz who--I didn't give her a ride. I had a car. I had this beat-up

old VW van, and I used to drive everybody everywhere. It had over almost 300,000 miles on it, and it was like our shared car. And she needed a ride, but she was going in an opposite direction late at night. I didn't take her, and he picked her up, and he murdered her and another girl. His name was Edmund Kemper. He murdered nine women. His last victims were his mother and a friend of his mother's, and he had murdered his grandparents when he was sixteen, and he'd been in prison. They had him administering psychological tests, and they let him out. It was a very painful thing.

I sat through his trial because I knew that he lied about what he did, because I'd been there earlier that evening and where he said he went and all that. He eventually was caught and he confessed, and he took police everywhere. He was also a necrophiliac and a cannibal, and it was so amazingly painful to me that I had to understand it. And I felt in my immature, young-woman way, I felt somewhat responsible, and it took me many years to learn I wasn't responsible, that if I had given her the ride--you know, it still chokes me up, because it was a horrible thing that happened to her. But that was so horrifying. And I sat through his trial. He was put in prison for life. He'll never get out.

But I decided I couldn't be in college anymore, so I left. I left and I went to Europe, and I went back and I worked. And at the end of a year working--I worked for an incredible organization, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature [IUCN], which is the sister to the World Wildlife Fund. World Wildlife Fund deals with animals, and the IUCN deals with the natural environment, the land. I did the lowest-level possible clerical job. I redid the filing system, and during that time I met--my third-grade teacher introduced me to an Englishman who was a translator for the U.N., and in his true passion, he was a translator of Russian poetry, and he was friends with dissident Russian poets, and he helped the poet Joseph Brodsky get out of--he was the person who picked him up in Vienna from--he went to W.H. Auden, and Bernie [Bernard Mears], my fiancé, went to Vienna with money from all of the poets who were in London and who were Russian

poets who'd gotten out, and they pooled their money, and they saved it for Joseph, and he went and got Joseph and then he brought him back to London.

He was in this whole world that was so exciting and interesting to me and so I got to meet him. I got to meet some of the poets in those circles, and I got more and more interested. I realized I wanted to be a filmmaker as an artist, not as a Hollywood filmmaker, not feature films, but I wanted to be an art filmmaker. And so I worked really hard there, and then I got caught by Immigration because I was working illegally. I had to leave the country, and I came back, and I went back to college at the San Francisco Art Institute, and I studied film.

GORDIENKO

Wow. I mean, it sounds like a time packed with events for you, right, very exciting time. I just wanted to kind of--

ANGELO

Yes, I'm sorry. I'm going on and on.

GORDIENKO

No, no, no. I mean, this is amazing information for me and just kind of at least establish the chronology, right? So you went to UC Santa Cruz in 1971. Were you undecided at the time, or you already took film classes, photography classes. Were you planning to be an art major?

ANGELO

No. I was Third World Studies. That was my thing, and I didn't know what I would do with it. You know, I actually in my heart of hearts probably thought I'd be a diplomat. But I really felt like the world needed help around--it was the end of the colonial way, and developing Third World--there was so much that was in flux and difficulty, and so much to do in the world. I don't know that I ever really thought it through enough. I think I would have been more oriented to a U.N. kind of a job than working on behalf of the nation, and at that time the U.N. was an admirable--you know, over the years we've seen all the ways in which the U.N. has had difficulty and been subject to failure and lack of vision and over-bureaucratization and one thing or another, but in those days it felt like this was the place where the whole world was

saying, "Let's create a way of being together that is more fair and equitable and takes care of everybody." That was the spirit that I grew up with through my father, so that was more like where I thought I'd go.

So I took the film classes at UC Santa Cruz because I needed an extra class. That's how I took the first one, and then I went, oh, my god, I love this. I love this. And I couldn't get enough of it. As I say, I was--the film history program at Santa Cruz was wonderful, so I studied all aspects of film history that were great. So I got to see kajillions of films, and then I started making little films. This was all--so I bought a Bolex, a really old 16mm camera. It was so expensive to make films in 16mm, so expensive. And then the school had Nagras. You could do sound if you wanted, but it was very hard. Mainly I worked in Super 8; that's what I did there. I should answer your question and not elaborate. What else did you want to know?

GORDIENKO

So that's already during the freshman year? Wow.

ANGELO

That was my freshman and sophomore year. So I went there--I left Santa Cruz in December of 1973.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see.

ANGELO

I left it at around Christmastime. I finished the quarter and I just was taking a leave of absence, but I really never wanted to go back there. After what I went through with my friend's murder, it completely tarnished that whole area for me. I still get the creeps when I go down there. [laughs]

GORDIENKO

Wow. I mean, it must have been kind of an important moment for you, because you were confronted with this violence committed against women at this early age, so it must have really impacted your views and your approach to art making and your activist work in the future.

ANGELO

Yes, yes. Well, and I did take a Women's Studies class. There was somebody named Jackie Christeve, who was also--she

was in the History of Consciousness Ph.D. program, and film was her interest. You know, it was all just the beginnings of these things around Women's Studies. I had friends who started the first--I think it was called WAR, Women Against Rape, in Santa Cruz, and I remember they did things that I thought they were so brave and so radical. Like I would never have done it. But they confronted a rapist and grabbed him and held him down and shaved his head and dyed his scalp blue with some dye, and so it wouldn't come off. [laughs] I mean, it was like, oh, my god. Actually, those methods I'll never really--for me, always in my heart of heart, to do something that is violent to someone who's done violence--I've always been against the death penalty. It's like--and now I'm a student of Buddhism, I'm a meditator. To me the things of "do no harm," it leads more into the kind of world I want to live in, rather than one where we retaliate. But I could really understand in that period where the amount of rage, the fear, the fact that even--those were before laws or understanding, really. The idea was that women asked to be raped, and that you were sexually provocative if you were raped, and that rape was a sexual act rather than a violation. It took a lot of work, and that was the expression of the times. So I was involved in some of those early things in Santa Cruz, but then it got overwhelming with this murder. And the fact--you know, I could have had a low-key view of that. Most of my friends did. But I sat through every day of that trial. I had to understand this. I had to understand what had happened. And I remember when they found my friend's head, the kids went wild. They had a party, and they bought dolls at the thrift store, and they dipped them in bloody paint, and they hung them in the dark. Because he chopped bodies up, they dismantled these dolls, and then everybody got totally stoned out of their minds and drunk and had this wild party, and it was sort of like, what are you doing? I mean, it seemed like that it was a way to protect against the pain of it by making fun of it and light of it. And I'll never forget, when the news came they found her head and I burst into tears, I was with a group of people, and they all looked at me and

said, "Why are you so upset?" It was another experience of, what planet am I on?

GORDIENKO

Yes. I mean, people have different ways of dealing with trauma.

ANGELO

Exactly.

GORDIENKO

Sometimes it's just a matter of brushing off, right.

ANGELO

Exactly. But it was--so the things that I found later, which we'll get to that whenever, but in L.A. and through the Women's Movement and the Woman's Building, it was ways of creating community and people being together where there was mutual support and connection and a discovery and a learning, which was not present in any of these other settings. So in UC Santa Cruz, it was still a very alienated place. During that time they built this incredible maze. Some students did it as a project. It was of wood, and you could walk through it and you'd get lost and all. Well, somebody killed themselves in the center of the maze. He hung himself in it, behind my college, which was in the woods, Merrill College, because it's a cluster college system like the British Cambridge and Oxford, and behind Merrill College there's forest. Someone found a head back there, a human head. This was before these murders.

There was a feeling of depression and oddness, and I think now, I think it had to do with the drugs, you know, in a certain way, and also it was a period of great upheaval for American young people. You know, who are we in the world? Who are we to the world? Who were we going to be? What do we do with our lives? It was heavy time. It was difficult. It was difficult.

Anyway, I'm going off. What else did you want to talk about?

GORDIENKO

No, I mean, it's all very interesting to me. Like I'm a graduate student right now, and I feel like there is a certain split or division between art students and social sciences students, but it seems like you were in social sciences and

you had friends who were hippies, who did drugs, who listened to music, so there was more like a larger community in which different people mixed, right? Is that the sense?

ANGELO

Absolutely. Well, you know, at the time at UC Santa Cruz, the most popular class was the chicken, and you studied it holistically. There was an animal husbandry factor. There was folklore. There was just plain old biology. So the whole concept was interdisciplinary approaches and a holistic look, using new ways of pedagogy to look at holistic things and the interrelatedness. So at that time, UC Santa Cruz had a kind of utopian vision, even though it was sort of distopic. But you did have all these people. People didn't think, "I can't talk to you, you're a physicist." It would be, "You're a physicist? Tell me about it." It's like, "How does that relate to--?"

You know, the Spanish playwright, Fernando Arrabal, came, who had been imprisoned by Franco for quite a while, was this amazing, amazing, visionary person, and mounted this play in the barn where he actually put people through the experience of what it was like to have been arrested and imprisoned in Spain under the Fascists. He kind of roughed up the audience and went and--since it was a barn, it didn't have conventional seating, and he'd go and put you in these little isolated spots. I mean, it was a time when everybody was saying, "Shake it all up," like, "Look at everything and look at it differently." But it wasn't comfortable. It was scary.

GORDIENKO

I see. And I mean, at the time when you were exploring all these new trends and movements and literature, cinema, do you recall if you had a favorite director or writer who really influenced you at the time?

ANGELO

Well, kind of where I lived, there were two directors who to me felt like I could have been their children, and they were very different from each other. But one was Ingmar Bergman, and one was Federico Fellini, so I loved both. The way that Bergman got to the heart of suffering in this way that sort of peeled it back and you were just right there in the presence of it, and it was just right there; it was

extremely appealing. And the Fellini-esque sense of whimsy and spiritedness, there was something wild under it all that kind of--you know, my family in origin on one part of my family is Italian. It's sort of buried a little bit, because people tried to assimilate over the generations, but there is still something there that I kind of resonate to.

In terms of other people, oh, my gosh, there were so many. I mean, in the art world there were people who were doing things visually that were so interesting, like Bruce Connor. There were people who were wild crackpots whose work I didn't really like, but I thought thank god they're on this planet, like the Kuchar brothers, who I studied with at San Francisco Art Institute. It was just where I came back to after I came back from Switzerland. I went to the San Francisco Art Institute. Gunvor Nelson was one of my teachers, who started to get into a little bit of a female voice at the time.

If you look back over time, I love the films of Luis Buñuel. The Surrealist Movements always spoke to me both in visual art and in film very powerfully as going into areas of human consciousness and expression that were really meaningful. And Jean Cocteau I loved. The narrative films probably didn't mean as much, in a certain sense, and there are individual films that probably wiped me off the face of the earth for a while, like "Night and Fog" (film title). I mean, there have been so many. I mean, I have to go back and think. But I feel like I got this richness of being able to just sink in. Also, very just early on, I loved the films of Buster Keaton and the simplicity of what he could do and the simplicity of film in that time, but the incredible spirit and the way of acting. I don't know, there are millions.

GORDIENKO

No, no, that's very interesting that you were into the kind of artists who worked both in cinema and painting, somebody like Jean Cocteau and also Bruce Connor, who was the painter and the filmmaker at the same time, and then later you in the future in your life also embraced multiple mediums.

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

That's very interesting. What about professors? I mean, did anyone really blew your mind and kind of pushed you towards your artistic orientation at the time?

ANGELO

Well, at UC Santa Cruz I had one professor, her name was Maria Alon. She was Cuban, and she was one smart cookie. I loved that she could distinguish complexity, like she didn't--that was a time when around political issues people could get very stridently dogmatic and simplified, and she would complexify. I loved that about her. I studied with a fellow named Tony Reveaux, Anthony Reveaux, who was a film-history guy who had the gift of bringing lots of stuff to light. At the San Francisco Art Institute, I studied with Don Lloyd, who was a filmmaker. He helped me learn how you work with a group of people who don't really want to work together but have to, when you're making a film.

GORDIENKO

I see. When you said that you went to study photography in Europe, was it just kind of a one-summer trip, or was it longer?

ANGELO

It was a film school called Praestegaard, which used to be a priest's--it was like the priest's house from hundreds of years old. Originally it was started by this international group of photographers, and the Beatles had been involved. Well, those people it kind of burned out, and this one guy who's very stable, steady, was kind of the heart of it, David Russell. He was an American. He was married to a Danish woman. He started his own thing in this old sewing-machine factory that was on the beach in Fjerritslev, and he could only have a handful of students at a time. He had another teacher with him, Will Melendez, who is Puerto Rican. So there were four or five students, and they decided to only do it in the summer, because they had to make their living more on the rest--this was like a labor of love.

So there was this wonderful Danish student, Jan, and Jill [Gholson], who's an American, and my brother and me, and

then this other guy, and we were there for this intensive summer. And they couldn't keep it going. They didn't have the money to keep it going. It had the cachet of when it had been this big thing and all of these rock stars and people who were interesting. It was like a very experimental place to play, and it was inexpensive. The whole thing of it was you go and you immerse, and you learn your craft but you become one with the environment, and you really look to see what's all around you. And in that part of Denmark there were still the fishing boats. When they would come in to the beach, they would take ropes attached to the boats and harness them to horses, and the horses would pull the boats on the sand. They didn't even have cranks. It was very, very primitive, and at the same time you also had--there were all of these Nazi fortifications that were still left. It was very--it was kind of in different worlds, and the people were such good people.

And then also you walk around and there are prehistoric burial mounds that are just part of everyday life, and people honor that sense of going back that far, you know, millennia. They're going back thousands of years, and, oh, yes, that's like--for them, they could feel like, "I'm descended from whoever is buried there. Those were my people." There's a sense of continuity over forever, and it's so calm and peaceful and beautiful. In the summer, it's never dark, or very little of the year is dark. In the summer, the night is dark. It was an eye-opening--it gave the chance to open my own creative eye, and that under the nurturance of a teacher who'd say, "Keep looking. I like this. I see something here. Keep going." Because I'd never got that encouragement, ever.

GORDIENKO

Wow. And before that trip you were studying social sciences mainly?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

And once you went there, you were encouraged, and you were told that you have talent--

ANGELO

Right.

GORDIENKO

--and you were told, keep looking [unclear] photography. Was that a turning point for you?

ANGELO

It was.

GORDIENKO

Was that the moment when you decided, maybe I should go in this direction?

ANGELO

It was. And I tell you, I had no idea how to do it. Well, so I talked to my father, and I said, "You know, Dad, if I could do anything, I would like to be a filmmaker. How do I make a living at it?" "Well, you'd have to get in the film industry somewhere." So he said, "I tell you what," because we were living in Europe, or he was, I wasn't. He said--and I was there because I was in Denmark, "Let's go look at the London Film School." So we went.

And the London Film School was churning out the leaders of the British Film Industry. So I went for an interview, and the person I interviewed with, he was some high official, he said, "You know, if you come here, you'll never do anything. No one will hire you. You're a woman. You'll be lucky if you get to clap the clapper, and you'll probably be a secretary. Don't think you'll ever get to--you know, there's somebody who's assisting somebody in an editing room, but you'll never get to do anything."

And the thing that I realize is I didn't have a lot of strength. Like if I had been--I was more sensitive, and also because of my eyes, I always felt different, like I see the world differently. That was a source of richness in my photography, because actually physically I saw the world differently. I also experienced the world differently every day than people who had full sight. I interacted with the world differently. I would tune into people differently, and I experienced the world differently because I grew up, in the important years of my growing up, not being of the country I lived in, and yet totally open to it. And so I was the outsider, but the outsider

who is interested in and wants to engage with. So if I'd had more fight in me, I would have said, "Well, fuck you, Bud. I'll find a way." But it was true, there were no women, and women were getting the coffee, so I didn't pursue that route. I went the art route.

Then I realized when I was at the San Francisco Art Institute, I met women who were with the feminist art movement. They came to teach there, Arlene Raven, the art historian, Ruth Iskin, Sheila de Bretteville, Suzanne Lacy, and I thought, "I've come home." That's what really changed my life.

GORDIENKO

I'm curious, so when you went to that school in Europe, you only spent maybe three months or four months there.

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

And then you came home to the United States, and you were faced with this kind of dilemma. On the one hand, you discovered something new. On the other hand, you have all these practical considerations, like you were told to face reality and that maybe you will not be able to get a job if you go down that road.

ANGELO

Right.

GORDIENKO

So what did you do when you returned to your American university, just stick to your major, right? And then when did you decide to quit the university? Was it in '73?

>

ANGELO

Well, my friend was murdered in probably the spring of '73, or the January or February, somewhere around in there. I can't remember exactly. And then the trial was in the late summer, early fall probably, or maybe it was later in the fall, I can't remember. And by then I just--and I was getting a lot out of my film classes. I was having a great time and all that, but then I decided to leave. So then I left in December.

ANGELO

Honey, this is Andrey Gordienko; Nancy McCauley.

McCauley

Hi, how are you?

GORDIENKO

Hi. Good, how are you?

GORDIENKO

Okay, so to resume our interview, we were just talking about the moment when you decided to quit your university. And once again, when was that, 1973?

ANGELO

Yes. I finished the fall quarter, and so in December of 1973, I left Santa Cruz. I was going to take a leave for a while, and I went back to Europe, and I worked in Switzerland.

GORDIENKO

I see. So at the time, you were kind of living in a moment or thinking about, oh, should I stick to this career in social sciences, or should I move into the arts field?

ANGELO

I didn't know.

GORDIENKO

Oh, you didn't know.

ANGELO

I didn't know. But I did know that it was good for me to work for an international NGO in Switzerland, for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. I like that world, and it was familiar through my father's work. It was work that was international in nature, and it focused on contributing to the well being of the world in one way or another, so that seemed like a good thing to do. So that's what I went and I did that through till the summer of 1974, and then I went back to the San Francisco Art Institute in the fall of 1974.

GORDIENKO

Did you want to go back? Or were you kind of forced, like your visa expired at the time?

ANGELO

Well, I did have trouble with my visa, because I didn't have all the permits I needed to work there, so I had to leave. In the meantime, I had met Bernard Meares, the man--and fallen in love. He was considerably older than I was. He was

a translator on a freelance basis with the U.N. The true love of his life, as I said, was translating Russian poetry. So I stayed a little while with him, and we traveled around a lot in Italy, where he had quite a few friends. His friends were mainly journalists and poets, and he had a friend Dalbert--I can't remember his last name. He was Australian, and he worked for the "Sunday Times of London" in Italy, and so we went and stayed with him in Verona. So we had a great time going around Europe for a while.

But then I realized I wanted to finish my education, and I went back to the San Francisco Art Institute, because I knew I wanted to pursue the film and photography more.

GORDIENKO

So you had to make a choice--

ANGELO

Yes, I did.

GORDIENKO

--and you picked a different major this time.

ANGELO

I did.

GORDIENKO

I see. How old were you at the time when you entered the San Francisco Institute?

ANGELO

I must have been like twenty-two, twenty-three.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see.

ANGELO

Was I that old? No, I was twenty-one.

GORDIENKO

Right. So you entered the institute, and could you tell me about what kind of friends you made there, what kind of people you started to associate with?

ANGELO

Yes. Well, it's a wonderful place. The building is this gorgeous old Spanish-style building. The studios are beautiful. It's a place where people, they squirrel away and they do their work, so it's not a big community. It's not super-interactive. You kind of work with the people that

you're studying with. So I immediately--I spent a lot of time in the darkrooms. I studied with Linda Connor and Joanne Leonard. Joanne Leonard was most inspiring to me, a wonderful photographer. I loved the photography, and then I started making the films, and then I got into a program in the summertime that was taught by Arlene Raven, Ruth Iskin, Sheila de Bretteville and Suzanne Lacy. Actually, Sheila probably just came as a guest. It was a feminist art program, and it was just tremendously exciting.

GORDIENKO

Really. I know that these women artists and educators were based in Los Angeles.

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

So they came to San Francisco just for a short time to talk about their program and educate students?

ANGELO

Yes. They would do these intensive art programs at art schools around the country. It was a good way for them to make money. It also sort of helped move the feminist art movement along, because wherever they went, they met with other artists and with students. At the time, they had developed the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, which was a center for women's culture, and within it they had a college and graduate level program called the Feminist Studio Workshop [FSW]. And as a result of studying with them--it was a combination of art history, studio art, and sort of feminist process, because consciousness-raising groups were part of it.

It was so rich and exciting and thrilling that I decided to move to Los Angeles and go to the Feminist Studio Workshop. So I did that, and so did some of the other friends I was in the program with, Meridee Mandio, Mary Yakutis, and Emily Chaison, and the four of us moved to L.A. to study in what was called the FSW, the Feminist Studio Workshop. And I got my degree through Antioch, so that's how I finally got my B.A. was as an Antioch bachelor's in arts. It wasn't a fine arts degree. It was a normal B.A. But because the

Feminist Studio Workshop wasn't an accredited program, but you could do independent learning through Antioch.

GORDIENKO

I see. So you only spent one year in San Francisco, pretty much?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

And you decided not to finish your degree there.

ANGELO

You know, this other thing was so compelling, I just couldn't not go.

GORDIENKO

Right. Also, if I may ask a personal question, I mean, you mentioned that you began to confront your new sexual orientation around the age of twenty, right? So was it already at the time of San Francisco when you met people who were no longer forced to hide their sexual orientation, who were open about it--

ANGELO

Right.

GORDIENKO

--or was it the time when you moved to Los Angeles?

ANGELO

No, actually maybe twenty was too young, because it was there--well, when I first was at UC Santa Cruz, there were some women there who were out lesbians. And actually, I had a very good friend in my dorm floor, Julie Werbel, who's a lawyer, and I just thought the world of her. She was wonderful. But I didn't really identify as a lesbian. At the San Francisco Art Institute, I met my first kind of role models, because Ruth Iskin and Arlene Raven were partners and had been lovers for a number of years, and they were able to combine this deep, deep connection with each other and their work, and they started to share more about lesbian artists historically.

During that time, I met the filmmaker Barbara Hammer, who was also in my program, and she actually was convinced that I should be a lesbian. So during this time, I was engaged to

marry Bernard Meares, the Englishman in Britain. At the time, he had moved over and was working for the World Health Organization in Denmark, in Copenhagen, and so we had a long-distance relationship, and we'd either come to this country or that for a few months at a time throughout the year, and Barbara Hammer was convinced that I had to come out. I had long, long, curly hair, and I was very, very invested in being a heterosexual person. She sort of set me up, and she had some friends grab me in a hallway and kiss me. I was furious. I was furious. I thought, I don't want anything to do with these lesbians. They're horrible, they're pushy and aggressive, I don't like them, and I love Bernie, and I'm engaged to be married, and I'm so happy. So I kind of kept that stance all the way through San Francisco. And when I moved to Los Angeles in the Feminist Studio Workshop, for the first time I really fell in love with a woman, Candace Compton, who was an artist that I collaborated with, and we created two characters that we used in our art making. I was just head over heels in love with her. Now, we were never involved with each other in a romantic way, but I could not deny my feelings, and they were--I did love Bernie, but it wasn't in the same way, at the same depth, so he and I had to confront that the relationship was over. That was very difficult. And then I came out. I never got involved with Candace, but that kind of opened my heart and my understanding, and then I got into other relationships with women and no more relationships with me. And I'd had relationships with men throughout my college years.

GORDIENKO

Yes. And I mean, from what you are saying, it seems like the relationship between students and professors was very different at the time. There wasn't like a barrier separating them. I mean, there was more interaction, even friendship possibly? I mean, they could really like talk to you about personal issues--

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

--and even intervene in your lives. Was that the case?

ANGELO

Yes. Well, and in particular with the women who were the feminist art educators. You know, the whole premises of feminist art that Arlene set out, and also she and Judy Chicago and Sheila de Bretteville, who founded the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, they looked at feminist art as that the functions of feminist art work were to raise consciousness, invite dialogue, and transform culture around women's experience. It was a very personal--it was from the personal to the political, looking really at personal experiences of women and seeing how is that shared with other women, how is it political, how is it played out in the world. With that kind of a journey and an exploration, the teachers were very willing to be real people.

There was also--it was creating a community, a community of interests, and with the Woman's Building itself, those of us who went to the Feminist Studio Workshop sort of did backbone work of keeping that building open. The building had the educational programs, so there was the full-time Feminist Studio Workshop. There was an extension program of classes. There were several galleries. There was a cafe, Sisterhood Bookstore, which was based in Westwood, but it had a branch there in that building. There were events and activities all the time. It took a lot of work to run the place, so we all pitched in and helped do that.

Actually, when we first got there, the building hadn't opened yet. It had moved from Grandview to Spring Street, and the Spring Street building when we pulled up, it was just--it had been a Chevron Oil building in the earlier part of the twentieth century. It was completely decayed and falling apart, and it had to be completely redone. And I thought, oh, my god, what did we sign up for? We pull up, it's just a mess. So one of the first things we did was scrape all the ceilings down. We learned how to build walls and do sheetrocking and paint everything, first of all scrub everything, pull, scrape layers and layers of plaster off the ceiling, sand the floors, so you were actually building the

building and owning the work of the building, making sure there was income generated, that it was all viable.

GORDIENKO

Yes, I'm actually interested to know about your impressions when you first arrived in Los Angeles. I know that Feminist Studio Workshop didn't have quite as much funding as other established academic programs. I mean, women actually had to work and maintain the building and paint the classrooms, so were you immediately engaged in this kind of work process?

ANGELO

Immediately.

GORDIENKO

And you were not taken aback? You were not shocked by the--?

ANGELO

I was horrified. Well, first of all, it's kind of a double-edge sword. On one hand, we all had tremendous trust in Arlene, Ruth, Suzanne Lacy in particular. Those are the ones we knew the best, because they had really been teaching day by day, and Sheila as well, who'd been there a bit. So we trusted them profoundly, and we were also horrified that there really wasn't a school. But as they said, "We're creating something here from nothing." And it ended up being one of the most beautiful and really, truly, I can't think of another word than empowering experiences to have. It was in a period also where in the sixties and seventies, so many arts organizations were created all over the U.S. by artists, so the whole thing of artists' spaces, it was a movement, and it happened everywhere in so many different ways. This was particularly out of--it was the feminist art movement, and they had taught at CalArts and at California State University, Fresno. They taught at the San Francisco Art Institute and then at art institutes around the country, so there was a sense of, this is possible, but in those other settings, it was nothing like creating your own building.
So the point of the Woman's Building--the original Woman's Building with an "a," so woman in the singular rather than the plural, which that was an important point, was you

appreciate each individual as part of contributing to what we all share collectively, so it's that you've got your eye on both. You're holding yourself, and you're a part of something much bigger. The original building was at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, and it held art works and cultural expressions and information about women from all over the world. It had the limitations of its era, so I think that it wasn't--it had a western-European vantage point. That idea of having a Woman's Building kind of as Virginia Woolf said, a room of their own, let's also create a building of our own. A room of your own is only for the individual woman to work in. A building of our own is for everyone to work in together. So it had to be created from scratch, and there's no money, so we have to make the money. We have to--that degree of ownership, of we'll do it together, it was tremendously rewarding.

For me to work on the ceilings, it was hard physical labor, and I wasn't very well. I was starting to have more lupus symptoms then, and yet I started to feel healthy in that setting, because it felt like such good work, even though it was difficult for me to do. Every day was filled with art making--studio classes, art history, feminist process, and the actual practical work of building the building.

GORDIENKO

Yes. I'm actually interested to know more about your daily kind of learning experience. I mean, I imagine it wasn't like professor was lecturing the students. It was more interactive, probably. What was it like to take these classes? What were the consciousness-raising groups? What sort of activities did you perform?

ANGELO

Well, the Feminist Studio Workshop met on two days a week, all day, and I can't remember, I think it was Wednesday and Thursday. It might have been Thursday and Friday. There was a mixture of--there were some lectures. I can remember Sheila de Bretteville and Deena Metzger--Deena's a writer, Sheila's a graphic designer--they were really dear old friends, and their friend Barbara Myerhoff, and Dolores Hayden, who taught at USC and UCLA respectively. They had

a tremendous body of knowledge built up around women's work historically and women's art. And Arlene Raven also is an art historian, so there were a tremendous amount of lectures and study.

The consciousness-raising groups, every incoming person was assigned to a consciousness-raising group. There were somewhere around seven, eight women, I can't remember exactly, and you stayed with that for a year. The Feminist Studio Workshop was a two-year program, so I really remember these women in my CR [consciousness-raising] group. So the origins of CR as we understood them was they'd grown somewhat out of speak-bitterness groups that had arisen in Maoist China as ways for working people and some women to talk about what their lives had been and how they'd come to where they were. So in that whole idea of revolution in China, we had no idea at the time, really, around the repression of the Cultural Revolution in China. It was more of an idealistic view of it. But the idea was that if you gave everybody equal time and equal space to look at their own experience and share it with others, you would discover the threads that link the individuals to the political issues, to the societal issues, and also to developing mutual support as well as self-discovery.

But the core issues that were first dealt with in consciousness-raising groups at the Woman's Building were, what's your orientation to work, what's your orientation to your sexuality, to money and power, which was a class conversation, and to--I'm blanking. And then from there--so the CR group would meet once a week, and everybody would have--I think each person had like around ten minutes. There'd be a topic that everybody would address, and then there'd be some shared discussion time. But the women who were in your CR group then formed--you had a special connection to them. But it was just an amazing discovery. Like the thing that--you'd look to see what was in common. So there were things like particularly around the stuff that had to do with sexuality. There were women describing a lot of, well, ignorance about their sexuality, not being taught much about it, shame around it, being taught shame. There

was stuff around just the hidden dimensions of violence, sexual violence. There were things of sexism throughout all of the--you know, you really could see the ways in which there were--you could just see the effects of sexism in people's experiences as it was described. And then as time went on, you'd pick different things to talk about.

GORDIENKO

I see. So these kinds of consciousness-raising groups were meant to supplement classes that taught art technique and art history. So the idea behind it was that art is inseparable from politics; was that it?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

Sort of to bring the two together?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

And also to say that personal is political?

ANGELO

Yes. And it was the beginning--there was just beginning to be--so the art world was moving from abstract expressionism. You were starting to have the development of a personal voice again in art, which across the centuries, this comes and goes in different ways, but the idea that personal experience might be fodder for art making. You could see it in the general art world. Like Chris Burden, Paul McCarthy. There were men doing work that was very personal in a way, but it also seemed very much to come from their experience as men. Like Chris Burden shooting himself with a gun. You had Paul McCarthy showing up to his friends' doors wearing horrible masks and pretending to shoot them. It's very frightening, very confrontive, different kinds of expression. So the stuff--just first of all, to say, "Women's experience is worth talking about," and that there are ways of putting it into art and looking at it with richness and depth, that was an inconceivable thing to do, and a lot of people didn't think it was really valuable, in the art world. It was sort of

considered, "Oh, god. Do we have to look at this?" But it was a very powerful experience to make it and be part of it. There was also a whole part where we were just given things to do. Like one of the first things that Cheri Gaulke and Barbara Buschka and, oh, there were several of us working on it, I can't remember everybody--we were asked to curate an exhibition of the folk art of Grandma Prisbrey in Bottle Village. She created this whole village out of bottles, in Simi Valley, and it had so much to do with her sense of her family and the loss of her children and her being an outsider with a different view as an artist in her world. So we recreated part. We got to know her. She was in her eighties. We created part of this Bottle Village that she'd made out there, in the Woman's Building. So it's all about within community and out in the world and back.

GORDIENKO

Right. Yes, it makes sense. And I also see kind of the mention of gender work here, because abstract expressionism and high modernism, it kind of erased that gendered experience from art. It was just pure abstract subjectivity at work, whereas women's art that was created at FSW emphasized this experience, brought it to the surface.

ANGELO

Exactly. And then we learned about the women artists who, if you would go and see their massive canvas, their modernist work, their expressionist work, and then they would take Sheila or Arlene or another one of the art historians and say--who'd ask, "Is there anything else you'd like to show us?" And they'd go in the bedroom and reach under the bed and pull out boxes, and in there would be these like little wonderful objects, and the things that were made with personal expression, like, "I can't show this to anyone. No one will think this is--this isn't art." So it was a shift in an outlook, and you know this better than I do, really, because you're an art historian. You've studied it way more than I have.

GORDIENKO

I try to be an amateur art historian, you might say. Yes. It seems like there was also a question of hierarchy, right? I mean, for example, arts and crafts could be something that would be explored at the Woman's Building, right, as opposed to abstract painting. And also performance art, right? I mean, it was new, right? I don't know if I'm wrong about this, but it seems like it was fresh and new for people at the time, so women could have the opportunity to start from scratch, from the year zero, without kind of prior history of male artists.

ANGELO

Well, it was way newer than anything now. But there were people who were actually supportive. Like Allan Kaprow really I would place as one of your early performance-art people; the Happenings of the 1960s; some of the work that Joseph Beuys did. I mean, they're antecedents. Men were doing work that started this all going. Some of the people, the Dadaists, the Fluxus people, they were doing performance, and they were mostly men.

Allan Kaprow happened to be alive and active and involved in southern California at the time, and he was a loving support of the feminist art movement, from my experience. He was married to Vaughan Rachel, who is an incredible photographer, really, truly a wonderful, wonderful woman artist. He later was involved with Barbara Smith, who is a very active performance artist, part of the feminist art movement. Barbara was our mothers' age, and Barbara had a studio in Pasadena, and Cheri Gaulke and I lived with her, and Meridee Mandio and Frank for a while. There are various of us who had studio space in that space with her, and Allan Kaprow was there fairly frequently. He was considerably older and way, way more developed. I mean, we were kids, and Barbara was certainly way more developed. But there were men who had started. There were men who were guiding, but women took it in a different direction.

GORDIENKO

So would you say that FSW was kind of separatist and exclusive in terms of being a community exclusively for women? Or was it actually open towards collaborations with

male artists? Did it actually invite male artists and critics to observe or participate in the performances and art projects?

ANGELO

That's a really good question. Well, in the actual building of the building, women's husbands, boyfriends, sons, brothers were there, and a lot of men taught women how to do the construction work. So Sheila de Bretteville's husband Peter [de Bretteville] is an architect, and I'll never forget when Peter--there was this moment of panic when we built the Bottle Village thing on the third floor, and Peter had to come in because it was like, "This is too heavy. This is built of concrete and sand, and this is this old warehouse building. Is it going to hold?" Because also at the opening, five thousand people were there in the building. So there were men participating in that kind of way. Sheila's son Jason [de Bretteville] was around a lot. Randsom Rideout was Nancy Buchanan's husband, or boyfriend. There were a lot of men involved, in terms of collaboration.

There were also men who were critics. The critics at the time were not very thrilled with the work, so there was a tension. There were some critics, like Roos Askey was a critic with "Art Week," who was open. So not all the women were that open either. I'd say that the emphasis was on, let's see what women's experience was. There wasn't at first a desire--you know, the idea was, these women couldn't get shown in galleries, so this is a place for women. If men can get shown other places, let the women get shown here, and let this be a place where that's explored.

That being said, there were collaborations with men, so like Cheri Gaulke did a series of things with John Duncan, who's a performance artist who actually then--I don't know, John sort of went in this direction, like he did this one performance that scared us all to death, where he bought a cadaver of a woman from Mexico, who died in Mexico, and he brought her dead body up to L.A., and he did a thing down near Little Tokyo, where he simulated having sex with a cadaver. And it was so scary. It was confrontive in this way we were all like, "Is this a good idea, John?" Like, "What is this?"

There were other men who were involved. Bill Laseroff I remember was writing and making art kind of on the fringes. In terms of direct collaborations, the collaborations were more out of there. There was a certain way in which--I would liken it to certain times in like African American movements, Civil Rights Movement, times when people say, "We don't understand ourselves enough, and we've been defined so much from outside. We need to have some separation." There was an element of separatism for a while, parallel probably in the feminist theory of the time. I think of Ti-Grace Atkinson. There were kind of pushes and pulls between women who were more like Monique Wittig, you know, like you go create your lesbian nation or whatever. Not to say that all the women were lesbian there, because they really weren't. It was an integration of heterosexual and lesbian women.

There were men in the audience a lot. There were men who supported many things. Years later, when I developed, with colleagues, an Incest Awareness Project, that it was a social-art project, the person who was the biggest help early on was Roland Summit, who's a psychiatrist, who was one of the first psychiatrists to look at incest as sexual abuse, an abuse of power in family relationships, with largely men at the time and probably still more so, but molesting at the time more girls. But we now know that young boys have been subjected to that a lot. And Roland Summit was a man really leading into that work in a critical way. So I'd say it was a mix. I'd say--but more on the end of, "This is our space. This is here for women."

GORDIENKO

I see. Generally speaking, FSW encouraged collaboration, so I just wonder how those collaborative projects arose, how performance groups came together. When you first arrived in Los Angeles, were you sort of put together in a group of students to work with, or it kind of happened naturally and spontaneously, you just made friends and you decided to work together?

ANGELO

Well, it was very small, so I think--I can't remember exactly, but I'm guessing that there weren't more than twenty in the FSW at a time, maybe thirty with both years, forty. I think the original thought may not have been so much, "You should collaborate. Go do it." So, for example, you had Suzanne Lacy. I think Suzanne Lacy deserves a massive amount of credit in all of this, because she really understood the connection of political-social issues and feminism and public art, and Judy Chicago in a way too.

So here's the thing. Judy Chicago has done artworks that really require the involvement and participation of many, many people, men and women. Even when the subject matter has been women's experiences, like "The Dinner Party," there are men involved as artists working on it. Those weren't exactly collaborations, because it's really ways of executing her vision, although within it, people may take different parts and elaborate on them, like the actual dinner plates or the embroidery or all different aspects.

Suzanne's approach--so Judy would be like the grandmother. Then Suzanne is the next generation down, because she'd studied with Judy and all, and Suzanne's approach was Suzanne would create vehicles through which people could participate and create things, as well as times she would do performances where she'd ask us to do something. I can remember she did one of the pieces around rape in Los Angeles. It might have been "Three Weeks in May." And I remember doing this thing that was so moving to be in, where I sat on this ledge way high up in a room, naked, covered in red paint, kind of like we were supposed to look like gargoyles, with several other women, and we just looked down at the audience as they were in the gallery space and interacting with other artworks. It was sort of kind of like the gargoyles in architecture, but sort of like the essence of carrying the spirit of women who had been violated, but also were making sure it wouldn't happen again by looking horrifying and frightening. That was doing what Suzanne asked us to do. She'd say, "This is what I need. I need these figures up here. I need them to be naked. I need them to be drenched in red. I want this kind of feeling to it. I want this

sort of expression." So that would be enacting something of hers.

But then she'd do other things where she'd say, "Would you please do something within this structure?" So she did a piece called "Traffic in Women." We did a piece as feminist art workers, so within that. So, for example, several there were several groups within. One was Feminist Art Workers, with Cheri Gaulke, Laurel Klick, Candace Compton, and then Vanalyne Green. Candace left; Vanalyne came later--did individual collaborations with Candace Compton as "Nun and Deviant" and did video and stuff out of that for a lot of years. I helped create the L.A. Women's Video Center with Candace Compton and then Annette Hunt, Jerri Allyn, Carole Jefferies, Geraldine Hanon joined in that, which was to produce video, teach video, and then curate video. Did collaborations as the Incest Awareness Project, and then I worked in collaborative things like the Lesbian Oral Herstory Project, with Terry Wolverton. Am I going on too long?

GORDIENKO

No, no, no.

ANGELO

So direct me. I'm not sure how to get onto the right track with it. Those people--we all chose each other. In some cases, our mothers, so to speak--we never called them mothers, but the teachers we had--Judy wasn't around, but you'd have Arlene, Ruth, Deena Metzger, Sheila de Bretteville, Suzanne would say, "Would you do something in this arena?" and we'd do it. With Suzanne's work, she'd say, "Come collaborate within this," and then we'd do a piece.

>

GORDIENKO

I see. Yes, I would definitely like to talk about these other projects and performance--

GORDIENKO

--and performance groups in greater detail. I was just wondering about kind of a general approach to performance at FSW. So on the one hand, there were these large projects put together by Suzanne Lacy and Judy Chicago, and I'm getting a sense that they were organized by these leaders

and educators at the Woman's Building. But then students had a degree of freedom while working within these projects, right? You had a kind of a chance to improvise a little bit. You weren't simply executing the orders and instructions given by Suzanne Lacy, right? Or was it kind of controlled for the most part?

ANGELO

No, it wasn't controlled. You know, I'm trying to remember, Andrey. You're raising such good questions. What I can't remember is if we'd have like assignments, or just time where we would create, because we created stuff all the time, every week our own stuff. Like I can remember, I had a miscarriage at one point when I was engaged to Bernie, and it was very sad, and it was a difficult thing. And later on I reflected back on it, and there was a lot of talk of women about what did it mean to be mothers or to have children, or did you want children, so that was something that was sort of in the air, and I remember doing this thing where it wasn't like I deliberately wrote it, but these words came to me, which were, "Egg yolk is no joke, when it's clot between your legs," about the experience of starting to have, like, to pass a fetus coming, which was sort of like this ridiculous--so then I like made that into a performance, and it was something very short. It never had a life. It never showed anywhere. It never did anything. But I showed it to a group of women at the Woman's Building and something, and then people sort of got it.

I did another thing with, actually it was with the work of--where I played a Rachmaninoff violin concerto, and I had a leg of lamb and a knife, and I played it like it was a violin, the leg of lamb. I sawed away at it with a knife until there was no meat left on the bone, which was sort of--and this is a violin concerto which is very much sort of cathartic. It was sort of about the suffering of the body and my experience of sort of carving away. I mean, these are things that were more from the unconscious.

GORDIENKO

Wow.

ANGELO

You know, they're more just sort of floating, so you'd kind of create these things. So we did lots of those, and then there would be exhibition opportunities, where someone would say, "We're doing a show. Will you create something for that?" Then it would have to get worked more. So you'd actually sit and you'd take ideas and you'd develop them together, and you'd keep hammering at them until they had something that seemed strong enough to do something with. And then you'd perform it in some public setting, either at the Woman's Building or in another gallery at LAICA, the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, which was like a really vital contemporary art organization of the time. Or later, LACE came about, or there would be not exactly festivals, but series of performances around the city. It would depend on whether you did it in private or in public. Not private, but in a gallery setting, a controlled setting, or if it was something that would occur out. And, yes, were you doing it for the audience that was there? Were you doing it for documentation and having it documented and then the documentation used? So I would say it was a crucible, a cauldron of a lot of creativity. It was just sort of happening all the time, and you would take it in many directions.

GORDIENKO

Yes. It sounds to me like you would have to be engaged in multiple projects at a time.

ANGELO

Yes, you were. You were.

GORDIENKO

So you'd participate in a project organized by Suzanne Lacy, but then think about your own project that you had to perform in a class, and then if you get positive feedback, maybe organize a public performance outside of the classroom, right? Wow, that's interesting.

ANGELO

Yes, yes. And everything Suzanne did, because it was public art, it was very, very carefully considered. She taught us--I owe her a debt of profound gratitude for what she enabled me to learn about myself, and for what she enabled us to learn together, and then what we learned to create in the

world. She was masterful at being able to work to get permits, to involve the city council, the police department. She would create collaborations between artists and the institutions around the violence issues. There was a period where there was the Hillside Strangler murdering women in L.A., and people were really scared.

So she worked some, as I recall--you'd have to ask her this in more detail, but--with the LAPD around that, as well as helping new organizations get off the ground, like Women Against Violence Against Women, which objected to media images that--it was at the time when there were actual pornography films made in which women were murdered in the making of the film. They were snuff movies, really high cost obviously to the women who'd die in it, but this very hard to get your hands on pornography. I've never seen them. I would never want to see one. But the fact they were being made was raised a certain amount of issues, issues taken with objectification of women in one way or another in film. That's what WAVAW, Women Against Violence Against Women, set out to do, and Suzanne supported their development and collaborated with them.

And then also going along at the same time you had LACAAW, the L.A. Commission on Assaults Against Women, which has been in business now I think for like thirty, thirty-five years. It's now called Peace Over Violence, or POV. It's headed up by Patti Giggins, who was one of the founders, which was a rape-crisis center and then around domestic-violence intervention, then a lot of violence prevention. Now they do a lot of work with kids. There are men and women who work there. There are a lot of men who work with boys. It's much more--everything is kind of--its origins were only for women, and now it's sort of developed. At the time, the artists would work with groups like that, so work with community organizations that were evolving, work with institutions in the government and running of society, work with the academic world, and bring all this stuff together.

GORDIENKO

Right. I mean, I can see now that in this respect the movement wasn't separatist, because there was a kind of

pedagogical aspect to performance art. I mean, you actually wanted to spread the message, take it out of the Woman's Building and confront the public with your art, right?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

I think as Suzanne Lacy actually tried to consciously get media attention when she did "Three Weeks in May," were you kind of aware of that intention?

ANGELO

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Well, the media--what we saw was the media was a way to change perceptions, and so if you want--especially if you're in Los Angeles, and you want to affect the music industry, TV, and film as well, to change cultural images. So if you can change cultural images in pop culture and mass culture, then it'll affect--and you have artists help in that, it'll affect society more broadly. That was an assumption. So the media part was a real important part. She was a master at working with the media, she and Leslie Labowitz. Leslie Labowitz did all of the media work for the Incest Awareness Project, and she did an incredible job with really, really smart strategy.

GORDIENKO

I see. I guess another sort of general question about the Woman's Building, did you notice any tensions between lesbian women and heterosexual women? For instance, were there complaints about heterosexual women bringing husbands or boyfriends to performances, disagreements of that nature?

ANGELO

That's a good question. When I first came to the Feminist Studio Workshop, and I was heterosexual, and I was engaged to marry Bernard Meares, I found some of the lesbians, a few of them, really very annoying. There was one woman in particular who'd say to me, "You know, I just don't have the time to waste on you as a heterosexual woman, because you give your energy to men." That was the argument.

GORDIENKO

I've heard that before.

ANGELO

Yes, that was the argument. And it was like I would just fume. It's like, you're out of your mind. And so then when I came out and she was suddenly nice to me, I thought, this is really--I'm the same person. I'm exactly the same person I was when I was heterosexual as now, and my energy goes where--it's not like I have this finite amount and it was--so that was strains in the Women's Movement in that period. I think you'd find that, because I think you'd find mirrorings of this at least in the Civil Rights Movement among black separatist organizations also, where people felt like, "We can't trust you if you're white." I think there were feelings to some degree--and we have to create our own. We have to depend on each other, on ourselves. You found that among some women. It wasn't universal.

Something I found really interesting about the Woman's Building from the get go. There was a time when--excuse me. Early on, there was A Woman's Saloon, which was a women's restaurant in Hollywood. It was on Fountain, and it was like a utopian idea of a restaurant. So at the time, minimum wage was around, if I remember correctly, and I could be wrong, but it was around two to three dollars an hour, and the women who worked there were paid five dollars an hour. It was more collective, and it was a great place to go. It was really fun, and so we'd go and gather there. There was a strike at the Gay Community Services Center it was called then, GCSC, not Gay and Lesbian; it was gay. It was mainly men, and there was a strike where women were mad that it was so male dominated, and women couldn't--essentially, weren't welcome, and there was a strike against it.

There was one woman who worked at GCSC who was in the Feminist Studio Workshop, and she wanted to keep working there. She didn't want to go on the strike. She wanted to keep working there, and she was kicked out of the saloon, the women's saloon. She shouldn't go there anymore, because she didn't support the strike. And I'll never forget. Arlene Raven intervened, and she said, "We're not going to

do this. We're going to strive--," essentially, "We're going to strive for more illumination and less heat. We want to understand the diversity of points of view, and understand the complexity of issues, and not cast people out in rigid ways. We're all women. We need to understand this better." So there was some of that voice that was crying for more diversity among women. However, that being said, this was a largely white, mostly middle class, some working class, women's movement at the time. But it grew out of education.

You didn't have many working-class people getting master's in fine arts. You know? For the realities of life, the people who could see that they could make a way in life as artists is a different--so there was some cultural diversity around race and ethnicity, but not much. So when it comes to the involvement of men, you had some women who really didn't want men around. I do not remember men being asked to leave. It was a public building. Men were welcome at events. There was a time when there was a man who wanted to be in a CR group, and that raised an issue because the women weren't going to talk in front of him. I'll never forget this. So we had to have a conversation like, "Why do you want to do that?" [laughs] There were some men who sort of wanted--they had a hostile intent. They wanted to mess with it.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see, I see.

ANGELO

You know? And it wasn't more--see, you're of a different generation. The fact that you're in a women's studies oriented--this is a whole different world. It's hard to say--there are some ways in which I look at the world--so I'm fifty-seven. I look at the world and I go, "Oh, my god. Not much has happened. We're still in the pits." But in another way, so much has happened. It's very different. So there were women who probably did not have men in their lives at all. I remember before I came out, I said to Suzanne when I moved to L.A., because Suzanne was heterosexual, I said, "Suzanne, you have to introduce me to men." This is before I was engaged to Bernie. I said, "I can't go where it's only

women. You have to make sure you introduce me to men." And she said, "I will. Don't worry, Nancy, it'll all work out." And Suzanne always has had men in her life, I'm assuming. She was with Rodney Blalock at that time. You know, women had men in their lives. They had boy children. It was more--the emphasis was something different. But there were lesbian separatists. There were women who didn't want to have men in their lives. It was a mix.

GORDIENKO

I see. So I actually have a couple of questions arising from your answer. On the one hand, you say there were, indeed, men who had a kind of hostile intent, and I'm assuming that at the time, your organization was perceived as a kind of anomaly, right?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

So the idea of art education for women maybe appeared strange or ridiculous to some guys, so maybe they wanted to kind of intervene. Were they hostile, or was it just a kind of the intention of mocking your efforts? What kind of negative reaction did you encounter when you were a student there?

ANGELO

I'm trying to think. I remember also there was a fellow, Jeremy Shapiro, who was a wonderful man. He went to CalArts. I'm not sure that he was an artist. I'm not sure what he did in his life. He may have gone into something in the therapeutic realm. But he and I co-taught a class for men around understanding female sexuality. I can't believe we did this, and why did I think I could do this?

GORDIENKO

When did you do that, by the way?

ANGELO

We did it independently. It was probably in like 1976. We did two different rounds of it. And we had men come--they signed up ahead. They came to my studio in Pasadena, and we did a thing. We taught them CR, so they did CR among themselves around how they oriented sexually. And then we asked them--the thing that I remember was, these were

men who had women in their lives. They were heterosexual. They were either married or they had girlfriends, and many of them, they didn't understand what made women happy sexually. They hadn't thought about it. They hadn't grown up--"This is something you ought to think about." So it was like a new thought for them, and they wanted to know about it. They wanted to figure--so I was embarrassed as all heck, because I was supposedly representing heterosexual--which I had heterosexual experience. I could do that to some degree, but only from my own experience, not generalizing. But there was something so touching about it, and also I realized I was really out of my depth, that he was great with them. He had warmth and connection. He might have gone on to be a therapist. I'm trying to think if there were any men in that who had any of that edge. There weren't. They were like, they kind of wanted to figure it out. I'm trying to think. John Duncan at times might have been--I'm trying to remember. I can't really remember.

When I did performances with Candace, she assumed the persona of a young juvenile delinquent who was androgynous, her deviant character. And I had a nun's habit made and I was a nun, and we did this thing where for days we were in San Francisco, and we just went all over the city in those characters. We stayed in those corners, and we took a corner, an intersection in what was the nightclubs, with all the strip clubs and the go-go dancers, and we just walked the four crosswalks for like several hours in this area that was the sex area, not the streetwalkers. But in that time also we had--the point where I really got, you know, this is something, because we were giving people a different sense of women. It reached another point [unclear] realized we're not being responsible entirely for what we're doing here, when we were at the airport, going to fly home, and some soldiers came up to me and they said, "We've just left Vietnam. We're coming home. Will you pray for us?" And I had to say, "Yes, I will." I wasn't about to say, "I'm not a nun." I mean, and they said--these men were in obvious distress. So the best thing I could think to do, being at the age I was in all this was to say, "Yes, I'll pray for you." And I

just quietly sat there and prayed the best I could know to pray. You know? So you kind of, in terms of how people were seeing us, were they perceiving us as we were?

I'm trying to think if there were other things. When we participated in the work that Suzanne did, we did a whole thing up here around the Take Back the Night march in San Francisco, and we did performances associated with that and the whole experience for people. We brought a group of women up from L.A. and facilitated experiences on the way, and I ended up on a really busy corner in that same part of San Francisco, and a fight broke out between some women who were really angry and some men who were taunting them, saying, I don't know. They were making fun of them. They were saying--and this one woman was really, really mad, and she was about to hit this guy. I walked right in the middle of it. I just walked in the middle of it and said, "Okay, you guys. We're not going to do this. Let's bring it down." I can't remember exactly what I did, but I remember just walking right into the center of about the punches, and just trying to bring the temperature down.

There were times like that where the performances and the activities, which weren't just the art in this, because it was also the Take Back the Night march, but the images and the stuff, they would arouse--people get upset. People get upset. I'm trying to remember other men who might have come to the Woman's Building. There was this one guy and he was going to press a suit around wanting to be admitted to the educational programs, because it was illegal for him not to be admitted, but he really would have kind of ruined the experience. And so it was more a matter of, "Do you really want to do this? Can you just let it be what it is?"

GORDIENKO

I see.

ANGELO

It kind of went away. I'm not helping you. I can't think of any other--

GORDIENKO

You're helping me.

ANGELO

I can't remember if there are any others. You know, other people might remember more about those. I don't remember--I'm trying to think if we ever did performances where people--I think people just--it was more the disdain, the people thinking, "You're not worth my time."

GORDIENKO

Kind of a quiet disdain, right?

ANGELO

Quiet? Well, you'd read it in the criticism.

GORDIENKO

Not a dialogue.

ANGELO

You'd read it in the reviews by the critics. You'd read it in--you know, "This is not a show worth going to," and, "Who wants to see--?" Because there was a whole thing around the central core imagery, where we'd lived with images of phalluses for how long, over how many millennia? You know, to look at something that might look like women's genitalia or central core imagery that you were looking at in Georgia O'Keeffe, the kind of disdain that would come from the established male critics, who would think, "This is just--there's no point to it."

GORDIENKO

Yes. Another question that emerged when you were talking about your experience is, it has to do with your personal life. At one point you became engaged to the man from England, and at another point you decided to publicly come out, and you had to break off this engagement. When did this happen?

ANGELO

I think that he and I probably--I think it must have been in the spring of '76 that it ended, or the winter. I remember he came to visit the winter in '75. That couldn't have been it, because that's when we were close, and we spent New Year's Eve with Joseph Brodsky and his girlfriend, who was the curator of antiquities at the Louvre, Veronique, in Venice. That was like just the eye-opening thrill of forever for me as a young woman. And then the year after, I was--you know, one year from then I was in this feminist art environment. It

was a whole different world. You know, disdain from him. He definitely let me know when I went back to art school, "You're not an artist. You don't have anything to say. You're not talented. You can't do this. You don't have anything to offer." He was thirty-seven when we got together. I was twenty. I daresay--you know, I don't make art now. I don't think the world has lost a tremendous artist. I do think I did work that was of value, but just the wholesale discounting, it was very harsh to the spirit. And, "Why would you go to study film? Why would you even think you could do that?" That kind of message.

So I think we probably--I think I knew probably by December or January 2005 to '06 that I really was a lesbian, that this was where I lived more, and then I think that he and I separated in maybe February.

GORDIENKO

May I ask if your miscarriage happened around the same time, or earlier?

ANGELO

It actually happened when I was at the San Francisco Art Institute.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see.

ANGELO

So that when I made art about it, it was remembering back. So I made art about it probably a year after it happened, maybe a little more. It happened in San Francisco.

GORDIENKO

And then finally a completely unrelated question, but having to do with your previous answer. We spoke about differences between lesbian and straight women at the building. But there was a kind of homogeneity on the level of race and ethnicity, right?

ANGELO

Right. There were a few women of color.

GORDIENKO

Were they feeling excluded? Or were there people not happy with this kind of homogeneity?

ANGELO

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

GORDIENKO

So there was an effort to maybe invite people?

ANGELO

Particularly at the end. You know, I think that at that time in the Women's Movement, a lot of women who were progressively oriented, politically activist in Civil Rights Movement in L.A., felt more connected to the Civil Rights Movement than they did to the Feminist Movement. For them, being African American was more salient at that time than being a feminist woman. And the structures and the things that were in place felt--there were women who could make the bridge and who were kind and generous in spirit, like Varnette Honeywood, an amazing painter, African American woman. Heysuk, oh, I'm blanking. I didn't work with Heysuk, but a Korean American artist is involved, Gloria Alvarez, in the Feminist Studio Workshop Syl Booth, who worked in the juvenile justice system as a social worker, working with kids who were on probation, and was an artist and a writer, and she now is a senior person in the Cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul in Minnesota, working in juvenile justice, African American woman.

There was a woman who came from Chile. Actually, I think she may have been from Argentina at that point. We couldn't know her whole name. She was in danger.

GORDIENKO

Because she wouldn't reveal it?

ANGELO

She couldn't. She was in danger. She was afraid of being assassinated. I think she was of Argentinean birth, who had been in Chile. This was after Allende was killed and all of the political upheaval. There were people who came who were involved in--well, actually, at one point Cheri was involved with a man, Peter Wiehl, who was an artist, who he later married a woman from Salvador, and she was murdered in Salvador as an activist. There were bits and pieces that folded in, but they didn't take mainstream views within the Woman's Building. And then there were women who felt very

much like it was too white-dominated and they couldn't have their voice, so there was--oh, gosh.

I wasn't around much in those years. See, I left. I got to a point where I wanted more independence, and I didn't feel like I was being taken seriously enough. I wanted a more--I went to work for the Social and Public Art Resource Center [SPARC] in Venice, which was a multicultural arts organization. I worked with Judy Baca, the muralist. You know, the roots of SPARC are in the Chicano mural movement, and Judy is one of the main muralists, but they're a wonderful multicultural arts [unclear]. So I went there as the director of development, and I raised money, and then I did my art on the side, in part to have more of that expression.

So the Woman's Building, I think, probably went along with other organizations at the time. It had to confront the fact that it was white-dominated, predominantly, and it needed to bring in more voices and more perspectives, but how to make the fit was at times challenging. We did some bilingual programs. There were efforts.

GORDIENKO

Yes. Actually, while we are on the subject, I was wondering if you ever met a woman named Chris Wong, who participated in [unclear] her story of lesbianism.

ANGELO

Yes. I've been trying to find her.

GORDIENKO

Me, too, actually, but so far I can't find any information.

ANGELO

Yes. So Chris also participated in a project I directed, called "Equal Time, Equal Space." It's an installation about women's experience of incest, and I don't know, we may not have time to deal with that today, but that's probably one of the bigger things contributed to. Chris went to Occidental College, so the last thing--I've been trying to find her, and we did a gathering of the women who participated in "Equal Time, Equal Space," and I tried to find her. Cheri Gaulke had a friend who was her roommate at Occidental, and that friend lost track of her and tried to find her through the

alumni office. The alumni office gave us an address, and it wasn't a true address anymore. I did look through some of the online detective services, searching. There are millions of Chris Wongs.

GORDIENKO

Absolutely. I had the same experience.

ANGELO

And I paid money. I did the deeper searches. There are so many Chris Wongs, it would be really challenging to find her. I called a number of Chris Wongs in the greater L.A. area, and none of them were the right one. Also Anita Green, who was in "Equal Time, Equal Space," I tried to find, and I found a number of Anita Greens. And "Lyric Jazz Woman." It's hard. If you find her, if you ever find her, will you let me know?

GORDIENKO

Of course. And just one of the concluding questions dealing with inequality, did you find that there were also class differences or tensions at the Woman's Building, between poor and affluent women?

ANGELO

Yes. You know, it was interesting. That could be answered in a number of ways. I also have to say something that Deena Metzger--Deena Metzger got us all involved in Amnesty International, and she was very tied into stuff going on in Latin America and also things that came more out of a working-class perspective. So in the founders of the Woman's Building, Sheila de Bretteville was a Red Diaper Baby. Her father was a printer, and she grew up in New York, I think maybe in Brooklyn, but I don't know for sure. Her family also sheltered many people who were refugees of the Holocaust after the war was over, so I remember her describing sleeping in the kitchen with curtains hanging between beds, to accommodate all the people.

Okay, I think Arlene Raven was probably of lower-middle-class background. I think Deena came from a working-class background. I think Suzanne, as I recall, a middle-class background. The thing at the time was, I would say there was a socialist orientation for some of the participants, and

you really see that out of Deena's work and all. There was also this sense that women who had participated in socialist movements feeling like women weren't well treated and feminism wasn't well addressed, and they were male-centered, so we have to create something different here. Now, in terms of how, within the Women's Movement at that time, the women who were really predominantly dealing with class issues, saw art and culture as elitist and exclusionary of working-class experience, and not worth going into. There was a divide in Los Angeles between the Eastside and the Westside in the Feminist Movement. The Westside was--even though the Westside is more affluent, and it might have to do in some part with academia, it was much more of the socialist, art is bad, if it's agitprop it might be okay, but it has to be very clearly defined. One the Eastside it was more, "Let them go crazy and discover their voice, and you'll find it wherever it comes."

And I remember there were meetings where women would attack Sheila. Well, okay, so Sheila, she married Peter de Bretteville, who came from money and privilege. His grandparents--the De Young Museum here was out of his family, and also his family were the publishers of the "San Francisco Chronicle" for a long time. They lived in a house that he, as an architect--he taught at USC as an architect--he designed their house in Laurel Canyon. It was very beautiful. Sheila's a Red Diaper Baby. She comes from a communist-socialist background. That was always where she lived. So I'll never forget this one meeting where women from the Westside started to attack her in a meeting and say, "You're just an elitist, and you don't know about anything." She was wearing a pair of denim overalls that were--she was a very beautiful woman and very--she looked like a model. And they accused her of being, in today's nasty word it would be more like a rich bitch. Okay, she had on rhinestone earrings from Thrifty that cost like $1.99, and she'd bought this jumpsuit at a thrift store, and she lived very simply, actually. And her values and her politics and where she lived was aligned with that. But there was this

thing that you had to be a certain way, so this was sort of back to the dogmatism.

The Woman's Building represented, in a sense, even out of the crucible, which was more out of an artwork sensibility, an art world sensibility, was more allow for diversity of expression, and through that you will discover the threads to the political, and then pursue them madly. The other was, take your political analysis and impose it on everything, and make cultural expression that fits within it. So there were these fights.

And at the time even I remember going to--in the middle ground, there was the Alcoholism Center for Women, which was in Alvarado, and it had really good programs for addiction recovery for women with a feminist perspective. It was sort of at the time, too, where women were discovering, okay, women had been seen as crazy, right, and had been made mentally ill, and had been unacceptable and forced into--so this also applies to addiction. If you're desperately unhappy, and you can't find your place, and you can't survive, and all the burdens of oppression, you know, you may be into addictions. It's a feminist analysis in there somewhere. There's this gathering--you know the musician Holly Near and all? Well, there's a whole thing of women's music that's really worth--well, there's a whole movement of women's music out of the Feminist Movement. A lot of it was done by lesbians, some not so, which was political and creative. But its roots were much more out of, like, political music out of the depression, folk music. It was music with a message, rather than make the music and discover. It's worth looking at, and one of the main musicians, a very wonderful musician, Holly Near [unclear], I remember getting into a fight with her, where she was more in the stance of, "Anything that's happening over there at the Woman's Building is self-indulgent--"

GORDIENKO

Elitist, perhaps?

ANGELO

Right. And you know, the thing about it is, if you looked around and you talked to everybody, you would see a range

of classes. There was--probably to some degree it ended up not being dealt with with as rigorous a political analysis as it would have been in another setting. So the thing that I think is that it's really important to remember that while there was this urge and this real impetus to create community around this cultural center, it wasn't perfect. And also, it was leading in its time and creating new ground, but it also was of its time, in which that was an okay thing to do. So, you know, any of the limitations of the time were also there, and if it were done again, if you and your friends and colleagues went out and created whatever, you would do it differently, and issues would be dealt with differently. So I think that there was more to do that wasn't done adequately, but it was the best that could be done at the time, within the bounded rationality, the frame of reference and the world views of those involved.

GORDIENKO

Thank you. I think this is a perfect time to take a break and resume at a later time.

ANGELO

Perfect. Andrey, it's been a pleasure.

GORDIENKO

Thank you so much for your time.

ANGELO

You're welcome.

[End of interview]

1.2. Session 2A (April 11, 2011)

GORDIENKO

This is Andrey Gordienko conducting an oral history interview with Nancy Angelo on April 11 [2011]. The interview is for the Center for the Studies of Women.

Hello, Nancy, how are you?

ANGELO

I'm well, thanks, Andrey. Good to see you.

GORDIENKO

Good to see you too. Last time I recall that we talked about the general structure of the Woman's Building and the studio workshop with which you were involved. Right now I have a

series of more specific questions regarding the performance groups and various projects that you were involved with. In particular, I'd like to know how did the idea for Feminist Art Workers come about?

ANGELO

Okay. Well, it was started by Candace Compton, Laurel Klick, Cheri Gaulke, and me. We all taught together at the Woman's Building in a summer art program that was a feminist art program, and we realized that it was so much fun teaching together. So we had students who came from all over the U.S., as well as a few came from other countries to study for the summer in a program that included a studio focus as well as feminist process. And we decided that we wanted to make art together and keep teaching together in some way where the two were combined.

So Feminist Art Workers was a particular kind of collaborative group where we did public art pieces and performances that built community through the artwork themselves. There was a component that was sort of like teaching, because there was process involved, as well as people having an experience of some kind from which they learned something new or looked at the world in a different way, and many of them occurred in public spaces where people didn't expect to come in contact with an artwork, so they were surprised. Not all of them were. There were others that we did in gallery settings and some in more structured, organized settings. But that's how it started.

We wanted to combine the words feminist, art, and workers, because we saw ourselves as feminist artists, and the art we were making had a distinct root in feminist theory. We talked some about that last time, around raising consciousness, inviting dialogue, and transforming culture as part of the key thing there. It was important that all of the activities we did we saw as art, as the creation of art, in the ways that we used performance and did other creating of pieces that were tangible forms as well as experiential pieces.

This was our work, and we intended to support ourselves through it, and we sort of did, living very modestly as young people can, and others can too. It also was part of saying

that it's important in the world for there to be workers who are artists, and for the whole world of work to be infused with creativity and art making, and that the act of making art is as much work as any other work, and it serves a purpose in the world as other forms of work do as well.

So what we did in our work is we, in addition to creating performances and creating--there were artworks that were not just performed, that had visual elements that were tangible. Either they were multiples, you know, posters of things, or books, or postcards, or things that were handed out. We also toured the Midwest of the U.S. twice, the Midwest and West, doing performances and workshops and showing video work. There was an intersection between feminist art workers and the L.A. Women's Video Center that Candace Compton and I founded with Annette Hunt and Sheila Ruth, and we started immediately curating exhibitions of video art by women artists. So we took some of those with us, and we would do video art exhibitions on the road, along with the feminist performances from Feminist Art Workers and the workshops. We would do lectures also, which was part of the teaching part, and those were amazing experiences. And then we also worked on projects out of L.A.

GORDIENKO

I see. Wow. You actually answered my next question concerning the name. I see the Feminist Art Workers implies not only the collective of artists, but also a unit of social workers in some respect, making an intervention, right? Do you remember who came up with this name, by any chance? Or was it kind of a product of discussion?

ANGELO

I think it's the product of discussion. I think we created it together. The group changed its membership over time. Candace Compton and Laurel Klick had been teachers of Cheri Gaulke's and mine. Then we moved into a peer relationship, teaching together, and then Candace left and pursued different things in her life, and Vanalyne Green later joined. So the name was set with Candace, Laurel, Cheri, and me, and I don't remember it as any individual coming up

with the name. I really remember it coming out of shared conversation.

GORDIENKO

I recall from our previous conversation the classes that you participated in. I mean, they were quite small, right. So were you and other members of Feminist Art Workers classmates at some point, before forming this group?

ANGELO

Yes, that's a good question, because there were a number of years that elapsed here. So we started out as students, and then we went on to both work at the Woman's Building and run it and manage it and also to teach, and then just to be artists within that community. So Cheri Gaulke and I were classmates. She and I were in the Feminist Studio Workshop the same year. Candace Compton was there then. She might have been in her second year of it, but she was more advanced than we were. But Cheri and I sort of--we were like puppies from the same litter.

GORDIENKO

I see. I wonder if you can remember some of the earliest performances done by Feminist Art Workers. I'm interested to know what kind of reactions you got from the audience. Were people receptive?

ANGELO

Well, they were really different kinds of performances. One of the first ones we did was when the state of California was beginning to do tax reform, and so Proposition 13, which was enacted, it was voted on by the public, cut property taxes hugely, and as a result, lots of services, education--as a result of Prop. 13, the public school system throughout California lost a lot of art and music in the schools. There are many, many other things that also went by the wayside because the tax base shrank considerably. This was under Ronald Reagan at the time, if I'm recalling it correctly, as governor.

So we did a piece just when the public was trying to raise public awareness, the organizers were trying to raise public awareness. And it was a piece called "Draw Your Own Conclusions: Know on 13," k-n-o-w, so like learn about it.

We dressed as house painters, and we wore sandwich boards that were big easel pads on the front and back, and we had markers, and there was a huge demonstration-rally at the Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles that was where people were first learning from speakers what the implications of the legislation would be if the ballot measure were passed, what it would entail. And so we went around to people, rather than saying, "Vote this way," or, "Do this," we wanted people to ask their own questions and to be thinking and critically thinking on their own around the implications, and to take the political and personalize it. What would be the implications be--from what they heard from the speakers, what did that mean to them?

So we had people write and draw on these big sandwich boards that we wore, and then we posted them around the outdoor area there. So people did their own drawings, they did graffiti, they wrote things all over that said what the implications would be for them, things like, "I'm concerned that I would lose child care," which actually there were huge cuts in child care. "I'm concerned about being able to afford various services that I'll have to pay for myself now." So the point of it, that was very much part of the work of Feminist Art Workers, was to get people to think for themselves with broader access to information and perspectives than they had before. And it was a lot of fun. So that was one piece. People loved that piece. They had so much fun. They really got in--and at the time, nobody was doing stuff like that. You know, now you'd probably go to any number of public things and you'd see people doing that. At that time, it was not done, so it was very fun.

We did another piece that was at a gathering of--the College Art Association came to Los Angeles, and we did a piece called "Pieta Afloat." We wanted to sort of jog people in the public eye around images of women that were stereotypical images, and so we took--Laurel had this wonderful old Ford Ranchero, so it was sort of like a station wagon, but it had a pickup bed in the back. It wasn't tall like a pickup; it was low. We decked it out like a float in a parade, so it had flowers and things all on it, and in the back, Cheri--I was

dressed as the nun, [Sister] Angelica Furiosa, that I performed, and I was holding Cheri in my arms, just as in the images of the Pieta where you have Mary holding Jesus down from the cross, and this sense of the mother holding the son who's been killed. But this was the nun mourning the fallen angel of--the images of sort of saint and whore were the ones we were playing with. And Cheri was wearing a gold lamé bathing suit of some kind. I can't really remember it. But she was just lying sprawled out, and I held her in my arms, and we were lit, and we were playing Wagner's "The Valkyrie" blaring, and we drove up and down Century--is it Avenue of the Stars in Century City. There's a fountain along there, and there's a theater. At the time, there was a big hotel, the Century Plaza Hotel. On the other side was sort of a large shopping area along with the beautiful towers that are there. But we just drove up in that, and people were like, "Oh, my god. What on earth is that?"

First of all, it was a funky old car, and Century City is not funky. And there was this odd image of this nun holding this gold-lamé-clad young--we were young. So that one it was hard to--but the people with the College Art Association were in buses, being schlepped from their hotel to some conference area, and they kept passing this float going up and down and seeing this performance just happening outside as they were going, and they loved it.

I'm trying to think of other things we did. As time went on, we did some very directed performances for people, for private audiences, so to speak, that had a lot of power. We did a piece that we performed in many places, that came from a story that my grandmother told that is actually from Dante. I didn't know that when I was a child. But the story is that in Hell, people are seated at a big banquet table, and the table is groaning with food, and everybody is trying to feed themselves, but they have four-foot-long forks and they can't get the food in their mouths, and they're stabbing their faces, and they're starving in the midst of plenty. And in heaven it's the exact same scene, but people are feeding the person across the table. And this was our experience in working together, was of supporting each other and

nurturing each other and caring for each other in ways that it was a whole different world, even though the circumstances were similar. What made the difference was how you behaved in it, how you took up your work, how you were with other people.

So we did that performance first in Lawrence, Kansas, at the University of Kansas, and we made four-foot-long forks, and we cut up watermelon, and we sat in the dining hall at the university, and we sat at a table feeding each other across the table, but alternating. First we'd try to feed ourselves, and then we'd feed each other. And then we had lots of extra forks and extra watermelon, and we gave people forks and the watermelon and we'd start feeding other people, but then little by little, they started feeding each other. So strangers were feeding each other. And we did it in a restaurant in Chicago. They gave us permission, of course. And we did it in--I think we did it--I won't swear to this, because I can't remember exactly, but I seem to recall doing it at LAICA, the L.A. Institute of Contemporary Art, in a show there. We did it in lots of different settings, over and over again, and we created an image that also was made into a postcard and a poster that has been in a lot of shows. It's in a collection at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and they show it frequently, that shows us as Amazons in odd outfits, doing that same thing. Okay.

GORDIENKO

Right. In your answer, you mentioned this [unclear] character that you frequently enacted, namely, the nun, Sister Angelica Furiosa, and I'm curious where you got this idea for the character, because as I recall from our previous conversation, you were not particularly a religious person. I mean, you were influenced by your father, who was not a religious man. But also, I didn't sense any hostility towards religion on your part. It seems like you really had appreciation for religious art and the cathedrals when you were living in Europe. So why the nun?

ANGELO

That's a good question. Maybe a little bit I owe that to my aunt, who was Elizabeth [G.] Berryhill, who was a playwright

and theater director. She used to talk about herself as that she would strive to be St. Elizabeth, the Good. There was a kind of, definitely in our family, but also we could see it in the Feminist Movement, you could see that women were sort of held in two lights, either really striving to be so, so good and striving for perfection, which was sort of chaste and virgin-like, or being very heavily sexualized, and that being at the time--what we all grew up with for our generation and women before us was that was seen as a negative. And this is interesting in the thinking you're doing around sexuality as a path to liberation. You know, the sexuality was more of a point of condemnation for women, and women's sexuality was frightening to people.

So for me, the nun was in part the striving that I felt that I grew up with, to be more of that, the striving for perfection in a nun-like way. But it also took on another symbolism, because nuns live in community, or they did. Most still do, I guess, and there was something about creating a community with others that was sort of like a nun-like experience. This didn't really--later on in other work, we dressed it in the sexual implications, but in this, not really.

GORDIENKO

Great. That actually leads me to another related question. As far as I know, there was a particular strain in women's art at the time, that had a strong basis in ritual, so there were frequent allusions to witchcraft, for example, or pagan rituals, or the ancient communities of women, like Amazon women. Were you interested in this tendency, or did you see your own performance art as somehow ritualistic in this kind of pagan, ancient sense of the word?

ANGELO

You know, I think most of that work came a little later.

GORDIENKO

Oh, I see.

ANGELO

This work was a little bit before that, but it did come on soon after. Didn't really see it--ritual was important, and I'll tell you, when we studied with Suzanne Lacy, who did wonderful performance art and taught us a lot in performance, ritual

was an important aspect, especially around healing related to sexual violence. And there was a way of using performance as cleansing and recovering and remembering. There wasn't--I'd say if you were to talk to other members of the group, their paths may have been more Wiccan. That was never really so much mine, but there was something about--ritual was an important part of it. It wasn't linked to the ancient, the goddess stuff, as much.

Although I have to say, at the Woman's Building at the time, Z Budapest was a Wiccan priestess in Los Angeles who did things at the Woman's Building, and she occasionally did rituals that I would never have known that they had Wiccan origins. But they were wonderful rituals that she would do and masses of people would participate in. So I guess there's a little of each in that.

GORDIENKO

Another thing I wanted to ask you is around the same time when you were doing performance, you were also involved in video making, and that's very interesting to me, because you received some education in filmmaking before that. So how did you decide to embrace a different medium and switch from film to video?

ANGELO

That's a good question. For me, I think just where I live, I love film so much, and at the time--filmmaking is incredibly expensive, and video was brand new. And the Woman's Building and the way that we lived our lives as artists, we really didn't have access to wonderful film facilities. We didn't have editing rooms. We didn't have good equipment. We would have had to rent everything.

There was a woman from Germany whose first name was Andrea--I don't know that I ever knew her last name--who had been in the Feminist Studio Workshop and who had died in the desert. She made a mistake, or I'm not quite sure what happened. She may have possibly killed herself, I don't know. This was before I went there. She died in the Mojave Desert. It was an environment totally foreign to her. And her family, in her memory, donated several thousand dollars to the Woman's Building, and she had loved video, and they

suggested it go to video. Sheila Ruth was an artist at the Woman's Building who had been doing a project with women in feminist communities around the country called--I think they were called video letters. And there were sister cities set up, and we would exchange video letters about what was going on in the Feminist Movement in their cities, and then they'd show on a community level in the cities to whom you'd sent it, and they'd circulate the tapes.

And so she arranged to buy a Sony Portapak. This was half-inch, reel-to-reel video. It was so easy to use, so much easier than film, so much cheaper. You could reuse it. It was still very tricky. We had to mark it with grease pencil in the edits. You were still kind of manually editing. You weren't necessarily cutting it. It was very elementary, but it was so fun, and it was immediate, it was cheap, relatively speaking, and because of Andrea, there was this equipment that came to the Woman's Building.

In addition to that, her family made it possible for the Woman's Building to buy two three-quarter-inch decks, so we could do editing, and there were two cameras, so you could do a little bit more complicated shoot. These cameras were huge. They were these big clunky things, tripods. And we built--it was called the video closet. It stored all the equipment. It was secure. And then we'd open it up onto the third floor and then teach workshops and use it as a video studio.

GORDIENKO

So you, yourself, didn't actually take classes in video making. You were just kind of trying to figure it out by yourself and with your friends?

ANGELO

Yes. Well, you know, some of the principles applied. It wasn't nearly as hard as filmmaking, in terms of lighting, exposure. You were recording sound on the video, so that was a million times easier than making a film and recording sound separately and having to deal with synching. The basic things around lighting were critical, but it wasn't as complicated. Now, there were people who did teach, so Kate Horsfield and Lyn Blumenthal, who founded the Video Data Bank at the

Chicago Art Institute, came out, and they taught us. They were our first teachers. Unfortunately, Lyn died in her twenties. But Kate--Kate might be retired now, but she ran that. The Video Data Bank, which is a major distributor of art video, really came from Kate, and Lyn early on. Kate's just a tremendously knowledgeable person about video art and about video. So they taught us a lot.

There were also some people in the film and TV industry in L.A. who came and taught workshops that we studied from, and then we also had them teach workshops to the public.

GORDIENKO

I see. You already mentioned the organization that you participated in, called Los Angeles Women's Video Center, so what was the purpose of this organization, distribution or preservation? And what were your duties, in particular?

ANGELO

Well, it was so fun, because I'd say originally video at the Woman's Building was Sheila Ruth, and then she and Arlene Raven and Kate and Lyn sort of tapped Candace and me, and then Jerri Allyn and Annette Hunt joined in, and Geraldine Hanon and Carole Jeffries, and Jerri Allyn is still doing L.A. Women's Video Center stuff. The collection of videotapes went to the Long Beach Museum of Art, and then when the Long Beach Museum of Art went out of business, they all went to the Getty. So there's this whole collection of video made at the Woman's Building that the Getty has, and it's actually a lot of it is going to be shown in the fall of 2011 at--Pacific Standard Times is a whole project put together by the Getty, funded by the Getty, of exhibitions throughout southern California, looking at the influence of art, post-World War II through the end of the century, in L.A., so there's going to be a lot of this work out.

So the L.A. Women's Video Center was--to answer your question; I'm sorry, I don't want to drift here, I want to be on the point for you--was, the first things we did was provide a place for women to make video art, because no one was making video art, nobody knew--Nam June Paik was video art, and how awesome and wonderful was Nam June Paik. I mean, very exciting. There was very little video being made,

and that's probably why a tape that Candace and I made called "Nun and Deviant" is in an anthology of "The History of Video Art," that's put out by the Video Data Bank. So it still gets shown and bought by libraries and stuff. But it was because it was all brand new. It wasn't being done, so it was so fun and exciting. So we provided a place where women could make video art.

And there had been a few conferences at the Woman's Building before I ever went there, and the Woman's Building was in a previous location on Grandview. They had a Women in Film conference that just had a little hint of video, and actually the use of video was in taping some of these conferences, so it was used more as documentation. So there was making art, there was documenting events and activities for posterity, so it's like to create a historic record, and then there was curation, and so we curated a few shows that were really wonderful and fun, I have to say. Work by Antoinette De Jong and Jean Manseur and Linda Montano, that traveled around the country.

We hooked up with some women in Australia who were in Sydney and Melbourne, and they put together an exhibition of Australian women artists' work that then we brought here, and then Candace went there with a whole bunch of stuff. So the curation also happened, and then teaching. So we got these various women involved to come and teach. And the thing is, it wasn't immediate. It took a little while, but as equipment got better and the sophistication grew, the equipment of the Woman's Building was not up to par, and there was not the money within that setting to be able to get a lot of stuff.

And there were also women starting to go to film schools, so we did know some women, like Marge Dean, who came and studied at the Woman's Building, she actually had gotten her M.F.A. at UC San Diego, UCSD in La Jolla, which was a wonderful art department at the time, and she ended up going for another degree to the UCLA Film School. She was one of the first women with a feminist perspective there as a student in the film department, but more came. So the sort of need for that wasn't as great, and the universities had far

better equipment. They had the resources. You just couldn't compare the resources.

And when we went to the University of Kansas in Lawrence, I'll never forget, when Feminist Art Workers, we sat in the women's lounge area of the bathroom in the student union, and it was bigger than the first floor of the Woman's Building, the bathroom was. We just sat [unclear]. [laughs] You know, these worlds are--the community-based world and the university world are very different. Just sheerly on an economic level of resources, it's just a world of difference. But there was the vitality there in the arts organizations, the artist-run organizations was so great, that people had a great time. They'd want to come and partake in that.

GORDIENKO

You know, the idea for that organization, I mean, it seems to me like it would be new at the time, this idea to preserve video for posterity, because I imagine video was seen as a kind of historical medium, right? I mean, you would make home movies, home recordings, and you wouldn't make any effort to save them. Like film was in a process of being preserved, but were there other organizations of this sort, trying to preserve video?

ANGELO

No, because, you know, at the time, like nobody had--you didn't have home video yet. It was before home video. So like Portapaks had a quasi-professional thing, and eventually people started to have camcorders, but this was way before camcorders and way before--maybe just a matter of a few years, because the technology innovation is so fast. I remember actually the first meeting in L.A. about the possibility of cable TV and community access. There was this wonderful man, John Hunt, who really--he got so much of that off the ground. I remember meeting in a studio--because these were people who worked in the TV and film industry in L.A. who said, "Gee, there might be all these other fun things we could do, lots of other playgrounds that wouldn't cost as much, where people wouldn't have to have as high production values, where the work could be more innovative and playful."

You also had Ilene Segalove, so there were artists who were starting to do video around the same time. And Shirley Clark and then her daughter Wendy Clark, and Shirley was at UCLA. It was just starting, but it wasn't the kind of thing--like people wouldn't really necessarily go out and buy their own. It was still really expensive, on a certain hand. It wasn't expensive like film is expensive to buy the stock and then have it processed, but it was expensive to buy the equipment, to be able to shoot and to edit. It was a very exciting, freeing time.

You know, those conversations about cable TV, when nobody had ever thought of cable TV. This was the very beginning of something. So like, "How would we program twenty-four hours, seven days a week? What would go on it if there was a community-access channel?" Nobody even knew it. This was the beginning of the community--there were FCC regulations around providing community access through public-service announcements on broadcast, and there had to be a certain amount of community programming that broadcasters would do, but they controlled it. So this was something where stuff could come out of all the people, and who knows what they'd create? It was very exciting.

GORDIENKO

Wow. You know, I'm also curious about the kind of relationship between video and performance that you envisioned at the time. For instance, did the idea for a performance piece come first, and then video was used as a kind of means to capture the memory of a performance and preserve it for posterity? Or were you thinking about camera angle and editing and sort of treating performance and video as somehow inseparable?

ANGELO

That's a good question. Well, one thing also that characterized video different from film--this is getting to your question--was that it was real time, and you would shoot in real time. So you would have the experience of something occurring, and it could be viewed and experienced by the viewer in real time. Now we would probably shudder and shriek in horror of having to sit through things in real time,

but there were wonderful--I can remember when I was in film school and art school, films by Michael Snow. Where's the one he did where--

GORDIENKO

"Wavelength"?

ANGELO

Yes, and the beautiful one in the forest, where you're watching the camera over a twenty-four-hour period. I mean, it's just like--I love those films. I have to say I love those films. But so it was trying. You have to be brave and stalwart and have a good bladder and all the rest of it to sit through a lot of that stuff.

But so I can answer it for ourselves. When Candace and I made the "Nun and Deviant" videotape, it was actually, in a sense, creating a performance in which video was an essential part of it, and it was a private performance that then the public would view through the video. So it was a static camera. It was on a tripod. It had one angle, and we would relate to the camera as if it were another person for us to talk to. So there are times where we'd come really close to the camera and we'd confide in it and talk to it. Then there are times where there are activities in the background, so that's all part of the performance. And it actually, in a way, sort of ties back to your thing of ritual, because in the background we were smashing dishes. We bought just tons of old mismatched dishes from thrift stores, and we smashed them. It was like breaking things, letting go of the way things had been, just smashing them, and then in front of the camera talking about the evolution of these characters. Then the audience could see that and be present to that experience as close as possible, through seeing the video, because that performance, that was never going to happen again.

So then later I took that when I did a piece called "Equal Time and Equal Space," that was an installation. It was about incest and women's experience of incestuous assault, which at the time, it was too sensitive to have women talk about what they'd been through as little girls and do that in front of a live audience. It'd feel way too exposing and painful to do

that, and it would change somehow, like they couldn't say, "This is my truth." At that time, it was too raw.
So what I did is I created an installation where there were six video monitors, and they were each at the height of the head of someone seated in a circle. They were on stands and then audience members sat in chairs in between them. They were all part of the circle. Their heads are along the other-- and there was a big circle of light in the middle of the circle, a pool on the floor and other people sitting there. The rest of the room fell away. It was charcoal dark, and it was just lit in this soft--it was actually lit through a parachute in soft kind of a peachy-colored light. And people sitting there would bear witness to women, each talking about what she'd gone through in being assaulted by someone in her family, and what it meant to her, and how it affected her life growing up, and then they'd also witness women supporting each other, because when any one of those women on video is talking, the other five in the circle were actively listening to the one talking. And you're in an intimate moment with these women. This would never have happened if it had been live. And it grew out of a long process. It took ten weeks, two months, actually closer to three months of facilitating the development of the material that women would talk about through consciousness-raising groups, not writing and fictionalizing, but rather peeling away to get to what really had happened to them, and having the camera women be there to support them, as opposed to putting them under the spotlight and examining them with that kind of scariness, it was instead supporting and bearing witness. So they worked together very closely to build trust and to talk to each other as well as the women in the circle, so it was a very close relationship.
And then the audience came in and as they sat through that, there were women from the video who would facilitate, with me, discussion. We'd include journal writing and what does this mean to you, what are you learning about it, so that it all becomes something where performance couldn't happen, because if it were performed, it would be too threatening and the voices couldn't be there, and yet the video enables it to

have a life, and a life that can be repeated over and over, because to tell that story over and over would be anguishing also, if it were real. And you don't have it performed by actors, which would then make it a few steps distant from the real. So it's kind of a little bit of documentary feel, but you're creating community, and you're creating an opportunity for a transformative experience for the audience to learn something whole new and to feel held by this circle of women supporting each other in the sharing of something profoundly painful, and coming out in a different place with it.

Some audiences would cry. There were audiences who'd get very upset. It was not easy to sit through those things for people. It was difficult. And then they'd have resources. We had places--information. "Go here for this," you know, what are the resources within the community where they could go and find counseling or social services or therapy. So that's a way to integrate performance with video, and it's not an installation where you would see it in a gallery. Like I would never install that and leave it. It's created in the moment. Each time it's presented, it's something new, because it's new with whoever is there in the audience and how they listen to and hear what they're taking in from these women. We actually repeated it in the fall of 2009. It was the first time, and we did it in Paula Lumbard's house, and we did it with each--as many of the women. There were two women we couldn't find, three we couldn't find from the original, but the others held laptops on their laps, so you were seeing the woman as she is now, and on her lap was the woman she was thirty years ago, and sitting in a circle with others sitting in between and listening to it, and it was amazingly relevant at the time, and also very touching to sort of see then and now in these women.

GORDIENKO

So, clearly, these performances had to allow for a degree of improvisation. For example, I'm wondering, when you made "Nun and Deviant," how much was it rehearsed and scripted, and how much was it just pure improvisation?

ANGELO

Pure improvisation.

GORDIENKO

Really. Wow.

ANGELO

Maybe a little bit--well, you know, except that it evolved from something. So Candace Compton and I created those characters, and we performed them together in many different settings. This actually was ritualistic in a way, because people had no idea what we were doing. Like we walked for several hours just around--at the changing of the lights at this intersection of Columbus and Broadway in San Francisco, which was the center of the striptease district in San Francisco. We just walked and walked. It's like nobody had seen a nun and this sort of dikey juvenile delinquent. You know, you just didn't see these kinds of people there. So it all grew over time. We wrote the stories of those people. We created those characters. We wrote--we told each other about them. We'd developed and done so many things with them that by the time we got to the video performance piece, there was something there. It was improvised, but it came out of something.

GORDIENKO

Yes. And you and Candace, you didn't consciously divide up the tasks, like, for instance, one person is the technical person in charge of equipment, another one is performing? Not really; it was just kind of shared. Yes?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

I see. Another question I have, more specifically about "Nun and Deviant" is that the two characters, nun and deviant, they belong to kind of a popular imagination, like related to the queer culture at the time. Like I remember seeing a film made in the sixties called "Binon" directed by Jacques Rivette, in which this film about a nun also touched upon lesbian relationships, and I think--

ANGELO

I've never seen that. I'd love to see that.

GORDIENKO

Well, I imagine there were also many other films back in the sixties and seventies which kind of exploited these characters of the nun and the deviant and related these personages to the queer culture. I mean, were you thinking about that at the time? Or was that piece somehow related to your actual orientation, your identity as a lesbian woman? Or not really?

ANGELO

That's a really good question and a complicated one. You know, I think that I don't doubt that there are things--I also have to say that in Belgium there was a Beguinage in Bruges from the Middle Ages, that was sort of a convent, that always--in the town of Bruges, all of these historic sites are very alive. You can go and be in them, although they're museums. So those are more the historical antecedents that were imprinted on me. But at the same time, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence here in San Francisco were a group of gay men who dressed as nuns, but it was a very different way of treating nuns, and I don't think I knew about them until after we were further along.

I have to say that at the Woman's Building at first, there was such a separation between gay men and lesbians. It didn't really feel like we were all part of one family at that time. It took a while to really find that common ground, and a lot of the men didn't really have lesbians in their lives. They more had straight women or--and it was a different time. So when I connected with gay men later, and we sort of like reconstructed our histories together, they were different tracks. They were different paths. But I guess for me--how do I say this? I just want to say it simply, so I don't take up a lot of time. Candace Compton is heterosexual now. Now, there was this period of time in which she was involved with women, and I think for her, the juvenile delinquent actually had more to do with being a kid who felt like she didn't fit in, and there was something queer about that, in a way.

But it was also, you know, this was also maybe even more--like Lynda Benglis, the artist who in the beginning of the feminist art movement strapped on a huge dildo and posed nude as, like, what if I were a man? It was kind of like kind of an aggressive, in-your-face way of saying, "You've defined

us in these--let's take on some characteristics of men." I think there was a little of that in Candace's role, the way I see it. Now, you should talk to her, because she might tell you something wholly different about that. But more than it being queer, I think it had to do with, are these aspects in which she actually was more male, in a way where she wasn't traditionally female, in female role. Because the movements change so much, and maybe little imperceptible changes that over a few years would add up to something significant.

And the nun, I could tell you more. For me, the nun was a precursor to coming out, because it was created at the time that, actually, I was engaged to be married to Bernard Meares, who was an Englishman. At the time that I created that character, I didn't know I was a lesbian in any overt way, although I fell in love with Candace. But it's probably true that it was a chaste way of being a lesbian, like maybe nuns are, in a certain way. I don't want to offend all nuns, because I know many of them wouldn't want to be seen as lesbian. But their primary affiliation is with women and God. So I had entered into a women's community, and I was in that community, and it felt like, on some level like home in a way that maybe for people a sense of spirituality means profound sense of home, in some way, that maybe it was a precursor to actually being sexually lesbian.

GORDIENKO

Yes. You know, your comments actually remind me of some of the lines that you uttered during this performance. I found them through my research. For instance, you said at one point that, "My work is about transformation," and you declared, "I am a nun of my own design." So I sense this theme of transformation on claiming your own freedom. Also I wonder, you made this video around the same time when you were involved with Feminist Art Workers, right?

ANGELO

Yes.

GORDIENKO

Was this more personal project seen as a kind of opportunity to develop your own voice outside of your engagement with

Feminist Art Workers? Did you see it as a kind of way of finding yourself?

ANGELO

That's a really good question. You know, I think it might have been just a little tiny bit precursor to Feminist Art Workers.

GORDIENKO

Oh, really. I see.

ANGELO

By months, by a matter of months.

GORDIENKO

Yes, because I saw that the year was 1976, but you actually made it before you joined the group.

ANGELO

I think so. We made it in about February or March. I also made another videotape then, which got me censored from shows, and the FBI came after me, thinking I was making pornography. It was more as I started to become more sexually identified as a lesbian, after I left my relationship with Bernie. So this was a very short period of time. It was really an explosive little moment. Yes. The Feminist Art Workers was more--but you're onto something. You're right that that other work was more private and more rough. And the Feminist Art Workers, because it also was handled by many of us, the work got--it wasn't as inchoate. It was more thought through and simple.

GORDIENKO

It's also interesting how there is a certain continuity. There was the nun character in the video piece, and you continue with the nun character in your work with Feminist Art Workers, so it is kind of a precursor.

ANGELO

And then to Sisters of Survival.

GORDIENKO

Right, which we'll definitely have to talk about this. Also I wonder, I mean you collaborate with so many people during this time, so I can think of Candace Compton, then Vanalyne Green, then Nancy Buchanan. Did you work with anybody else on video projects at the time?

ANGELO

I love that Nancy Buchanan. I think she's brilliant. Well, you know, we used to do--people would think of projects, and they needed more people, so they'd say, "Will you help me?" "Oh, yeah, sure. What do you need done?" And you'd join in and you'd help. Suzanne Lacy taught me so much, because she was my first teacher in performance. She also was so brilliant around social art and art that had to do with women's experience of sexual abuse. She really opened that whole thing up, and she taught us so many different ways of working. But the experience--she would do projects and she would need people to help her.

Like the one piece she did, which now--I'm terrible. I can't tell you if it was--I think it was within "Three Days in May" that was around rape in the city of L.A., and she did a performance where she needed some of us to sit like gargoyles on a shelf, and we were naked, painted in red paint, and we just hovered up there looking down at the audience. But before and after doing that, we talked about what had gone on in the city, because she mapped out all the places in the city where rapes had been occurring, right then and there. I mean, this was real time as well as recent time, and you got a sense of the magnitude of the issue and also the deeply personal damage it was doing, and the fact that it was ongoing, it wasn't stopped. So these things just resonated in deep ways.

I'm trying to think of other people. People would come from out of town. Like, actually, the funniest of them, Kate Millett, who wrote--was known more as a feminist theorist--I wasn't crazy about her artwork, but she did this thing where she created these huge papier mache like I think sort of supposed to be Goddess of Willendorf sort of figures that went on the roof of the Woman's Building. They're painted gray. She needed tons of people to help her, and Ruth Iskin had actually told her that we would all help her and then hadn't asked any of us if we wanted to, and then we sort of had to, but we didn't really want to. So there are things like that that we'd do.

Artists from the East Coast--Donna Henes. Well, when Linda Montano came to town and did some stuff. So people would ask for help and you'd join in. It wasn't quite collaborating in the sense of creating the artwork jointly. It was more like helping people get their work done by being in it.
Eleanor Antin, we worked on a piece of hers, I remember, and she was a professor at UC San Diego. Mary Beth Edelman did something that was much more ritualistic along the sense of goddess that we all helped with at one point, in San Diego. That kind of thing.

GORDIENKO

Yes, and you just mentioned your admiration for Nancy Buchanan's work. Did you have a kind of long and productive professional relationship with her?

ANGELO

Well, Nancy also--so when I was in the Feminist Studio Workshop, I lived in Echo Park first, and then Cheri Gaulke had a studio in Pasadena, and somebody moved out and I moved in. So the studio actually, the master lease was held by Barbara Smith, who was a generation older than we, and was an incredible woman, an incredible role model, and a wonderful artist. She actually did beautiful ritual stuff in her work that had much more of actually a Buddhist bent than a Wiccan bent. She taught out at Johnston College at University of Redlands, and she wasn't around a lot. But we were on 32 South Raymond. The city of Pasadena did a survey, and they found there were two hundred artists within four blocks at the time.
It was this incredible place, and it was also--our building was owned by the guy who owned the porno theater, the Oaks Theater around the corner. He ended up--he would collect the rent with his bodyguard, and he was finally murdered one night by somebody. So it was kind of a dangerous area to live in, but also very exciting artistically, and Nancy Buchanan was a close friend of Barbara Smith's. She was younger than Barbara. She was sort of age-wise between us, and she was a much more developed artist than I was, much more senior. At the time, she [Nancy Buchanan] was with Randsom Rideout. She had son Paige, and it was just this

community. Faith Wilding lived, and Everett Frost, her husband, lived a building away. There were just so many artists around.
We actually did this wonderful piece once from our studio with Building 35 South Raymond across the street, where people sat in our studio and they looked across the street, and they were performance that occurred in the different windows of the different studios that were all different timed. So they'd look from here and then they'd look in that window and then in that window, and we set up a pulley from our building across the street, and we ran--this was my piece. I ran tumbleweeds from the desert that I had painted gold, so they were like luminescent in the late afternoon sunshine. They were like these gorgeous gold tumbleweeds that just flew across the street on the pulleys. It was just beautiful. And people sat there and watched. So this was the kind of synergy of the area, because there were so many artists. Nancy Buchanan was in that mix, although her studio was in--was it Mount Washington? I can see her home and studio, but I can't remember exactly where it was.
So I wouldn't say that I worked on a lot of pieces with her, but she was around a lot, and she was so thoughtful, particularly when we got into the anti-nuclear work. Her father had been involved in the creation of the atom bomb as one of the scientists, and she went through a lot of soul searching, and she did incredible performance about that, that she kind of opened up all different ways of looking. But her performance, I'll never forget her performance she did at LAICA, which I'd never seen, where she sat dressed as like a little doll. She had on a wig that was like yellow yarn, and it was in braids, and she wore this little sort of baby-doll little white dress. She was sitting on the floor, and oh, my god, Andrey, she had painted--her eyes were shut and she had painted eyes on her eyelids, and so when you looked at her, it was the scariest thing you've ever seen. [laughs] It was just a powerful image of this sort of thrown-away baby doll, and you thought, is she looking at me, is she not? Like it was very hard to detect that that was actually painted on.

She had thoughtfulness and a way of sort of--she would do so much performance that nothing was precious. So you'd do something here and then you'd go do something, and there were other people doing that too. Like Paul McCarthy did that. It was stuff that was fast and you're always moving. And Kim--what was his name? He was a Vietnam vet, and he broke my heart. He broke my heart. He did a piece where he smeared his body with shit and urine and straw in the gallery at LAICA, and then he went up to people to hug him, and, of course, no one wanted to hug him. Finally one person hugged him. That was so much his experience of being a Vietnam vet and very damaged by that experience.
But these were things that people would just create fast, so that's something I learned from Nancy. I'm sort of rambling here. Help me get back on track.

GORDIENKO

No, no, you were right on track. I'm just kind of moving towards the late seventies, and I know that you were involved with the Oral Herstory of Lesbianism.

ANGELO

Right.

GORDIENKO

And as far as I know, it was organized primarily by Terry Wolverton.

ANGELO

Yes, it was.

GORDIENKO

So what was the nature of your involvement in this piece, do you remember?

ANGELO

I do. Well, Terry is very wonderful in particular ways. So what she did was, she knew she wanted a play. She came more out of a theater background, theater and writing, not so much visual art, and not performance--the performance artists, the rest was for more performance art as a visual medium, as opposed to as theater, or as spoken word, which later performance became much more, like poetry jams and stuff that were more performed.

So she knew she wanted to do a theater piece that related to kind of delving more into experiences of lesbianism, and she also loved feminist process, so she created a feminist process where a group of us, who all said, "We'll do it with you," and she was very, very fun to work with, she facilitated our talking about all these things. So we created all the pieces together, and then we'd usually perform our own pieces. So it became a play or a collection of sketches in a way. Nancy Buchanan actually videotaped it, so somewhere there's a videotape of that performance, which is probably not very good, because it was done with a single camera with not very well mic'ed, and pretty static lighting. But it's a document, and Terry probably has that. Terry's so good at keeping things. I'm terrible at keeping things.

But she ran the process through which we generated the material. Then she directed the process of--she was really dramaturge in terms of crafting it into what would get performed, and then she directed it. And she might have been in it a little bit. So the people I remember being in that were Cheri Gaulke, Sue Maberry, Jerri Allyn, Leslie Belt, Cheryl Swannack, Arlene Raven, Bia Lowe, Terry. There must have been a lot more, but it was very, very fun. It was so fun.

GORDIENKO

So when you were involved in this project, did you see yourself as being a gay-rights activist? Did you care about the gay-rights issues at the time?

ANGELO

Well, another thing. We did. Not just me, but we did. So also along the same time, it was around the time when the Briggs Initiative was being proposed as legislation. This was an initiative being presented to the electorate of California by a very conservative, right-wing politician, who wanted to make it possible to fire any school employee who was gay or lesbian or who would even say that it was okay to be gay or lesbian. This could affect the janitorial staff as well as teachers.

It was the same time as Anita Bryant in Florida was sort of going on mass kind of waging war against gay people,

because you also had so many states in the union that were just beginning to fight against really decriminalizing sodomy laws, taking sodomy laws off the books. So California, Willie Brown, actually, who we love here in northern California, because he was mayor of San Francisco for a long time and then he was Speaker of the House for a long time, you know, California took its sodomy laws off the books in the late sixties, in '68. But there were still discriminatory laws around housing, around jobs. People had to be scared and in the closet, and California was ahead of so many other places. You know, it's hard for people now, I think, to even realize how even for us as young people at that time, it wasn't a world in which you would really be out. You'd be out selectively and in a few places, because there were risks. There were risks that you wouldn't get work or you would lose work, or you wouldn't get that apartment you wanted. You could be discriminated against in all these ways. So in the L.A. Women's Video Center, which actually Suzanne Lacy had a lot to do with this--we weren't the heads of the Woman's Building at the time, but Suzanne Lacy the women who were heading up the Woman's Building at the time, secured some CETA grants, and CETA was C-E-T-A, Comprehensive Education and Training Act. It was federal funding. It was job-training money. So the Woman's Building got some of this money. You would get paid like the equivalent of a full-time wage of like seven thousand dollars a year, or nine thousand dollars a year, so like really rough going, and the Woman's Building crafted projects out of it. So one was through the L.A. Women's Video Center, is that we got three CETA positions, and Candace, Annette Hunt, Jerri Allyn and I, we shared that money, and we set up a parallel company called Those Women Painters, and we did house painting. It was a collective. We pooled all our money. We were all going to be supported, although Annette also had a little additional money. She worked at the "Herald Examiner," and then later she became a really superb video technician and worked in the video biz for a long time. But at that time we made public service announcements with our CETA money, and we also made some documentaries. And

one of the public service announcements--which is a bunch of them, were about the Briggs Initiative, and they were also trying to bring to the fore other views, like kind of, for want of a better word, humanizing our making more real gay and lesbian people, because the public had ogre ideas. So we had a mom talking about her daughter who's a lesbian and--you know, those videos exist. Jerri Allyn has all of them, if you ever wanted to see them. I haven't seen them for a million years. But that was a way, in addition to getting people to vote and sign things and do all of that organizing, we tried to use artistic means or video means to be activists.

GORDIENKO

Yes. And also, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think at the time you were involved with the Public Policy Office of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center. Were you somehow related with this place?

ANGELO

You know, various projects were, and at that time, that wouldn't have been me so much. But Terry Wolverton did a lot also when we developed the Incest Awareness Project, and that's something I could probably tell you way more about than the Oral Herstory, because that was more Terry's. But I can tell you about my own part in that, which I love. But the public policy, there was a link, and actually, we did work with them in the L.A. Women's Video Center on the PSAs, because we needed--what we were trying to do was to create links between artists, activists in the traditional sense of activism, and community organizations, and education, any of the links, like create coalitions in people working together to advance things.

I think that those public service announcements may have been coauthored. When we presented them to TV stations, the Gay Community Services Center, which it was at the time; I'm not sure it was Gay and Lesbian yet. I think it was GCSC--their name probably was on it as one of the presenters, if I'm remembering correctly.

GORDIENKO

I see.

ANGELO

Yes, through their public information office.

GORDIENKO

I think so. You mentioned public service announcements, and I'm thinking of the Incest Awareness Project media campaign. Were there any other strategies? I mean, I remember that we talked about Suzanne Lacy and her way of manipulating media and addressing these issues and communicating them to a broader audience. So did you use some of the same strategies in talking about incest awareness?

ANGELO

Yes, yes. The media-strategy part of that project was headed up by Leslie Labowitz, also known as Leslie Labowitz Starus. She and Suzanne started Ariadne: A Social Art Network, and they did that work together for forever. Leslie was tremendously gifted at doing the whole public-media part of it. So in the Incest Awareness Project, it started out of the videotape that I made that ended up being censored. But whenever I showed it, people would come up to me--and it was very private work. People would come up and say, "I've never been able to tell anyone this before, but I was raped by my father." You know, when we showed it all around the country. Or we'd show it somewhere, and there'd been somebody crying who then would have to leave, and then we'd go talk to them. So it was like clear, there's so much going on here that needs to be talked about more. We've got to do something about it.

And Paula Lombard was somebody in the Feminist Studio Workshop who had done work about incest, who had a very strong vision. So we started the project, and Leslie Labowitz joined in, and it go co-sponsored by Ariadne, and so the point of the project was it had several focuses. One was this whole public-media part that she did, and she was brilliant about doing this. There were two ideas that she wanted in the public mind. One is to see the concept of not incest victim--well, first of all, is to change the notion of incest from being a wonderful seduction of mother and son that's delightful for both--that was sort of a public idea--to it being a sexual abuse arising out of an imbalance of power with

somebody who's known to you intimately and has a lot of power in your own life. At the time, our understanding was it was mainly male perpetrators and female children, but we now know that male children have been abused amply as well.

And to also call them survivors as opposed to victims. So for the adult, if you've lived with it all these years, you're no longer a victim. You've actually survived it. You've gone on. And now there are even better words that people say, like veterans or things that are post-surviving that like you've actually come through it and are doing fine. So Leslie's objective was to get this notion that incest is assault, it's not a wonderful sexual experience, that women are survivors, at this time was the way we were looking at it, who've been through it, not victims, and to have the depth of women's experience known. So she got on all the media. Whether it was on TV, on the radio, or in the newspapers, she would have a feminist psychotherapist along with a survivor, so that there would be a richer way of looking at the experience. And she got us on so many things, and it just spanned out from there. I mean, it was in the newspapers, so that that was one part.

Then there was an exhibition called "Bedtime Stories." Is this okay to tell you?

GORDIENKO

Absolutely, yes. I'm going in there.

>

ANGELO

Okay. "Bedtime Stories" was really focused more on--well, that actually had several parts. The gallery at the Woman's Building was painted to look like it's from a child's perspective, so the walls were yellow up to about maybe three or four feet high, within a frieze that Bia Lowe created of like paper dolls that went around, and then above that, the walls were all charcoal gray. So it was like the day and night and the sense for kids who were sexually abused as children of that daytime was safer than nighttime at home when they were abused by a family member, because often the abuse occurred at night, someone coming in the room.

So the exhibition included artworks about incest by women artists. It included artifacts that women artists, who had experienced incestuous assault as children, had saved, that helped them get through their childhoods, like their little bear that was like their little love bear that kept them going, or their journals, or their little things that were the means of living through hell, essentially, for many.
We facilitated workshops. We worked with and art therapist, as well as artists who went into what was then called DPSS, Department of Social Services. It's now Department of Children's Services, I think, in L.A., but it's the department that controlled MacLaren Hall, which was the juvenile hall, as well as social services to kids who'd experienced incest. At the time, with the best knowledge of the time, when incest was discovered, children were taken to juvenile hall. They were taken away from their families, and they were incarcerated in juvenile hall along with kids who had committed violent crimes. It was very traumatic for the kids, and instead of the father or the brother, the perpetrator being taken from the home, it was the person who had been victimized who was taken from the home and incarcerated. And we had people working with those little kids, creating artworks, and so their artworks were shown in the show. And policy changed, luckily, because this is sort of a wellspring. Then there was a whole part of the show where we got kindergarten tables from school supply, and the little tiny chairs that kindergartners sit on, and the adults had to sit on those chairs and imagine, these are the little bodies that we're talking about. We're talking about little kids here, as well as older kids. It was in a whole area where we had access to resources, so there were written materials, there were things they could sit there and read, magazines, newspapers, books. There was a wall that had all kinds of resources of services to go to and so people could get that. So that was the second part.
And then the third part was "Equal Time and Equal Space," which was the video-installation part that I told you about. So these things were together. There was the very public part that Leslie Labowitz did, and it built on and used all the

things that she and Suzanne had developed together. She had also been the P.R. person for the Woman's Building. She was really, really good at that. You know, she's a very capable--she's a businesswoman. She owns her own company that produces health food and sells in Los Angeles, very successful entrepreneur. She was very, very good at doing all of that public outreach, so she got the City Hall to--the Mayor's Office declared this a special project. There were big stories in the "L.A. Times," and at the time, L.A. had two newspapers. The "Herald Examiner" was the other one. It was in both of those. It was on news shows. It was also on talk shows.

There were also shows like Norman Lear, who created "All in the Family," he created a show that was really interesting--I can't remember the name of it, but we'll figure that out, and I'll get back to you if I remember it--where there'd be like a--I can't remember if it was an hour show or a half an hour. But the first part would be a dramatized thing around a social issue, so it was done by actors. Then he would open it up to a handpicked studio audience of people who knew about that issue, and they would talk about what they'd just seen in the drama part. So when they did one on incest, our people were all in that audience.

And then people came to us and asked for help on things. Like I remember consulting to Tom Topor and Mark Rydell, who were developing the movie "Nuts," to help give them a little bit of background. So it was a very rich and comprehensive way of integrating services through referral, public outreach and image changing, and getting particular ideas out to the public in a very simple, direct, but very permeating, pervasive way. Then having this really powerful gallery experience.

In the time that show was up, five thousand people came to see it in three weeks, which was a huge number for that gallery. And my office was right inside in that area, and I can remember I would hear people crying out in the gallery, and I would just go out and talk to people. I've never been--this was the story we'd hear.

[End of recording]

1.3. Session 2B (April 11, 2011)

GORDIENKO

So this is Andrey Gordienko resuming interview with Nancy Angelo. We left off talking about the Incest Awareness Project. I just wanted to ask you to list the names of all the participants, all the different people who contributed something to this project.

ANGELO

Okay, I'll do my best. I know it'll be partial, and hopefully you'll talk to other people who can fill in other names. The project started with Paula Lumbard and me, and Leslie Labowitz, also known as Leslie Labowitz Starus joined in the core group, as did Terry Wolverton, Bia Lowe. Leslie Belt curated performances. On the "Equal Time, Equal Space," we also have in addition to--well, I'll just reel them off--Terry Wolverton, Bia Lowe, Cheri Gaulke, Leslie Belt, Annette Hunt, Jerri Allyn, Anita Green, Lyricon Jazzwomyn, Chris Wong, Jane Thurmond, Paula Lumbard. I know I'm leaving people out. It's so hard to remember everybody, but it's so important that everybody gets mentioned. That's a problem that I have is so often people are left out, and I hate to be the instrument of leaving people out also. Also Roland Summit, psychiatrist, Sandra Butler, author of the book "Conspiracy of Silence," were both guides and helpers along the way, and I think you've got a core group there.

GORDIENKO

Yes. I mean, it's impossible to mention everybody. I think around the same time, the Feminist Art Workers broke up in the late seventies, and I was wondering what was the reason for the group breaking up.

ANGELO

That's a good question, and I wish I could ask Laurel and Cheri and Vanalyne. Well, Vanalyne moved to New York. Then she later moved to Chicago and taught at the Chicago Art Institute. But she moved on to teach more and do her art in bigger settings. I think maybe it had to do, in part, with just a change in the work. One of the last pieces we did was, I think--you know, I would really want to ask them, but my

sense is that the work we were interested in doing was not bound by the Woman's Building anymore. It started to be in a bigger picture.
And so when Sisters of Survival came to life, that work, I mean it was rooted in the Woman's Building in a certain way, but it was much more, in fact, rooted in the Antinuclear Movement in the eighties in L.A., which was a very interesting place to be at the time, with lots of wonderful people doing wonderful work, both in the arts and also in activism. So Sisters of Survival started. So I was involved in it in the early part of it, and it had a whole life that went way beyond my involvement. It would be good to talk with Cheri Gaulke, Sue Maberry, Jerri Allyn, and Ann Gauldin about that, because they could tell those stories.
But the image that came of the image of nuns in habits that are the colors of the rainbow, came from a dream I had in which I saw those nuns, and they were walking in a cloister that looked to me like parts of Italy I'd been in that was sort of a medieval vaulted walkway near an interior courtyard garden with beautiful light streaming in. The origin, I think the way the use of that image for Sisters of Survival had to do with really declaring the group a community of sisters who were different, so they could be in different colors. You know, there's something in common. There's the shared, but there's also the individual, and holding both of those was important. And the group--it became a way for us to address and start to create artworks that were where we shared our concern about both proliferation of nuclear arms and the difficulty in reaching nuclear arms reduction agreements internationally, and our sadness at the legacy of harm that had been caused by the deployment of nuclear weapons in Japan.
So we had really connected with the survivors of Hiroshima who were in Los Angeles and all of the work being done in Little Tokyo by Japanese citizens and Japanese Americans around caring for the survivors, and also trying to prevent other uses of nuclear power and nuclear war. And it's very poignant now, when we look at the earthquake that's recently happened in Japan and how the contamination of

escaping radiation from the plants, which aren't ultimately--it's so hard to guarantee safety. It's just a very scary and sad, both on the arms level and also just on the use of nuclear power.

But the image of the nuns, so Sisters of Survival also stood for SOS, which is like calling out a cry for help, saying, "We need to pay attention to this," and it was one expression in a very large movement in a period of time, and they could tell you way more about it. So I was involved in the early days, which were really focused in Los Angeles around building public awareness and activism. We did a performance called "Shovel Defense" that created --and Marguerite Elliot also worked with us on that. She's a photographer. But it involved kind of visually showing the magnitude of deaths in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as conveying to some degree the panic and horror that would occur if that were to happen to people now anywhere in the world, just wouldn't want it to happen anywhere in the world. And then they took that work a lot further and went touring with work in Europe.

GORDIENKO

Yes. You partly answered my next question, concerning the very name Sisters of Survival and the fact that you and your other members in the group dressed in nuns' habits. It just kind of seemed to me as if you passed on your character of the nuns to other members of the group. So my question is, being the most experienced nun, did you find yourself in a position of the leader in this group, Sisters of Survival?

ANGELO

You know, I think maybe initially. Also for me, my life was heading in a different direction and creatively in a different direction, so it was sort of a sad and painful time. I was there for the first part of it, but I felt like it was very literal. The work was pretty literal, more literal than I probably would have been, so it was important for me to go on and do other things, and I was sort of sad about leaving that behind, and for a while I felt kind of proprietary and possessive of the nun image. But, you know, it's okay. They did something else with it, and as you say, there are a lot of people who've

used that image. I'd just always like it to be known that that came out of a dream I had.

GORDIENKO

That's good to know.

ANGELO

Yes. It doesn't really matter in the scheme of things in life, but it was a powerful experience having that dream. It was a beautiful dream.

GORDIENKO

Another question I have, I have the sense as if the Feminist Art Workers tackled more personal issues, whereas Sisters of Survival tackled more global political issues, such as the Antinuclear Movement, the protest movement. Would it be a correct judgment on my part, to say this?

ANGELO

I think that's true. I think that's true that the Sisters of Survival was really about kind of bringing together artists with antinuclear activism and sharing messages of antinuclear activism with powerful images in creative ways, and there were a lot of artists doing that in different ways. Like, actually, some of the first white rap artists I ever heard were antinuclear, people doing antinuclear raps. There are these white guys in L.A., I can't remember their names, but they were really good. So it was being done with different media and by different artists in different ways, but there were all different ways of reaching audiences.

I mean, there was a panic around how--this is huge. This is huge. I think we know that. I mean, the world didn't end then, but the risk is still there, and when you think of--I don't know. Obviously, our heart goes out to the people of Japan just suffering so much devastation from tsunami and from earthquake, but when you add to that the potential of contamination. And you were born in Ukraine, that's suffered--

GORDIENKO

Yes.

ANGELO

--horribly, horribly, and that legacy, how long? I mean, it's still--a friend of mine has been part of a project that buys

Geiger counters for the teachers in Chernobyl, and you probably know that, but that the schools, they don't have a single school building. They teach in a different place every day, depending on where the radiation is lower and how the wind is blowing and where it's sending all the stuff. I mean, it's harsh, it's harsh. So I think Sisters of Survival, we really wanted to make a difference if we could, in a small way, with no grandiosity about--we knew that we were part of something very much bigger than us, and we wanted to do our piece in that, to help make people have a reason to stop and think and listen and maybe take action in different ways.

GORDIENKO

Speaking of that, I know that the Sisters of Survival actually toured Europe, so I'm wondering if you get to meet some European artists or maybe collaborate with them, and also about the reaction of European audiences to your performances.

ANGELO

You know, I didn't go.

GORDIENKO

Oh, you didn't go.

ANGELO

So actually, I chose not to go, in part because I felt like--I remember feeling this very strongly--I don't want to go and be an American acting as if we have an answer to something.

GORDIENKO

GORDIENKO

I see.

ANGELO

I don't want to do that. I don't like it when Americans do that. And it seemed that the very nature of the performance seemed to be pushing an idea more than saying, "How do you think about this?" So that was a stopping point for me. I couldn't do that. But you know, I don't think they actually did it that way. I think they went and they had a really great connection with people, is my understanding. I think I was overly worried about something that didn't--I think they handled it in a different way, and from all I can tell, I think they had a great time and it was a rich time. I don't know

how much they collaborated. I don't know how much they did. For that I would talk to Cheri and Jerri and Sue and Ann.

GORDIENKO

I know that during the early eighties, Women's Movement in Los Angeles experienced some difficulties. For instance, there was a shortage of funding, and the Woman's Building wasn't doing so well. For instance, it had to rent space to outsiders, right, and invite people who were not even involved with the movement. So where were you at the time? Were you still involved with the Woman's Building, or just pursuing your own ideas and projects?

ANGELO

Right. You know, I left the Woman's Building in, my guess is around '82. What happened for me was I knew that I needed to make a better living, and I felt limited. I guess I reached a point where I could see [unclear]. So I learned skills. I went and took training classes and courses in grant writing and fundraising, and I tried to apply them there, but the women who were in charge of the building at the time weren't receptive.

So I went to work at the Social and Public Art Resource Center, SPARC, in Venice, that was headed up by Judy Baca, who was a muralist. It was a multicultural arts organization centered in the Venice jail, what used to be the jail, and did all these community art projects, bringing together artists with neighborhood people, including kids from rival gangs and scholars in wonderful, wonderful projects. So I was director of development there, and I worked there through the Olympic Games in 1984, because we had a big Olympic arts project. One of SPARC's things was they created the Great Wall of Los Angeles. It's the longest mural in the world. It's over a half mile long. It shows the multicultural history of California through the 1950s. It was a wonderful place to work. I had a great time at SPARC.

So Judy is a feminist, yet it had a bigger feel for me than the Woman's Building did at that time. It was something I needed at the time. It was just a bigger playing ground, but also one in which I could practice more professional skills. You know, I really wasn't wedded to being an artist. I was

wedded to--I think I came to the art. If I could have been a filmmaker, see, you know I think about this. There are times when probably I could have taken a different life path, more into filmmaking, and that probably would have been a happy path, but I didn't know how to create that for myself so well, so I didn't really pursue that.
And I had, I confess, I had a disdain for the commercial television and Hollywood. I couldn't find myself in that, which is where I could have made a living. In fact, at one point my aunt, she had served during World War II with Stan Margulies, who was one of the producers of "Roots," the miniseries, and he was a wonderful man. He kindly gave me an interview to work on his next project, which was "The Thorn Birds," and I just couldn't find my way into it. I would have been a production assistant. It could have been something to open into something. But I was too much wedded to being more in the art world and more, well, more in a form, in an art way and more social-change-oriented. So I didn't do that.
So I went to SPARC, and I worked at SPARC until such time as I developed cataract in my eye, and I had no health insurance. We lived so marginally, I tell you. For so long we made next to no money. I mean, this is how things were. And so I had to have eye surgery because I couldn't see, and I couldn't see to drive. So I borrowed money from my parents, and I realized, I can't work here anymore.
So then I went to work for Pacifica Radio, and I headed up the Pacifica Program Service, which distributed programs through all of the--there were five Pacifica radio stations around the U.S., and also to radio stations beyond Pacifica, and also I headed up the archive, which was the oldest archive of public radio programming in the country, which is one of my favorite things in the whole world. That is a beautiful place. There are some incredible things in that archive, and it was my privilege to work with that archive for a few years, to raise money to preserve some of the tapes that were--you know, they're iron-oxide tapes where the emulsion was flaking off, and it needed preservation. So I did that work for several years.

And I left that when the AIDS epidemic hit in the early days and no one knew quite what it was, and I felt like I was losing my family, and people were dying so rapidly, men were dying, and I had to do something about it. So I went to work at the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center as the director of development, and I raised a lot of money and poured my heart into that work for the first years of the AIDS epidemic. And then I went from there back to graduate school, because I wanted to do bigger work.

GORDIENKO

And then, actually, I was wondering, did you get your degree in organizational psychology?

ANGELO

Yes, I did. I got my Ph.D. in organizational psychology.

GORDIENKO

What is the nature of organizational psychology? I mean, what is the profession?

ANGELO

I love this profession, and you know, it's so completely and utterly--Feminist Art Workers, Incest Awareness Project. I can see this progression. It's so closely related to the art work I made and what drew me in the artwork and I think what was my contribution through art making. It's really the study of human behavior in groups and organizations. And what people get trained to do, at least I was trained to do--I mean, there are two paths you can take in it. One is an academic path and research path, and one is a practitioner path, and I chose the practitioner path. You really--the way I practice it is to help people in the workplace. It's to help leaders and all the people who work in workplaces find ways to make their workplace work better.

So right now I practice it with a colleague in L.A. We work together and have a wonderful time. Her name is Linda Garnets, and we help organizations bring about change in their organizations, whether it's change they've asked for or change they're forced to make. But it's the human side. It's helping people find their way to making organizations work, and generally the world of work is not one where people are concerned with that. And when you think of alienated

workforce, that's how most people live their lives, just doing what they have to do to bring in the paycheck. And some workplaces actually are pretty negative places for people, and they don't have to be. And some have great potential. The reason I went into it was I worked in organizations that had so much potential, and they would fall short, and I knew that as a fundraiser you're always trying to make the case that is based on showing the potential of the organization and its mission, and you always have difficulty raising money when the organization can't fulfill it. And often it would fulfill it because of strife, conflict, lack of vision, lack of imagination, poor planning, bad management, any number of things, or, as in the case of JLCSC in those early days of AIDS, being stressed beyond human capacity by just illness and death. So helping people cope with that so that they can come back and do it again.

GORDIENKO

When did you finish graduate school and enter this field?

ANGELO

Well, I took the scenic route, so to speak. What I mean by that is I finished the core part of my program quickly, and then I chose to do a dissertation that was qualitative research, that was something really, really, really hard to do. It was looking at how people managed anxiety in what I called high-anxiety organizations, which I was working in, AIDS hospices. I took about seven years to do my dissertation. All my co-workers, my fellow students finished, I think most of them, in way less time than I did. So I worked at the same time.

So I had my master's in organizational psychology, and I could do some practice, and I also had consulting skills, because I was a fundraising and nonprofit-management experience person, a professional in both those fields, because I'd managed nonprofits, and I'd raised lots of money, and I'd been the chief development person in nonprofits. So I consulted those arenas, and then I added in OD as it's called, organization development skills as I got them more and more over time, and that's how I supported myself during my dissertation and then I finished it up.

And my partner and I moved here to take care of the elderly in my family and her family. Between us, we took care of six elders in their last parts of their lives, both sets of our parents and my aunt and my mother's cousin. And during those times, I worked as an internal consultant inside Blue Shield of California for a while, and inside Kaiser Permanente Northern California, because when you're in a job, you can take time off. When you run your own business, you can't take time off, can't leave people in the lurch.

GORDIENKO

I see. When did you meet your partner? I mean, for how many years have you been together?

ANGELO

Okay. Well, I met Linda first when I worked at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Los Angeles. She was a consultant, and I was in her client group. The center was one of her clients. I thought she was brilliant, and she did amazing work, and I thought, "I want to do that." She encouraged me to go to graduate school, and she's the one who said, "Don't just go get a master's. Get your Ph.D.," and she was right. So I did the harder route, and we were in touch over a thirty-year period. She actually called me when she had challenges in her work. I would call her, and we worked on a couple of projects together just informally. And then about three or four years ago--she worked very, very extensively at UCLA. She's actually taught a class for over twenty years that's jointly Women's Studies and LGBT Studies, called "Dyke Psych" class that was in lesbian psychology, which she just taught for the last time. But she was a consultant at UCLA in the library system for a lot of years, and also with the business school, and they had to have her stop doing that at a certain point because of the budget cuts. So she called and said, "Do you know of any work out there?" And I said, "Let's get together." So we've been doing that for about three years, three or four, and it's really, really fun. And we do work that's harder than work that either of us could do alone, that's very, very demanding and a lot of fun.

So it's all custom work. We don't go in with a set idea of like just go do this anywhere. We go in and we learn deeply about the organization, and we engage the people who work in it with the leaders and all to figure out how to move forward, and then we help them find their way to move forward. So it's helping them build their capacity and their commitment engagement. It's very akin to all of this feminist art.

GORDIENKO

And when did you meet your partner Nancy?

ANGELO

Oh, my life partner.

GORDIENKO

Your life partner, yes.

ANGELO

Oh, my life partner. I met her through--I was involved with a filmmaker named Bobbie Birleffi. She actually works in TV now and has made films and TV for a lot of years. And a friend of hers who also I knew, Janet Stambolian, was involved with Nancy, so we used to do things the four of us, the two couples. I met her in 1984 and then my relationship didn't last very long. It was short, less than a year. And hers had lasted a few years, but it ended, and after both of our relationships ended, we'd gotten involved. Well, we've been together since 1984. It's been a long time.

GORDIENKO

And you decided to move back to San Francisco in the early nineties, or?

ANGELO

I think we moved in '95. We were trying to figure that out the other day. I think it was either '95 or '96. It's getting on to sixteen years. And she got a job up here, which made it a good time to move, and the elders needed help.

GORDIENKO

Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're involved with the National Endowment for the Arts organization, as a contributor? Or were you?

ANGELO

I did write a thing on strategic planning for them. Morrie Warshawski was a consultant in St. Louis, Missouri, and he asked me to write an article, because over the years I've done a lot of strategic planning, and when I worked in the arts, well, that was one of the fun things I got to do at SPARC, too, was that SPARC was--it was a multicultural arts organization before multiculturalism was something that people were widely interested in. That's because of Judy Baca. I mean, she created something truly extraordinary. And so SPARC had the good fortune to get a lot of support early on.

So the National Endowment for the Arts gave--I think there were six organizations around the country that they gave these special grants to, that combined technical service with funding. During that I had two technical consultants working with us, and I was the main person working with them. They also got me into the organization development field, although what they did isn't exactly what I do. Theirs is more business-oriented than helping on the human side, but it was really great experience. So through that I met other people all over.

And also at Pacifica Radio, I did relate to people in the Pacifica world. The Pacifica world for me, especially the stations, was like, "Oh, my gosh, this is insane." I think if you talked to most people who worked in that world--I mean, I've never met people I liked more, and the life of the stations was crazy. So I felt more affinity with people outside of the stations. They were in the National Federation of Community Broadcasters, so there are stations, like there's a whole network of Native American stations in the country. There are college-based stations. There are all kinds of community stations all over the U.S. that are really interesting radio stations. So meeting people through them and also through the Museum of Broadcasting in New York, through the Library of Congress, the National Archives, the NPR library, all of these people. Stanford has an incredible radio library, and Steve Gong, who was the head of--he may not have been the head of it, but he was key in the world of film preservation at the AFI, was somebody who was a

mentor for me in learning new approaches to how to preserve these wonderful materials, even though they weren't film, these audio recordings.

So I got to spread my wings and meet all these incredible people through both those jobs, even more the Pacifica job, because I had a national job for Pacifica. It was just this wonderful flowering of finding people. So that's how the National Endowment for the Arts thing came about. Morrie heard about me from somebody and said, "Will you write this thing?" and that has a life because it made its way onto the web really early on. I have no idea if that's even valuable. I actually did get somebody about three years ago who saw that and called me, through the California Council for the Humanities, who wanted me to do some work for them.

GORDIENKO

Right, yes. I mean, I checked your name on Google, and National Endowment for the Arts came up. But I'm also interested--once you moved to San Francisco in the nineties, did you show any interest in the local art scene or performance scene? Did you attend any performances? And can you actually like compare Los Angeles and San Francisco in terms of performing arts? Do you see any differences?

>

ANGELO

That'd be interesting. You know, during the years that I was actively making art in L.A., we used to do stuff up here, and there's always this rivalry between San Francisco and L.A. When I first moved back up here in the nineties, people would just--they were rude to me, knowing I'd come from Los Angeles. I have to say, San Francisco is more snobbish about L.A. than vice versa. L.A. likes San Francisco. We like to go there. The San Francisco people think L.A. is inferior, but L.A. has so much more going on. So in the art world here, we kind of fought that a little bit when we were from L.A. and performing and showing up here, that in the art world, people also, they find affinity because of their fellow artists. You share common ground.

Since I've lived up here, I have not been involved in the art world, to my sadness. Immediately, I had to start taking

care of elderly people. I mean, literally for the longest time, all I did was work and take care of people, and I've had a certain amount of illness of my own, which has been difficult and taken a lot of time for me. And then when doing my own practice, it's running my own business, it's a lot of work. So I haven't--well, that's not true. What am I saying to you, Andrey? I'm lying to you.

When I first came up here, I got a job--it was a contract--as the executive director of Contra Costa County's Arts Commission. There are a number of counties throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Contra Costa County is in the East Bay. It's a very large county, and they were just starting an arts commission. They wanted an arts professional to head it up, and I did that to get them going and to get them enough money to start programs, and we started the first program with a summer art program for kids living in public housing in Martinez, which is one of the towns, and then also doing an awards ceremony that would give awards to artists in the county, to increase their visibility and to create a network across the county of all the arts organizations, so they could help each other and share work and show together.

So I did that, and what I experienced was it was nothing like a formal art world. It's people--because it has a very highly sophisticated part of the county that are people of very, very high income, mostly who are executive types who work in San Francisco and this is their suburban home, all the way over to farms. And then there's now the high-tech area that wasn't developed then, and then there's Richmond, which is actually my favorite part, which it's a place people are afraid of because there's a fair amount of poverty, and there's been a lot of violence in Richmond. But it had the most vital art scene and had a really incredible--the Richmond Art Center is a wonderful place. By and large, the county doesn't have--like one of the commissioners had won a prize. She did a painting that was a direct copy of one of the Old Masters and entered it into a competition as her own, and they gave her an award, thinking it was for original work and not a copy of something, and then she got in trouble later. It's a place where what people love is they love making art, and they

relate to it from all different kind of angles, where they live it in their daily life in some way.

But it's not about--in L.A. you've got a highly, highly developed art world, and it may not compare favorably to New York's, but it is way more than here. Now, I think there's a lot going on here that I don't get to see that much.

GORDIENKO

You mentioned earlier in the interview that your current work is related to the work in the arts, so I'm wondering about the nature of this relation between organizational psychology and artistic work.

ANGELO

Okay. Well, I think that in the work I do now in consulting to organizations, what you really aim to do is to help, in a sense, transform workplaces. That may sound loftier than it really is, because it's very nitty-gritty and often difficult. But, for example, a project we're working on right now involves an organization that has had a great deal of conflict and where people are having a very hard time doing their work, and the leaders are very concerned, and the work they do is important. It matters a lot to people, and it needs to happen, but it takes a lot of work to sort of dig underneath and help them find their way. It's not unlike wanting to help create a different world, which was part of the aims of the feminist art movement, and to create innovative ways for people to work together, to talk to each other, to explore their own life experience and then how they were in their work or their world, their families, wherever, to bring that out in new ways so that they would be able to contribute in far greater ways. They would be different and changed and their work would be changed. I mean, they're very closely related.

Also in the artists, the world of arts organizations run by artists, those organizations were created really to be places that would work well for people, as well as accomplish things, and where the creative really mattered. And, you know, now the world of work really cares about innovation, creativity, and I think that things have progressed enough over time that we realize that if you have workplaces where people are profoundly unhappy or the work is not going well,

because it's not designed properly or there's a bad, inadequate strategy or planning, or the work processes aren't right, you're just so limiting--it's like an impoverishing of what's possible. You're like making it--the conditions are far worse than what could possibly be there.

And I think that's part of what was fundamental in the feminist art movement and in the world of artists in general, is artists are the voice for--if you bring these elements of creativity, of new ways of looking and seeing, of new ways of being with each other into life and be different with each other, you'll get something out of it that's unexpected and delightful and wonderful. And the world of artists organizations created in the sixties, seventies, and eighties, and in the feminist art movement, really was about in part a desire for utopia, but it had to grapple with reality. And so that quest is not much different than what somebody in the field of organizational psychology does with organizations today. So I get to do that every day, and I do it mainly with colleges and universities. I do it with hospitals and healthcare. I do it with smaller businesses. They're very, very closely related.

And I could, if you wanted to, I could tell you about specific Feminist Art Workers' pieces and how I see the organizational psychology components of those, if you like.

GORDIENKO

Yes, you could certainly touch upon that aspect. I would like to hear that.

ANGELO

Okay. Well, there was one piece we did. It was called "This Ain't No Heavy Breathing," and the piece at the time, it was part of a larger art framework of art works in Pasadena. This particular piece, the thing that we were interested in was, where do women feel safe, and are you safe in your most private world, but can you also be isolated in your most private world. We recognized that--and also that your most private world also may not be safe, for people who experience--so at the time there were certainly women in the work world, and a lot of women obviously forever have had to work to make a living. And you had middle-class women

who may not have been in the work world, who were more in the home world, taking care of families. But so the thing that we were interested in was, is home the safe place? And for people experiencing domestic violence or abuse of any kind at home, it could not be. For women who wanted to have a bigger life than being at home, it might not be a safe place or a fulfilling place, and it could be a very isolating place if they weren't able to express deeper aspects of themselves or the capacity to be an agent in the world in meaningful ways. So what we did with that is we--and this is also from a completely different world than you have today with social networking, people making their lives very public on the Internet; very different in those days. So what we did is we took the phone book, because telephone was--this was before people had computers. We'd look in the phone book, and we'd find someone with a woman's name. We set up our phone so we could record on it, and we called them and we said that we were Feminist Art Workers, we were artists and we'd picked their name out of the phone book, and we just wanted to call them to wish them well. And at the time, the kinds of--there was also a thing that would happen for women, which is sometimes they would get anonymous phone calls or threatening phone calls.

Some women would be--and this has happened for a long time, people who were stalked, sometimes a stalker would stalk someone on the phone. But also there's a thing where the phone could be used for obscene phone calls or threatening phone calls that would make the home unsafe, as an intrusion from the outside world, and so in making these calls, it was a symbolic act to say, "There are women all over. We relate to you because you're another woman," which we knew would be seen as something probably stupid by most of the women we called. If they weren't feminists and didn't value that, that would be like, "Who are these people, and why are they bothering me?" But what would happen was when we called them, the women who were listed in the phone book just by a woman's name tended to be living alone, because the phone books then, the phone

number would be listed under the husband's name, or else it would say, like, Jack and Jill Smith.
And so we got in these phone conversations--some of them were very touching--with women who really were kind of isolated and lonely. So we recorded these conversations. We thanked them for the interaction. Then we set up a thing in Pasadena in that Old Town, which at the time--now Old Town is shops. This Old Town was the porno district and the red-light district, so this was crime and prostitution. We had a pay phone there, and we sent out postcards, and we directed people to this particular pay phone. I think it was on the corner of Fair Oaks and Colorado or something like that. And when people got there, on the phone booth for a few days we had instructions of what to do, and they would call a number and on--this is in the era of answering machines, which were revolutionary at the time. Actually, Feminist Art Workers in the very beginning, we had an answering service, which that's what people had at the time if you wanted, where live operators would answer your phone for you and take messages, and you would go and pick up your written messages. So this was just in the beginning of answering machines. So we had some of these calls on the answering machine, and people could stand there on a corner in a neighborhood that was very threatening physically. Like you wouldn't want to stand on that corner very long, because of the fact that it was a high-crime area and a little bit scary. Especially if you're a woman you probably wouldn't, but probably men wouldn't either--and listen then to these really kind of wonderful conversations between Feminist Art Workers and these women we called, and there was a little intro to it.
Then we also had it on--there was a series on KPFK--that's the L.A. station; yes, KPFA is up here--KPFK, the Pacifica station, called "Close Radio," that was artist radio, and they also did a whole thing of this. We had it on the air. And the thing about this piece, where it is similar, is it's saying in this work you take into consideration--this is the link to organizational psychology--as you create your work, you take into consideration, what are the needs and interests of

your audience and of the people you're interacting with? This was another thing that separated us some from the men that were our colleagues in the art world at the time, like Kim, whose name I'm blanking on, with his body smeared with excrement. But we didn't want to put people in the position of having to hug us with our bodies covered with shit and piss, essentially, or to do things like Paul McCarthy going to the front door, ringing the doorbell, and then shooting a blank from a gun and scaring somebody profoundly. Instead we wanted to be more of a force of creating connection and warmth and increasing understanding, like to shed more light than heat, I would say, and more a connection on another level.

So there's that piece, that link in, that if you just do work that's about "I want to express something, and I don't care what it does to you," that was more the traditional world. The link into the organizational psychology is that if we really think about the organizations we build that are the places where we work, but they're also the places where we educate people, we take care of the sick, we produce things that people need, we run our cities out of them--if you take into consideration the needs and interests of the people who are doing the work, the people they're there to serve in whatever way they are, and allow for more voices and consideration of all the voices in how you design things, you can end up with things that are way more powerful than if you're just trying to say, "Do it because I said do, because this is it and I don't care I'm cloaked in excrement, you have to hug me." I mean, I'm making it more dramatic than--I'm trying to make a point by being a little over-dramatic. There is a relationship.

So the work of organizational psychology is to really consider all the people, where are they coming from, what are their needs and interests. How do you engage them in ways where people come in common cause, where they can find the meaning in something that's bigger than their own endeavor, but that their own endeavor is a big piece of it, and they contribute the very best they can from their own endeavor into something that is a shared endeavor, and then it makes

something that's benefiting even more people? And how do you handle the power relationships, which are fundamental in a feminist analysis? Some of the feminist analysis in the workplace is a useful one to have, but there are other power dynamics beyond feminist analysis as well. How do you support leadership and having people be powerful leaders in ways that help move things forward meaningfully for people, rather than it being something that diminishes or impoverishes? All of those things fit into that world, so it feels like a privilege to get to exercise some of the same things.

You know, another piece that I did early on that I didn't tell you about that was just my own that the Feminist Art Workers helped me with, because I'd shared with you the blindness I had as a child, is that I did a piece where I had people--this is in our studio in Pasadena--I had people come together, and I disabled each person in some way, or they disabled themselves by choice. They picked, like, are you going to not have use of a leg, not have use of a hand? Are you going to not have use of your eyes?

Candace was deaf in one ear, Candace Compton, and so that was also something, because we shared this thing where she couldn't hear so well, I'd had problems singing. You could kind of see this thing. So everybody had something that they were disabled, and then together I grouped people who had different disabilities, so that together they formed one whole body and one whole capability, that group. So together they would have somebody who couldn't walk, they'd have somebody who couldn't use their hands, they had somebody who couldn't see, but together they would all have all the capabilities of one whole body.

And then I gave them like instructions that was sort of like going on a scavenger hunt or a treasure hunt, where they had to leave the studio in this disabled state all together, and one person who was fully able to could drive, and then they had to make their way to places in L.A. and find things and bring them all together. And then the place where they all met was in Griffith Park at the merry-go-round. And then I had all these people--I just loved it. It kind of reminded me

of a contemporary sort of Hieronymus Bosch image of all of these people with these different parts of themselves disabled, riding these merry-go-round animals and going around. It was really a great image to see, along with all these children and families sort of wondering, who are these people? But they brought all of their things they found all over the city, and then all together they talked about what was it like to not have the use, and that they didn't have to struggle with that disability alone. They could struggle with it as one whole body together, and how do they move all together? That piece actually is a lot of what I do every day in my work, because none of us have--in an organizational or work setting, we don't have all of it. We have pieces of it.

GORDIENKO

I guess another kind of a general question I have that links your own work to the Feminist Movement as a whole is the question concerning periodization. There is often this dichotomy posed in a discourse on feminist art that states that seventies art was somehow essentialist. There was this central core imagery. There was the kind of talk about what would be a truly women's art like? And then on the other hand, feminist discourse back in the eighties much more theoretically inclined and influenced by psychoanalysis, semiotics, political theory, kind of distancing itself from essentialism. But then your work kind of makes me question this dichotomy, because in the "Nun and Deviant," for example, you talk about transformation and becoming and changing shapes, so it's very different from that kind of essentialism that's ascribed to early feminist art. Do you believe in this dichotomy, or do you think it's not very productive?

ANGELO

The only thing I can think to say is yes and. You know, I think that I guess the way I'd see it, which is probably way more simple than that, is that if you're thinking of as the essential the central core imagery and all that came from that, that was an opening into understanding, and it's one example or way, or a set of examples or a way of looking at what might be seen of as a way for women artists to create

and express themselves, but it was one of many. And maybe the artists who came more out of conceptual art framework and performance came from a more theoretical framework to begin with, and more living in the world of ideas.
And, you know, I can't paint. I don't draw. I don't know how to do those things. I've done some sculpture and really enjoyed it, and I've done assemblage, and I do like--there was a whole period in which I made a lot of pieces that were sculptural pieces. But the world that's more interesting has more to do with the world of ideas, and maybe that lends itself more to the eighties' analysis. But I don't think it was all one way or the other. Maybe it's the role of the art historian to try to categorize, and I guess the thing that I think is important is I hope that, just as you've done, as long as original source materials are available and people are alive, I hope that the scholars, like you and the ones who follow you, also they look to both the scholarly precedents and they look to the original source material and they come up with their own new interpretations, because I think if people just interpret the waves of scholarly work without experiencing the original--and then coming up with your own conclusion--I don't know what you'll do with this. You'll find your own things you do with it and create your own understandings. And I really do think that also for the people who--as long as we all have the good luck to live, we also keep growing and learning and our viewpoints change. Even the ways of retrospective sense making, looking back and figuring out, "What was that all about?", it's probably as you're looking at the narrative, the narrative will change as we grow older. And also we're all different, and there are so many different factors.
So there's an organizational theorist whose work I really love, whose name is Karl Weick. He actually taught at Cornell for some period of time. I don't know if he's still there. But he's always says, "Make things more complex. Don't try to simplify it. Complicate it." Because it's really, when you're dealing with the richness of human phenomena, it's not simple. You can find things that are simple in it--that my thinking is sort of the same about--I mean, I guess I live

more in that place than trying to clarify it down to the few things that really are truthful across time. I think that the meanings will be different at different times. And why do you think the meanings were different in the eighties? Why did the eighties need to have--

GORDIENKO

I just think there is a certain influence coming from academia, right? I mean, I think in the seventies there was a kind of separation from academia, where people like yourself would actually start alternative organizations and educational programs, whereas in the eighties you have certain scholars working within established institutions and universities and producing this kind of theoretical discourse, very much detached from the attempts to locate the feminine essence in art, and also borrowing a lot of ideas from, let's say, continental philosophy from French theory, kind of distancing itself from the previous generation.

ANGELO

Yes. See, I think that's really interesting, and then what does your generation do and the next generation. I think it'll be really interesting to see what meanings you all put to it, and hopefully there'll be chances to keep touching base and with what the meanings were for those who were involved, in any area of research.

GORDIENKO

Are you interested in the way contemporary curators and artist audience treat this period, the late seventies when you did much of your work? For instance, did you have a chance to attend the California Video Exhibition at the Getty Center in Los Angeles a couple of years ago?

ANGELO

Yes. You know, I didn't see that. Glenn Phillips, who had a lot to do with that exhibition at the Getty, I had a conversation with him about that, and I wish I had seen that. I'm not sure. I guess I've had the experience at times of feeling like people may not understand, I don't know, thinking about films and just over the weekend going to see a movie to have fun. We saw the film "Potiche." Have you seen that?

GORDIENKO

I've heard about it, but I didn't see it.

ANGELO

Right. Well, you know that, like, oh, my god, don't even--I mean, it's like sort of kind of a pathetic rendering of a period that I lived in. So I think it's very hard to think--and I don't know, and I probably--I didn't see that. I didn't get to see Glenn Phillips' work, that exhibition. And there have been various feminist art exhibitions around the country, one at the Brooklyn Museum. The thing about--I'd say the prominent things, in terms of the Woman's Building, it's normal, I think, that the founders have been the primary focus for a lot, and so you would find a lot about Judy Chicago and Arlene Raven and Sheila de Bretteville and Suzanne Lacy and Deena Metzger and the early people. Then I guess the thing that I'm always interested in anything is, where are all the voices? And the people who chose to--for all the things that I've read, with everything I've read I've found, like, "That wasn't me. That didn't--." You know, they're partial stories, it's not the whole, and they're stories from different angles, and we each have our own. We have the lenses we look through, and we tell the stories the best ways we know how, so I'm not saying anybody hasn't done that the best way they know how. But I just think that over time, whenever there are ways to get as many different perspectives into the mix and a whole range of interpretations, I think that would be valuable.

GORDIENKO

Yes. And just one concluding question. What would be your advice for a young feminist activist or artist today, starting out her career? Or is there something that you would have done differently, like if you were just a beginner?

ANGELO

You know, the thing that I notice--this is going to sound weird to you, I think--for my generation, people didn't believe in us. Our parents didn't really, so we had to fight very hard to find a voice. Then we worked really, really hard when we had our children or our nieces and nephews or our godchildren, to give them a sense that they were really, really of value and that their voice mattered. And then the

thing that I find, like talking to my nieces and nephews and all now is that for them there's a struggle, because they expect the world to more go their way, and they're living in a world where it's hard to find work. You know, the world isn't all set up to go their way, but we gave them the impression that things should go their way more. And we didn't expect the world to go our way. We were taught--we weren't encouraged. We were discouraged, and we had to find our own way to stand on our own two feet and not be beaten down in life.

And I guess the thing that I would wish for young feminists, for young men and women both, I think I would wish for them to have a mixture of finding and listening to their own internal promptings and their own inner compass, and also to be really, really fiercely curious about the world in ways that they challenge their own assumptions and look for new understandings, and to try to find people with whom they can build community that's not just out of sameness, but where there's shared values of caring about greater diversity and allowing for a lot of different ways of looking and thinking. And to be relentless, to not give up.

You know, there's so much that has changed. Like what did I see? I watched a little bit of something on "Oprah" where she had a woman on who was about my age, and when she was like eighteen, nineteen, twenty, she was arrested for supposedly selling heroin, and she went to prison and she escaped, and she raised a family as a fugitive and didn't tell anybody. And what her daughter said--her daughter was in her twenties, said, "I always wondered why my mother wasn't an ordinary mother, because I knew she was ambitious and smart. Like why didn't she have a career, and why wasn't she out there in the world?" That wouldn't have been the narrative of my generation. So I guess the thing that there's a lot that's changed, like that would be her world view, but we still have a world where--I mean, when you look at--I mean, it breaks my heart every day to read about the poverty and sexual abuse and rape and abuse and just really the feminization of poverty that you see in so many areas of the world. And it's not--anyway, I could go on and

on. But there's just so much more to be done, and people need to find their way to pick up their piece of it and do something with it, without trying to be grandiose but being sincere. That's what I'd say.

GORDIENKO

Thank you.

ANGELO

You're welcome.

GORDIENKO

And thank you so much for your time.

ANGELO

You're welcome.
