CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW OF BERNARD KESTER

by Joan M. Benedetti

Bernard Kester

July 11, 2008

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Bernard Kester was a friend and advisor to the founder of CAFAM, Edith Wyle, from the beginnings of The Egg and The Eye gallery in 1965. At the time, he was on the UCLA Fine Arts faculty and a regular contributor to *Craft Horizons*, the magazine of the American Craft Council, writing about contemporary craft activities in Southern California. He attended the seminal contemporary craft conference at Asilomar in 1957. He was briefly the first Board President of CAFAM and then on its program committee (PIC) in the late seventies; he then served on the board for several years in the eighties. He has curated important exhibitions of contemporary crafts at LACMA, the UCLA Wight Gallery, MOCA Chicago, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, and the Minnesota Museum of Art. He curated two important CAFAM exhibitions: California Women in Craft and Made in L.A. and was himself the subject (along with Sam Maloof and Laura Andreson) of a CAFAM exhibition, California Classics.

A ceramist and weaver and contemporary craft critic, he is known internationally for his writing about and curating of contemporary craft exhibitions, as well as for his exhibition designs. He was the designer of three of the California Design shows (1968, 1971, and 1976), curated by Eudorah Moore and held triennially for many years in Pasadena. He designed shows for LACMA, especially during Rusty Powell's tenure (1980 – 1992). He has also designed exhibitions for the L.A. Municipal Art Gallery, the Pacific Design Center, and the J. Paul Getty Museum. He is a Fellow of the American Craft Council and was honored with an American Craft Council Award of Distinction in 2002. He is a Trustee Emeritus of what was the American Craft Museum (now the Museum of Art and Design). He holds a B.A. in Fine Arts and an M.A. in Ceramics from UCLA. He was on the faculty of the Fine Arts School at UCLA from 1956 – 1993. He was head, art department 1972 – 1975. In 1987 he was appointed Acting Dean of the College of Fine Arts. He retired as Dean in 1991, but continued to teach until 1993. After his retirement from UCLA, he was for several more years a principal designer at the L.A. County Museum of Art.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Interviewer: Joan M. Benedetti. B.A., Theater; M.A., Library Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. **Related Experience:** Milwaukee Public Library Decorative Arts Librarian, 1967 – 1968; CAFAM Museum Librarian 1976 – 1997. From 1998 – 2012, Benedetti worked to process the CAFAM Records, 1965 – 1997, which are now part of Special Collections at the UCLA Young Research Library. From 2008 – 2010 she conducted oral history interviews with seventeen former CAFAM staff and trustees; almost 60 hours were recorded and transcribed. She is the author of several articles on folk art terminology and small art museum libraries and the editor of *Art Museum Libraries and Librarianship*, Lanham, MD: ARLIS/NA and Scarecrow Press, 2007.

Time and Setting of Interview

Place: Librarian's Office, L.A. County Museum of Art Research Library

Dates: July 11 and July 18, 2008

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of hours recorded: Two interviews took place one week apart, both in the afternoon. The first session was 1 hour, 59 minutes, 31 seconds; the second session was 1 hour, 54r minutes, 7 seconds. A total of 3 hours, 53 minutes, 38 seconds of conversation was recorded.

Persons Present during Interview: Bernard Kester and Joan M. Benedetti

Conduct and Content of Interview: To prepare for the Kester interview, Benedetti reviewed the relevant documents in the CAFAM Records at UCLA Special Collections, including several Kester résumés, and an article that appeared in the *UCLA Magazine* (Summer 1991). The interview follows a roughly chronological outline.

Editing: Benedetti and Kester reviewed the interview transcript, making minor changes and correcting spelling of names. Benedetti added (in brackets) full names and opening dates of CAFAM exhibitions where appropriate. She also added (in brackets) some further information for clarification and deleted (with ellipses) some back-and-forth comments that did not further the reader's understanding of the narrative. A later version of the transcript was reviewed by Kay Spilker, a friend of Kester's. Time stamps have been added to both the table of contents and the transcript at five-minute intervals; the time stamps make it easier to locate the topics in the transcript that are mentioned in the table of contents.

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Session 1, Friday, July 11, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti (1 hour, 59 minutes, 31 seconds).

JB: Today is Friday, June 27 [actually July 11], 2008, and I'm at the L.A. County Museum of Art [LACMA] with Bernard Kester, who has a long history of involvement, both with LACMA and with the Craft and Folk Art Museum and its predecessor, The Egg and The Eye gallery, as well as the School of the Arts at UCLA. Today we'll talk about some of Bernard's early background and, especially, his involvement with the Egg and The Eye gallery. And then in another session, we'll focus on the Craft and Folk Art Museum as well as some of Bernard's wider interests. And my name is Joan Benedetti.

So let's start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

BK: Oh, I was born in March 25, 1928, and I, therefore, have just turned eighty.

JB: So, can you tell us a little bit about your family?

BK: I was an only child and they came . . . from Colorado Springs--where they were married—[to] here, and I was born, however, in Salt Lake City, which was their extended route to get here. So essentially, I'm a native of California because I arrived here at eight months old.

JB: Oh, I was going to ask you what brought you to California. I guess your parents brought you to California.

BK: That's right.

JB: So you were an only child. What were your family doing in Colorado Springs . . . ?

BK: Well, they met and married there, and it was the home of my father's parents, [who] had a summer house there in Colorado Springs. They were from New York and they came every summer to spend time in Colorado Springs.

JB: So what took them [your parents] to California then?

BK: Well, they were interested in leaving the kind of high-altitude blustery winters and things like that, so they came to California as a good choice because they had friends who had also come to California.

JB: And was that in the L.A. area to begin with?

BK: Yes. [First they went to Orange County.]

JB: So you've been here a long time.

BK: [laughing] Well, yes!

JB: I know from reading your cv and a few other things that you have a B.A. and an M.A. in art from UCLA.

BK: That's right.

JB: But can you maybe—I didn't realize you'd gotten to California so early—tell us a little bit [about] before you got to college--what was going on.

BK: Well, I was interested even in earlier school [in] the art classes. And I was, I guess, somewhat creative because I was interested in building and constructing things. And then my father was a football hero and he was clearly--

JB: Really?

BK: Yes. I mean, not that he was good, but he was a football enthusiast and a football player in college. And so he always . . . felt that I should go to USC because USC has always had a strong football program. And I wasn't interested in going to USC for at the time it didn't have as good an art department as UCLA did. So that's how I got to UCLA. And that was fine.

JB: So you had an interest in art from a very young age.

BK: Yes.

JB: Was there anything about your family that influenced you--

BK: No.

JB: --any collections or--

BK: No, I don't think so.

JB: Well, what do you remember about the UCLA art department when you [were] first associated with it?

BK: Yes, it was very broad-based, and it—among the departments at UCLA--had—at that time—a strong component of women on the faculty. And that all changed over the years because UCLA first started as a **[05:00]** southern California normal school--

JB: A teaching university--

BK: Yes. Well, not only that, they had an art department, and it sprang forth way down in downtown Los Angeles.

JB: Oh-h.

BK: And I remember—what makes me remember this—it seems silly but I remember having a teacher at UCLA who was a very handsome woman--and she said when she began

teaching she arrived on the trolley in her hobble skirt. And in order to get up and down from this trolley to the street level she had to have a cane or a walking stick. So she told stories about this early life of the school and I learned a little bit of the early geography of Los Angeles. Because she said on short days in summer they would sometimes take the trolley to the Bimini Baths on north Vermont Avenue. [laughing]

JB: Oh—I don't think I know anything about that! [laughing]

BK: [laughing] Well, nobody ever knew how old she was. She retired from UCLA about 1954.

JB: Do you remember her name?

BK: Yes. Louise Pinkney Sooy. And, oddly enough, she had married the coach of the football team at the time at UCLA. It did not last, of course, because she was temperamental and he was a scrawny kind of guy I guess—a sportsman. And [laughing] so—isn't that odd to remember such things? But she was a very good teacher. In fact, she was head of the department at one time—before I came to the scene—but she was still on the faculty and a very interesting woman. She was also into costume design and she taught costume history, furniture history, and decorative arts history in the art department. And so, she was very enthusiastic about lots of things. And I took, in fact, a class—this is sounding overbalanced on this side of the wheel of art but she taught costume design and she apparently liked some of the things that I did and she called me in to her office one time and she said, "Would you be interested in a job?" And I said, "Well, I suppose." I hadn't thought about having, you know, a job at that early portion of my--

JB: This was when you were an undergraduate--

BK: Yes. And she said, "Well, I have a request here from a corset company." [laughing] I don't remember the name of it. "And they need a designer. And you know how to design," she said to me early on. And I just thought it was a big joke. And she said--

JB: You probably had not thought too much about corset design—I don't know, but [laughing]--

BK: Well, I thought it was memorable that she thought of me as a potential corset designer! [laughing]

JB: [laughing] That's wonderful! So—how big was the faculty then?

BK: Oh, it was a good size faculty because they had—art education was part of their undergraduate programming and they had, of course, lots of men on the faculty, mostly men, but a sizeable component of women. And one of the famous—she was famous at the time in California—was Dorothy Brown, who was a painter. And I studied with her, and then [there] was Jan Stussy, who was an artist and [with whom] I studied drawing and also figure composition—I think it was with her. And Clinton Adams, who was also

very well-known in those days around town, and subsequently became head of the art department at [the University of] New Mexico, when the Tamarind Lithography Workshop moved there in 1970.

Well, the Tamarind Workshop was born in Los Angeles and its founder-director--and leader--was June Wayne, who is still living on the same site as the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, on Tamarind Avenue in L.A. She originated it, of course, and led it **[10:00]** for ten years, and then she wanted to relinquish that and it went with Clinton Adams [to UNM

JB: Was that—excuse me—but was that in the late forties, early fifties that it was founded?

BK: No, no, no. It wasn't founded until about 1958 or 59. [It was founded in 1960 by June Wayne, Garo Antreasian, and Clinton Adams.] And then it had a tenure here up until 1970. And the reason that I recall that time frame is that she got a Ford Foundation grant to help get it off the ground and then it really was in flight for a number of years and many, many famous artists of many media had their time spent there and so forth.

JB: Yes, now did she teach at UCLA for a time?

BK: No, no.

JB: OK, so . . . did you feel that you were beginning to have a focus in art—I guess what I want to ask is, did you, at the time [at UCLA], think that you would be a professional artist . . .?

BK: Yes.

JB: --and what areas were you interested in?

BK: Well, no, [I] wasn't that focused. I enjoyed design and the kind of possibility of making things that are useful, which is different than painting. And I think that my paintings were not very inspired—far from being inspired.

JB: But you didn't really have an ambition to be a painter at that point?

BK: No.

JB: That was just [one] of the courses that you needed to take?

BK: Yes, sure. And I studied several things. They had—it was quite a diverse program. They had interior design. It was before there was a school of architecture at UCLA. And had that already been there--I had an interest in architecture even at that point, and—but UCLA didn't have an architecture school—that wasn't until much later.

JB: Now let's see—what time period exactly are we talking about? When did you graduate?

BK: Well, I graduated in 1950.

JB: OK.

BK: I graduated in 1950 with my BA and then I entered graduate school and then while I was doing the latter part of that I taught—or was invited to teach—ceramics, which I was also involved in a program at UCLA—undergraduate--and decided that I would do that in my graduate studies in ceramics.

JB: Had you taken any ceramics before you went to UCLA?

BK: No. Then so--I taught at Los Angeles City College--

JB: Oh.

BK: --for a couple of years--at the time that the Los Angeles City College became host to the birth of the state college system. That is, Los Angeles State College [CSULA] was born on the campus of Los Angeles City College. [CSULA was founded in 1947 as L.A. State College of Applied Arts and Sciences on the campus of what is now L.A. City College; the campus was shared with L.A. City College until 1955.]

JB: Oh.

BK: And suddenly right at that point, I found that I would have a class of students that were—part of them were City College students and part of them were the newly-born students in State College. And for a while they had overlapping programs and things like that. But I was there not very long until they—I was invited to come to UCLA and teach after I received my MA [in 1954]—we didn't have MFAs at UCLA at that time. So I went there beginning in 1956 on the faculty at UCLA and that's where I've been ever since.

JB: And what were you teaching to begin with at UCLA?

BK: Well, basic ceramics, and then I also taught--but I don't know in which sequence . . . —I also taught basic fundamental design, and ultimately, over the time period, I became interested in textiles and knew both printed and woven textiles. And we had at that time a lady, Margaret Reswold, followed by another lady **[15:00]** whose name I can't recall, who came to us from the Cranbrook Academy [of Art], and she had a shop on Robertson Blvd., when Robertson Blvd. was very big in the decorative arts industry—and way before the Blue Whale [the Pacific Design Center] came into being, and she had a shop there and therefore, she taught at UCLA and then went down and wove for designers and architects.

JB: What was in her shop?

BK: Looms.

JB: So it focused on textiles then.

BK: Yes. She was a weaver. Unfortunately, she smoked like mad and she got cancer and died. And as a consequence of her death, I was given the weaving class because that was a gap . . . suddenly. And that encouraged my interest in textiles more and more. Yes.

JB: Yes. Did you continue to teach both ceramics and textiles?

BK: Yes, for a while I taught both things, and, you know, both programs grew—well, the whole university grew—but the art department did continue to grow up until the point where we had a kind of design faculty and a painting faculty (which meant paintings, drawings, prints and things like that) and art history. So there were three groupings of curricula and faculty within the art department at that early time, which diversified the department, and it also allowed more concentration in one of those fields, as things grew both in faculty and student population.

JB: Now this was a time—the late fifties (well, actually throughout the fifties I guess) when, partly because of the support of the GI Bill, I believe, there was a growing interest in what came to be called contemporary craft.

BK: Yes.

JB: And I know the American Craft Council was founded in the forties—in the late forties I believe. [The ACC was founded in 1943.] . . . To what extent were you aware of the movement as a whole and the American Craft Council?

BK: Well, yes, I was concerned about all of that. There was the American Ceramic Society, which was older than the American Craft Council, and I was active in that—in what they called the Design Division, which still exists in Southern California. They still send me their little booklet every month about things, which—anyway, there was that--and I began to exhibit some pots. Of course, exhibitions of art [were] more or less limited to fine arts, and not to craft, and so that's in part the reason for the Design Division of the American Ceramic Society: to foster greater awareness of ceramics as a form that can be exhibited.

And into that sort of vacuum, I think, in the fifties, [came] Eudorah Moore at Pasadena—and she was Chairman of the Board and also Director of the museum there [the Pasadena Art Museum] at one time or another. She felt that inequality of exhibition possibilities, and she asked me to come and design and put together a little pottery exhibition one time—and I don't remember when, but it was very early [c1954], before the California Design things came into being. [Eudorah Moore was curator, then director of design, for the former Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, 1950 – 1976.] And that was the first exhibition that, I think, I had pieces in and that she asked me to design and put the

thing together. So, she is, in fact, therefore, responsible for kind of introducing me to exhibition design, which--I didn't know what it was at the time. **[20:00]**

JB: Yes, that was one of the questions I was going to ask: what your first show that you had designed was.

BK: Well, it wasn't that I designed it, really. It was—we got a bunch of pots together; now what do you do with them to put them together in the gallery? And whether we needed more than one gallery and so forth. So that's the way it all started actually, [organizing and presenting].

JB: Now was this in the building that now is the Pacific Asia Museum?

BK: Yes, yes. Well, actually, that museum at that time was quite an attractive museum for contemporary art and even very national and international figures showed there, and that brought that museum to early attention, even though it was what I called the "Anna Mae Wong" building.

JB: Yes, it's had an interesting history, that building.

BK: Yes, absolutely.

JB: Well, let's see, what about the American Craft Council. At what point did you-- ?

BK: Well, the first time that I had, really, access to that—lets see, I'm trying to remember, when did *Craft Horizons* (the magazine), when was it born? [*Craft Horizons* was first issued in 1941 as a newsletter.]

JB: Well, I was just wondering about that too, and I realized that it did start while—either just before or while—the war was going on. So I think it was the early forties.

BK: Probably. And then what brought [together] the personalities involved in all of craft media nationally was the first international—no I would say it was the first national conference of craftsmen—and that was held at Asilomar, up the coast, in 1957 I think it was.

JB: I think you're right.

BK: And that was Aileen Osborn Vanderbilt Webb, [who] was the originator of that cluster of bodies . . . [Aileen O. Webb founded America House in New York in 1940. In 1941, she helped start *Craft Horizons* magazine. In 1943, she founded the American Craft Council. In 1944, she founded the School for American Crafts (SAC), now known as RIT in Rochester, NY. In 1956, she founded the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, now known as the Museum of Arts and Design, the first museum to exhibit craft art by living artists. In 1964, she created the World Craft Council to support indigenous craftspeople around the world.]

JB: She organized the meeting.

BK: Yes. And it was a very fruitful and I think a wonderful [meeting], uh—you know, it went on for several days—I don't know [how long]. [The "First Annual Conference of American Craftsmen sponsored by the American Craftsmen's Council" was held at Asilomar, California, June 12 – 14, 1957.]

JB: It was really a historic meeting.

BK: Yes, it was and in a beautiful setting and they brought together major international figures to speak about various media and what was happening in those various media. And I remember a professor at UCLA who was one of the speakers, and his name was [Dr. Karl With]. He was brought up there. He was a German import to UCLA and he was one whom they asked, you know, to sign one of the—this is when the--

JB: --the blacklisting?

BK: Yes. Anyway, he brought a view that was a European view to the integration of machine design and forms by hand--

JB: A sort of Bauhaus principle-- ?

BK: Yes. And he wasn't a Bauhaus figure, but he was a historian about [Asian art]—and he taught a fundamentals class at UCLA, which was quite inspiring and different than most at the time, and we called it the "pots and pans" class. I've forgotten the exact title, but it did describe what it was about, and that was: why can't and why aren't utility vessels always beautiful or are they beautiful because of the response to a need to create a form in various media? And he was brusque and all and a very fascinating man. Karl With, but he [pronounced] it as Veet.

JB: And was he there [at UCLA] for quite a while?

BK: Yes, yes, yes. He was there beyond the time that I was [a student]—well, let's see—he was there, I would say probably up into the late—well, the sixties, I think. **[25:00]**

JB: And at what point—we may be jumping ahead here, but I don't know--

BK: That's OK.

JB: At what point did you start writing for *Craft Horizons*?

BK: Well, I--of course—at Asilomar. Everything was judged by what took place at Asilomar.

JB: Yes, it was very important that you were there.

BK: Yes, Rose Slivka was the editor of *Craft Horizons*. That's how all this dispersal of information traveled. So I met her there and pretty soon, I don't know, we had discussions and so

forth, and from time to time, she traveled somewhat, you know, to cover exhibitions and it was also the period that Peter Voulkos came to California. [Peter Voulkos was at Otis Art Institute from 1954 – 1959 (during this time it was called the L.A. County Art Institute); and then he was at UC Berkeley from 1959 – 1985.]

JB: Yes.

BK: And he brought with him a different kind of attitude of ceramic building and making . . . that was nontraditional in its nature and she was fascinated by that and wrote a big article. I've forgotten the name of her article—and ultimately she wrote his biography [*Peter Voulkos: A Dialogue with* Clay (N.Y. Graphic Society, 1978)], which is—which was --very interesting, and she was with him even about the time that he died--whenever that was—it was several years ago now. [Voulkos died February 16, 2002.]

JB: Yes, it was a few years ago.

BK: And she's now dead too. [Slivka died in early September 2004.] But that magazine had considerable, growing interest in the exhibition of and salability of contemporary crafts. And so she asked me to write little reviews and things, periodically.

JB: You were representing the west coast weren't you, to a certain extent?

BK: No, no, no, no. I had no tie to it really. I only covered some Los Angeles or Southern California exhibitions, and, in fact, I wasn't the only one. Susan Peterson, who was a potter at USC at the time, also wrote. And she was a good colleague of mine in whom I—she lives now in [Carefree], Arizona. [Susan Peterson died in 2009.] So we had lots of contacts together.

JB: And many of them, I guess, started at Asilomar, or at least coalesced there.

BK: Yes, yes, and they were really world figures. In fact I met Anni Albers and her husband . . . there. And she had a little session at the time [at Asilomar] and that's where I first met her, whom I knew all about and—about her and her husband—from the time that she was at Black Mountain College, and, of course, historically, part of the Bauhaus.

JB: Well, there's so much about that period that I'd like to talk about—[but] maybe we should get back a little bit to your personal history. I understand that you--did you take graduate courses at Claremont and USC?

BK: It was because they had—often in summer—various universities might invite non-regular faculty to come—lots of them liked to come to California—and so there was a potter who came to teach at USC from—oh—the name of the university—New York State University—of Ceramics--

JB: Alfred?

BK: Alfred University. He came to Claremont—and I wanted to know him and he also came to USC one summer. [The ceramic sculptor, teacher, and author, Daniel Rhodes, was at Alfred from 1947 – 1973. He taught summer sessions in ceramics at USC 1952-53.] And I went there and took a class with him, and his wife was an artist [Rhodes' wife, Lillyan Estelle Jacobs, was a potter, sculptor, and painter] and she was a very interesting artist too. So that's a way of getting different viewpoints that you wouldn't ordinarily have. And broadening, you know, one's perspective and so forth.

JB: Yes, well I guess I'd really like to know when you became aware of Voulkos and that whole point of view, which was pretty revolutionary at the time.

BK: Yes, that was while I was still at Los Angeles City College because some of the students at City College were very impressed by his arrival at--

JB: Otis [Art Institute] in 1954. [In 1947 the Otis Art Institute's name was changed to the L.A. County Art Institute; in 1960 the name was changed again to Otis Art Institute of L.A. County; by this time, however, Voulkos was teaching at UC Berkeley.]

BK: Otis. And it wasn't far away. It was--

JB: Right, right—at the time. [At that time Otis was in L.A. at 2401 Wilshire Blvd. in Westlake across the street from MacArthur Park.]

BK: And so they would go and observe. **[30:00]** And he also gave lots of public demonstrations of his vast physical capability on the potter's wheel, you know.

JB: He must have been quite a showman in a way.

BK: He was quite a showman as a matter of fact. And so he appeared at Claremont. He appeared here and there and at USC and at Otis, where he then lodged. I mean that's where he—

JB: --was on the faculty--

BK: --and ultimately, he was asked to go to the University of California at Berkeley and did so and left to go to the Bay Area. But there were other artists--Susan Peterson, for example, traveled a lot to Japan and . . . she knew Shoji Hamada and other famous artists there . . . So she had a big summer seminar with Shoji Hamada, who came and demonstrated, and we all gathered, of course . . . to see them.

JB: Was that the one where Bernard Leach--[Susan Peterson hosted a three-week workshop with Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada, and Yanagi Soetsu at Chouinard [in Los Angeles], where she was teaching, in 1952.]

BK: Yes. So, it was very interesting—yes it was; it was very good. And then there was also the importance of the influx of people from Europe avoiding, you know, the--

JB: Yes, yes, the Holocaust.

BK: So Marguerite Wildenhain and her husband at the time—Franz Wildenhain—they settled in northern California—can't think of the name of the place at the moment—[Pond Farm outside of Guerneville, California] and her brother was hired at UCLA in History—European History—and so the contact between her and her brother at UCLA brought her to UCLA more frequently than otherwise would have happened. And his name was Friedlander and her maiden name was Friedlander. She was Dutch, but French-Dutch. And so Professor Friedlander lived in Westwood and she would come down to visit him and she would wander over sometimes to visit the pottery shops. So she and Laura Andreson became good friends. And she--

JB: Laura was teaching at UCLA at this time?

BK: Yes, before I was—long before I was. She started in 1933 or something. [Andreson started teaching at UCLA in 1933, just one year after she graduated *summa cum laude* from there in 1932.]

JB: She was always at UCLA? She was never associated with USC? Is that right?

BK: Only UCLA.

JB: OK.

BK: She, I guess, was probably, maybe the first person in ceramics at UCLA—I imagine. Because she graduated from UCLA in 1932 or something, just [after] it moved to Westwood from Vermont Avenue. [UCLA moved to Westwood from Vermont Avenue in 1926.] And so Marguerite was an important influence. So she would oftentimes drop in, unannounced, for tea, because she came down to visit her brother and his wife.

JB: Would she come into your classes?

BK: Yes, sure. The classes were lots of big spaces, and Laura would often have tea in the afternoon or whenever. So she [Marguerite Wildenhain] would drop in and there would be a cup of tea or she would wander around and see things and visit. Very interesting woman, I thought. And—as was Susan [Peterson], having brought Shoji Hamada and all of that in.

JB: What great resources you had.

BK: Yes. It was very interesting, and then Laura traveled extensively also in the Orient and there were other more nontraditional potters emerging. And so they would then travel here and we would have them giving demonstrations and things in classes.

JB: And what about the effect of all of this on your students, especially the ones that were working in clay—or any media for that matter—did you find that more were interested in a sculptural or nonfunctional way of working?

BK: Well, we had a sculpture department at UCLA too, taught by a sculptor—Mr. Oliver Andrews—and there was more than one sculptor. Then we had a sculptor from Cranbrook, [Robert Cremean], who came in. And he had studied **[35:00]** pottery with [Maja Grotel], the original person at Cranbrook, who had the pottery shop.

JB: So ceramics were part of the sculpture department?

BK: No, sculpture was really in the painting department. But the location was adjacent to the pottery shop.

JB: Ah-h-h.

BK: So, there were—there were overlaps. We had at that time, when I was teaching there, we had silversmithing, [which] was a serious discipline. And bookbinding as well.

JB: Wonderful--

BK: Yes, and weaving, and also printed textiles. And as those faculty moved on, . . . the focus of things became narrower, but the intensity increased, I would say, as we went forward. I guess it was forward! [laughing]

JB: [laughing] So at that time, then, there were really two ways of working with craft media: the more traditional or functional and the more sculptural, I guess I would say. But it sounds as if UCLA and—yourself—embraced both in terms in teaching—is that right? Or was there some tension?

BK: No, I don't think there was any tension, but students, let's say—stepping back a little bit—the students whom I had at City College, almost half of them went over across the way [to Otis] to study with Voulkos—and others went elsewhere. One very prominent potter went immediately to USC from City College and graduated from USC and is a very—Tom McMillan is his name—and others stayed at UCLA and some of them even went out of state to Alfred, if that became an important part of their training. . . . And then one of them—there was a guy in my pottery class named Billy Al Bengston--

JB: Oh, yes. What was he like?

BK: He was a potter and then he went to the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland.

JB: Oh yes.

BK: And that was where Carleton Ball was—he was in charge of the Mills College ceramic program, where Susan Peterson trained, and then there was also Edith Heath, who was a potter in Sausalito.

JB: Yes!

BK: The first place that Marguerite Wildenhain taught when she came to the states—she was hired at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, but she and her husband wanted not urban living and so they went to . . . [Guerneville]. And so that left an opening and so the lady in Sausalito [Edith Heath], who had made tiles and dinnerware and all sorts of things—but high-class stuff—it was very good.

JB: I actually had some of their dinnerware back in the early sixties.

BK: Yes, well, I think they're going to reproduce it because it was really swanky stuff!

JB: Yes, and I could afford it at the time [laughing].

BK: Yes, yes. And Edith Heath decided—she was appointed to teach **[40:00]** at the College of Arts and Crafts at Oakland from her place in Sausalito. So she invited—now this was even before the conference at--

JB: --at Asilomar--

BK: Yes. So one time [1954?] she invited the various faculty people—faculty people in ceramics--to come for a weekend to the College of Arts and Crafts and what she wanted to know was: what do you teach? Because she was, you know, a professional. She hadn't taught anything before and here she was going to teach the program [at the College of Arts and Crafts]. And it was really kind of comical. But it was interesting because we had a lot of diverse people who arrived there--

JB: Who had maybe hadn't gotten together before?

BK: That's right and who'd—this was before Asilomar you see. And so it was very interesting to meet all these people and there she was. At the time she was quite beautiful with blonde hair, and she got up to demonstrate making a pot on the potter's wheel, with little ruffles here and very, you know, it was almost laughable because she wasn't dressed like a potter would dress. She was dressed like a representative of somebody or some corporation.

JB: And that doesn't reflect the kind of dinnerware that she was designing either.

BK: No, but this was all new to her. She said, "Who are you and what do you do?" So it was all of this meeting and doing--

JB: Maybe she thought this was how the faculties of universities dressed.

BK: Well, I don't know what she thought. But she wanted information. She wanted to know what these people should be taught. Because she knew by then that they weren't going to go and open a shop like she did and have her husband, you know, underwrite the whole thing and get it going **[phone ringing in background]** and have it [be] successful. . . . All right. So—and she was charming—good-looking and charming and I thought—well, anyway, getting back to Bill Bengston. He went up there and was in her first class and he stayed throughout that until he decided to come back here.

JB: At the College of Arts and Crafts.

BK: Yes, and then he came back and he wasn't in ceramics anymore. He went into painting.

JB: Although he's done some decorative kind of painting.

BK: Oh, sure, sure.

JB: Well, let's see. So you were teaching ceramics and textiles. Did you teach anything else?

BK: Oh sure.

JB: --basic design or--

BK: Yes, I taught basic design. Yes. And then later on, much, much later on, I taught design history, and the history of textiles and, you know, other more specialized, lecture-type classes—beyond the laboratory.

JB: Did you find it difficult to—to discover texts that you could use? Did you find that you were really creating your own curricula—in terms of published material?

BK: Well no, I thought there was plenty of that. Yes, there was plenty of that available. Anni Albers wrote two very good books. One was a small one called *On Designing*—period. And the other one was called *On Weaving*. And then Rose Slivka asked me if I would review the book *On Weaving* for *Craft Horizons*. It was [to be] a special article, not just a little dinky one.

JB: Uh-huh.

BK: Which I did. And delighted to do so because her stuff—what she proposed—was so fundamental and interesting. And very good. And she liked the article. That is—not just Rose Slivka, but--

JB: Anni Albers.

BK: Yes. And so she wrote to me and told me she was sending me a print. Which she did. And it was called *Entanglements*, which she had done at Tamarind. (And I had met her again

at Tamarind—this was now after Asilomar of course. And her husband was at Tamarind as well and she was there.) **[45:00]** And—which was very nice of her to do. And the package came [and] it was cardboard. It wasn't professionally packaged. And the print was in there, and just with flabby cardboards, enough to stiffen it a little bit. And when I opened it and saw the print I was quite overcome by it. It was a good-sized print, you know. Then I took the leftovers of this cardboard thing that was taped together and one side felt thicker than the other side, and I thought that was odd, so I poked around and one side had something in it. And I took that apart and found two prints of the *The White Line Squares* by her husband Joseph.

JB: Oh-h-h!

BK: And I—well, I thought, "Something is wrong," because it wouldn't have been packed that way if all of that was in it. So I called her up. I didn't know her number, but I got it, and I talked to her and I said I was just overwhelmed with this beautiful print, and so we chatted a little bit, and I said that I also found two *White Line* prints. And she said, "Ah!" She caught her breath, and she said, "Oh, we had just filed a loss." Apparently they had received a packet from an exhibition that was returned and--

JB: It was hidden away in the--

BK: And they didn't bother to open all the layers of cardboard—I don't know what happened really—anyway, she said, "Will you please send them right away back?" Which, of course, I did. And she was so relieved.

JB: Yes.

BK: Because the one to me she dedicated on the bottom of the print.

JB: Oh, how wonderful.

BK: And so—excuse that aside—but it was interesting--

JB: Oh, I'm sure you still treasure that--

BK: Yes, I do.

JB: Well, as we've indicated, you had quite a career at UCLA, and I think it was in 1972 that you became head of the department for a few years.

BK: Yes, yes, that's true.

JB: Were you—I know that some faculty are not that eager to take on administrative jobs--

BK: Most of them aren't.

JB: So how was the experience that you had?

BK: Well, the experience was, I think, expected. There were—by that time the department was big enough that it had three basic [academic] areas.

JB: And how many faculty would that be—

BK: Oh, I don't remember. There was art history and they were all of a kind. And then there were the painters and the printmakers and the sculptors. And the design people—well, there was greater diversity among the design people because they weren't all object-makers. They were also graphic designers and things like that. So they were almost divided and [had] their own subheads for those three areas. There had been for the most part an art historian for chairman of the department up until that time. I was there for four years or something as chairman. [He was Chairman of the Arts Department, 1972 – 1975.] And so . . . ultimately, we went along in that regard for several years and I was— . . . they rotated the chairman. And then in 1987 (this is a big skip in time now) the Chancellor, **[50:00]** [Charles] Young asked me if I would—what we were in at that early time was called the College of Fine Arts, which had music and dance and all the basic things. So he thought it was high time that we had a more professional view and more emphasis on the graduate programs. So he asked me if I would become Dean of what would become . . . the School of the Arts. [Kester was Acting Dean, UCLA College of Fine Arts, 1987 - 1991.] And then the arts would . . . have a greater kind of independence. The department of Theatre, Film, and Television [which was] going through the same kind of divisionism as the art department. There was Theatre. Film. Television. And the things that they had in common became less and less.

JB: Yes.

BK: I mean everybody had to take a class in movement, you know, no matter what you did.

JB: Or basic acting?

BK: Yes. That acting for television was different from acting for film or stage. So they all became separate departments.

JB: An administrative nightmare. [laughing]

BK: Yes. But anyway. So, music, for example, was as bad as the art department in a way. Music had the musicologists.

JB: Oh, right, yes, yes.

BK: And they left to become what the chairman of that department, that becoming-department (they wanted to be with their research colleagues in the School of Letters and Science) became musicology. They didn't believe in the teaching of performance music.

JB: Oh-h-h.

BK: But oddly enough—and the chairman told me this—"We must keep contact, though, because we have to hire some musicians to show our musicologists what each instrument sounds like."

JB: Oh my God. . . .

BK: Anyway. So then that's the way things went.

JB: So when you were Dean—or Proto-Dean or--

BK: I was an Acting Dean until we formed this School.

JB: Part of that time the performing arts, music and so on, were under your aegis, right?

BK: Right, yes.

JB: So did you—I suppose there were committees--

BK: Yes, there were--many.

JB: But you were chairing the overall--

BK: Yes, thousands of committees, yes—so music, you see, had musicology, which they wanted to go with—then there was ethnomusicology. Now they didn't believe—they didn't have the same beliefs at all. They said that composition and listening and history were all wrapped in one package, not separable. So, they stayed, you see, with the do-ers.

JB: Ah-h-h.

BK: [laughing] And then there was dance, which of course was the doing: dance and ethnomusicology were closer than dance and the other music people.

JB: Yes.

BK: Anyway, it's weird.

JB: Yes, and they [dance] broke off entirely, and joined with folklore, didn't they? [The Ethnic Arts Program, the precursor to the current Department of World Arts and Cultures, was established in 1972 with faculty from the dance and folklore departments; the name changed to World Arts and Cultures in 1984. Then in 1995, it became one of six departments in the School of the Arts and Architecture.]

BK: Well, they had a kind of—yes, yes, sort of. But they are—and they have their own facility now, which is very, very handsome, for dance performance and all of that.

JB: I know that at least a couple of people that were later associated with the Craft and Folk Art Museum went through that [earlier] program—Willow Young was one of them. Well, that

must have been **[55:00]** an amazing experience, and you, apparently, enjoyed that--in spite of the--

BK: Well, I don't know if it was enjoyment; at least we did it.

JB: You did it; it was satisfying then.

BK: And Charles Young, he thought it was better. I think it was inevitable, whether I did it or whether others [did]. I think it was the right thing to take—to happen at the same time. And then architecture came into the picture.

JB: Oh yes, and urban planning.

BK: No, excuse me, there was a School of Architecture and Urban Planning. [The School of Architecture and Urban Planning was started in 1968.] Now the urban planners—this is just so weird—the urban planners, which somebody said were more like geographers—the urban planners didn't believe that there should be practicing architects on the faculty.

JB: Oh!

BK: So, they decided that they would retreat from the architecture department and go into public policy. So, they went to the public policy school and architecture joined the arts. [The latter restructuring happened in 1994.]

JB: How interesting.

BK: It is.

JB: Well I guess they thought of architects as artists and creative people, which essentially, they are.

BK: Yes.

JB: Although sometimes it's hard to separate that from public policy since they're often working on public projects.

BK: Oh yes, sure.

JB: Well, it seems like this whole period from the time that you started at the end of the mid-fifties, certainly through the eighties, early nineties, was a tremendous—a time of tremendous change in point of view.

BK: Yes, that's true. By the way, the architect whom Frank and Edith got to design the proposed building, was Richard Weinstein. He was a professor and chairman of the department until he stepped down because the urban planners wanting to move out

JB: Yes. Now—so, according to the information I have, when you finished your deanship, you retired.

BK: Well, no, I taught a little while and then, let me see now—one could retire and if you were—see everybody had to retire at sixty-seven, which is odd, but never mind. You retire and then, if they want to, they can rehire you at 50% or less, if they want you. [laughing] And so they asked me if I would teach a couple of classes for a couple of years if I wanted to. So I did for two years on sort of a half-time and that was going back into the classroom after my period of [being] Dean. [Kester retired as Dean in 1991.]

JB: Oh, you hadn't been teaching while you were Dean.

BK: Not when I was doing the Dean thing. But I remained on some student committees, but that's all. But that was the period also [of] the beginning of the computer--

JB: Oh yes.

BK: --and the word processor.

JB: Yes.

BK: So I had a lecture class during that period—going back [from the] Deanship—and the students (this was a lecture class and I had them doing papers and things)—so we got papers that were beautifully presented, you know--

JB: Yes.

BK: --because of the--

JB: --computer and the printer.

BK: Of course, of course. And they began to be dreary and, really, I don't know what happened because other people also felt the same way—that the level was—you know, that the papers would come in and they'd look great—and they didn't say much of anything. **[1:00:00]**

JB: They didn't have the content.

BK: They didn't—I don't think they knew how to do any [serious] research or anything.

JB: I don't think it's gotten any better.

BK: I doubt it. But I was sort of disenchanted with what I read in student papers and things, so I thought, well, I'd better get out. [. . .]

JB: Ah! But you did not [just] retire [and rest on your laurels] or--

BK: No, no. That's true. Because I was doing some exhibition designs even before that, but they started out as textile exhibitions because I knew something about textiles and stuff like that.

JB: Maybe you had the same experience that I've had—and many people have—that retire--that suddenly you have time to do the things that you really love most and, yes, I've always thought of you, of course, in terms of the Craft and Folk Art Museum--well, as a curator of course--but primarily in terms of your wonderful installation design. And you did—you said that the very first one that you did was for Eudorah Moore--back in the fifties was that?

BK: Well, the first exhibition—yes, it was very early on, like '54 or something like that. And that was before she took on the California Design thing—which went triennial instead of annual.

JB: Yes.

BK: And became very big, you know, like 700 objects.

JB: Incredible publications associated with that.

BK: Exactly. So that was loads of fun. It was very hard work.

JB: So were you involved with the design of those shows?

BK: I was only involved with three of them—the last three. Well, they weren't exactly sequentially the last three, but I did [number] ten [1968], [number] eleven [1971], and '76. So, the last three were my designs, yes.

JB: But you had been doing design—well, why don't you tell a little bit about that, about your career as a designer, if you can separate that out a little bit.

BK: OK. I had done by that time two or three shows, I think [it was] in 1965 when the museum on Wilshire Blvd. opened.

JB: Yes, LACMA, yes.

BK: The American Craft Council was circulating nationally a show that they did in New York called *Craftsman '66*—I think it was *Craftsmen*, yes, *Craftsmen [USA] '66.* And [as] one of the opening shows that first year, the museum decided to have that exhibition.

JB: LACMA did.

BK: LACMA. And they had just moved there you know.

JB: Right, right.

BK: And so the decorative arts curator [Gregor Norman Wilcox]—poor crafts fell into—he didn't know. **[voices in background]** Anyway, he was not actually very well. He was nearing retirement age. So he didn't know what to do with the crafts show, you know. I mean,

really, he didn't. And he knew furniture from the Colonial onwards and backwards and forwards--

JB: But not the contemporary stuff.

BK: So I don't know who told him about me or something. Anyway, I—he asked me to come and design the show, and I was in it so--

JB: Ceramics?

BK: Yes, ceramics. I think it was just ceramics. Anyway, so I did that, and somebody came along and saw the show afterwards, that is, you know, **[voices in background]** what is her name now?

JB: Oh Tomi Kuwayama!

BK: Yes, well, her brother.

JB: Yes, George.

BK: George. George saw the show there and (I didn't know George at the time) and George said, **[1:05:00]** "Oh, Bernard, you must come and let's talk." So we talked and he was planning a big show of *[yayoi?]* ceramic period, *[jomon?]* pieces. I don't know if it was a touring show or what, but he said he was going to do that show, and I was very interested in the very early Japanese stuff anyway. And he said, "Would you design this show for me?" It was a different gallery and all that and I said, "Sure," because I wanted to see that stuff. So there was no other Asian curator at that time than him. That changed very soon though. And so I did that show and then somebody saw that show and said—oh I know, oh darn it, it was an Indian—there was an Indian at UCLA; there was the man that headed the Indian department, that is, the head of Indian art in the art history department--

JB: That wasn't Pratap?

BK: No, no, no. This was before Pratap. Let's see. What the devil was his name? He died somewhat later. Anyway, he was going to do a big show of Indian art on the second floor of the new galleries. And he had seen the Japanese pot show. So he said, "Why don't you come and talk with me?"

JB: So one thing led to another.

BK: One thing led to the other. And he told me about his show and so, since he was a guest curator at the museum, George was sort of in charge of the administration of the funds, or I don't know what you'd call it, but George was going to be over him for awhile. And so we did that big show of Indian art and he liked it too. And then there was a big gift—the

thing that came along next. There was a big gift by Joan Palevsky, who brought in the—let me think—what was the name of the collection? But it was a huge collection of Indian and Far Eastern art--

JB: Was that the Heeramaneck--

BK: Heeramaneck collection—that's it.

JB: Heeramaneck collection.

BK: So there was a show of the Heeramaneck collection, which Joan Palevsky at least provided the principal funding for. And—which is interesting, because I'm doing a little show of her divorced husband—she was the first of several wives--

JB: Oh yes. But she evidently had her own resources.

BK: Yes.

JB: Tremendous donor.

BK: So we're going to honor [Max] Palevsky. Anyway—for some promised gifts that he's been very generous with—Arts and Crafts Movement gifting.

JB: Ah good.

BK: So we're going to do one in the fall of his stuff. So that was kind of my introduction to—then an interesting thing took place while I was there—and this is timely because Mary Kahlenberg comes up now—while I was there at one point or another the curator of textiles [Stephania Holt] became ill and [. . .] so she taught a class or two in textile history, which I had assisted her with at the old museum downtown in the late fifties.

JB: At the L.A. County Museum [in Exposition Park], which was both art and science at that time?

BK: Yes, and it had textiles and Holt was in charge. And she taught a class and she knew her facts and everything as a historian. But she couldn't describe what made velvet velvet, you know, or what's the difference between a brocade **[1:10:00]** and something else—or embroidery. And she said, "Will you help me with my class, Bernard?" And I said, "Well, what can I do?" And she said, "Would you mind explaining how the shuttle goes?" And she had no loom there or anything for this little class on textile history. She felt they should know what was woven and what wasn't. Of course. But she would say, "You tell them how the threads go." Well, anyway, I did that a couple of times for her class and I thought it was hilarious. And when Holt got ill and ultimately died—I got to know her fairly well because I even—she went to London often--and I remember she said, "When you're in London and I'm there too, we must go and look at textiles, Bernard." Well, I did.

JB: You did.

BK: Yes, and so she upped and died and her husband died shortly thereafter and so the director of LACMA (he was a specialist in Dutch art) said, “Would you mind sitting in and doing—considering becoming the curator of textiles?” [Richard F. Brown was LACMA Director 1961 – 1966; the new LACMA building on Wilshire Blvd. opened in 1965.]

JB: Oh!

BK: And I thought, well, what on earth is he thinking of? So, I agreed to go over--

JB: But you had been teaching textiles--

BK: Yeah, I know, but as far as being an historian of textiles—so I agreed to go over there—it happened in June [1965]. I agreed to go over there and spend my summer familiarizing myself with the collection and I said I would do an exhibition at the close of that summer in their galleries and that I’d re-think whether it would be what I wanted to do or not. And he said fine.

JB: And this was in Exposition Park, when it was still--

BK: No, it had already moved [to Wilshire Blvd.] by this time. Her class began in Exposition Park and she—I blame her about being narrow-minded about the move because when they moved somebody made the decision [about] what was left and what was not and she chose not to bring any American Indian, American any ethnic thing--

JB: Oh, that’s very interesting, yeah, [a] critical decision.

BK: Very interesting. Yes. So her whole viewpoint of textiles was--

JB: Western European--

BK: Yes, it was absolutely limited. Her vision and her information. So that’s where we [LACMA] did not get [even] one rug in the move. And all that stuff is still over there. Even Pre-Columbian stuff that they had over there. So I stayed that summer and I realized that the curatorship was a 9 – 5 kind of thing that I couldn’t cope with actually. Not that what I was doing didn’t fall from 9 –5, but that kind of thing where you clock in and you clock out, I-- . But while I was there that summer, a lady walked in the door and said to me—I had a nice office there for that summer—had said to me that she had come to California because her husband had been sent from Washington as a representative of the American Film Institute [that] had just been formed in Washington and they were going to recognize that the [West] coast had something to do with film! [Both laughing.] And they would open a branch office in Los Angeles and she was the wife of the man who was going to do that.

JB: Oh boy!

BK: And she was Mary Hunt Kahlenberg.

JB: Oh, my goodness!

BK: And so, we got to know one another and so, fortunately, [**1:15:00]** I was there [long] enough to recommend to the director, "Here is your curator," which, of course, took place. [Mary Hunt Kahlenberg was Curator of Textiles at LACMA from 1968 to 1978.] And what's happened right now—and this is interesting—is that she (ultimately she moved and separated from her husband), but the whole complexion of the [LACMA textile] collection shifted instantly to world cultures, and thank goodness for her doing that. And so she ultimately left the museum after 1977 or '78 or I don't know when it was exactly—later than that I think—she did some super exhibitions and all of that. So then she divorced her husband and she married somebody interested in food processing or something and she moved to Santa Fe. And continued her collecting and her textile work. Well, so then she became the consultant--consulting curator for [the head of] Neutrogena. . . . Lloyd Cotsen [collector and founding CEO of the Neutrogena Corporation]. So she comes here right now once a month to spend time with him on his collection. She came to the museum recently and she has in the meantime collected vast amounts of Indonesian textiles, wonderful ones . . . **[Recording interrupted.]**

JB: OK, we're back, and I want to ask you just a little bit more about installation design and, obviously, you have now—what--forty or more years' experience with installation design and surely you must see that there've been some changes—and maybe you've been influential in those changes during that time.

BK: Well I don't know about the influence, perhaps, but there are things that are kind of going on here. Of course, the museum has hired another designer here, which is fine, because they have a lot of things in the program.

JB: Were you the only designer here for--

BK: --for quite a while. That was because when I met Rusty Powell [Earl A. Powell III, LACMA Director, 1980 - 1992]. He sort of—when he was being interviewed here to become director, he saw a little exhibition that I [had installed] and he was walking through the museum, I guess with the then-director or somebody, and he said, "Who did that?" And then they said, well, it was me, you know.

JB: What show was that?

BK: Well, I don't remember what it was, but the process is what I remember.

JB: Yeah.

BK: And he said that he wanted to see me and so he flew back to Washington. I didn't meet him here at all. He flew back to Washington and then I got a phone call from him saying that he was Rusty Powell and he was—when it was confirmed that he was going to be coming here—that he would like for me to come and meet with him and discuss the exhibition that he must put together for his arrival. And I was very pleased. So, I went to Washington and met him, and we chatted—he was the Executive Curator at Washington--

JB: At the Gallery, at the National Gallery [of Art].

BK: And so, I liked him and he apparently liked me, so we went on with the design of it and what his exhibition was the [Armand] Hammer Collection, because he wanted, I think, to foster Hammer monies. Well, all that went sour in years--

JB: In the end.

BK: Yes, in the end. So that's when I got to know him and I was primarily **[1:20:00]** here during his leadership, and I liked him a lot.

JB: I was just wondering about, oh, really basic things I guess, like at one time and I guess still to some extent, the sort of standard--for contemporary art especially—[was] the white cube. And it seems like—maybe it's because I'm more familiar with your craft installations and decorative arts installations, but I remember your using, you know, the use of not just color, but really deep, intense color.

BK: Oh yes, absolutely. But now you see, we have a new director [Michael Govan] now and he says that most everything should be white. Well that doesn't go with me.

JB: Are there any other changes that you've seen?

BK: Well, yes, yes. And it's a change if you—when—I don't know when you will see the exhibition upstairs on the fourth floor--

JB: Oh I haven't yet, no—I'm really eager to--

BK: It's [the] Pre-Columbian art collection, and he—what is new that affected me is that he wants to use artists in the presentation--

JB: Oh right—like the John Baldessari installation of the Magritte show.

BK: Well, but you see, that—Stephanie Barron [LACMA's Senior Curator] and I get along fine and I worked with her and it was all set.

JB: Oh.

BK: Before Baldessari was introduced as designing it.

JB: Oh-h-h.

BK: And of course, he didn't have anything to do except put the ceiling in—which he did—and then he wanted a carpet with clouds on the floor, and he wanted a column over there—one of the real columns given a different profile, and then he wanted a view—that floor had a window overlooking Wilshire Blvd. like that [he points to window in the office in which we are sitting] only bigger—and he wanted a view of the Hudson River--

JB: Um-hm.

BK: --there. But he didn't—and Stephanie and I had already planned where everything went and he said, "I have nothing to say about that. It looks just fine." But of course, he got all the credit and the hoopla.

JB: Interesting.

BK: And so he's—he, meaning the director [Michael Govan]—wants to have other artists involved and you'll see what he did with the Pre-Columbian collection, and so forth. So, anyway, let's continue about The Egg and The Eye now.

JB: Yes, I think we should talk about when you became aware of The Egg and The Eye. I guess—which came first, the chicken or the egg? Did you—inotherwords, did you know the Wyles before you got—became familiar with--

BK: I did, but I can't tell you how or when—it just seemed like we were always knowing one another. And then of course her Egg and The Eye Restaurant was a huge success and it brought people galore, and I think that the great mistake ever was to separate it.

JB: I agree with you.

BK: And to reinstitute it—it wouldn't have worked either because it probably wouldn't have come back as what it was.

JB: Yeah.

BK: And it probably would have had a different flavor and a different cook and everything like that. So that was, I think, one of the mistakes that were made that weren't for the best.

JB: But that was one of the main attractions when the gallery opened and—but did you talk to Edith Wyle about her plans for the gallery at all? At what point were you—did you begin to be involved?

BK: I kind of don't remember. It seemed to me--

JB: It was quite a while ago—1965 we're talking about, yes.

BK: I think it [our friendship] started out just as a discussion between her and me because she would be there all the time and, in fact, she would **[1:25:00]** be there more than she needed to be. And we got along very well except that she sometimes had her eye on the cost factor as to whether we'd do another vitrine or not, you know those things. And that was a perfectly reasonable thing. I think our biggest discussion was how to separate visually for the regular customer what was the special exhibition from the shop. Because there wasn't a spatial division.

JB: Yes, let me ask you, it's my understanding that when the gallery first opened that they occupied just the—I guess it was the east side of that building wasn't it? Or did they--

BK: No there were two sides. The stairway sort of went up in the middle, and on the left was more or less the exhibit area and on the right was the merchandise.

JB: Ah! So they did occupy both sides on the first floor and the restaurant on the mezzanine.

BK: That's right.

JB: So it was just the third floor that they did not have during the gallery days.

BK: That's right.

JB: OK.

BK: But still it wasn't sufficiently a visual or a traffic flow that would separate the two. I mean the staircase separates anything.

JB: Right.

BK: And what they did over here, you and I would know that this is an exhibit and over there was merchandise. I don't think—I think the problem was that one didn't recognize that as something quite separate and specific from the other. And you and I could tell the difference, but maybe the ordinary person wouldn't. I think that was a disadvantage for the artist who was being singled out--

JB: Featured.

BK: Yes. Let me think—who was the—I can't think of the artist whom we did a very nice exhibition for—Lenore Tawney—her weaving. [No record of it in the CAFAM archives.] And I can't remember whether it was just before that or after that that Dextra Frankel and I did a show of her work at Cal State Fullerton. I wrote the catalog [*Lenore Tawney: an Exhibition of Weaving, Collage, Assemblage*, CSU Fullerton, November 14 – December 11, 1975] and I already knew her and Dextra did the—you know, the installation--

JB: --the design--

BK: --and all that. But it was kind of a mutual do-up at Fullerton. And we did a nice little catalog.

JB: Uh-huh.

BK: And that was much more inventive and thoughtfully put together than the one at The Egg and The Eye. But Lenore was there [at The Egg and The Eye gallery] and she liked it and thought it worked. And I got to know her and that was an interesting experience because she also did collages and she took pages from books and—that had interesting calligraphy—and did things to them as a collage. They weren't in the exhibition because these were more personal things.

JB: Yes.

BK: And so she found that we had very good—had at the time—very good antiquarian books around in various places and I took her around to those.

JB: You mean Los Angeles did.

BK: Yes. And she would buy books by thumbing through them.

JB: Jake Zeitlin comes to mind.

BK: Yes, exactly. She bought books from him. And I found it—I was—she picked them out because the typography on the page was a basis for her collage. So she would buy this book, not caring what it was about or who wrote it or when if it had the look. And so she bought books every time she came out and I would get her in the car and we would go shopping and I'd stay in the car sometimes because I was sort of embarrassed that she bought these books--

JB: --in order to--

BK: --tear them up--

JB: --disembody them, yeah! **[1:30:00]**

BK: Yes! [Lenore Tawney lived to be 100. She died September 24, 2007.]

JB: Oh, interesting! Well, so you were doing the occasional exhibition—and those were all, I would assume, contemporary craft exhibitions.

BK: Yes, but you know, you gave me the list of all of them [of The Egg and The Eye exhibitions], and I can't recognize any of the ones that I did. I mean I just don't remember.

JB: Let me just explain—this is sort of an aside—that [Excel] list of The Egg and The Eye Gallery exhibitions was a little bit difficult to do because all I had to go on, really, were the gallery announcements. There weren't—I don't know that there were any catalogs, as such. And the titles would change. So I did make one [Excel] sort by topics rather than titles, but—yes—and there were several often, several shows up at the same time. Well, this was a gallery after all, not a museum. But for the archivist, it was a little hard to go back

and reconstruct just what the featured show was or just, you know, what all the shows were.

BK: Right.

JB: But I guess what I was going to ask you was if you were involved at all in any of the folk art installations?

BK: I probably was, but I just don't remember.

JB: Now a related question that occurs to me is—well, the whole question of the balance between folk art and contemporary craft or design at what became the Craft and Folk Art Museum. I gather that it was remarkably similar as a gallery to what it became as the Craft and Folk Art Museum, but my question is: I have noticed that many collectors and designers have—even though they may be very contemporary in their personal approach—will often have folk art collections. And I have noticed at the Craft and Folk Art Museum that people who are interested in contemporary art or craft often are also interested in folk art—but not the other way around often.

BK: No, that's true.

JB: It seems as if the, you know, died-in-the-wool folk art—Folk Art Council people or whatever—are not as likely to be interested in contemporary craft. And that's just something that I've noticed and I—I don't know what it means but--

BK: That's true.

JB: I wondered if you had any thoughts on it.

BK: No, I don't have any thoughts on it.

JB: I don't know—maybe contemporary art is more encompassing [and admirers of it are] more interested in many different cultures--

BK: Well, contemporary art means that of the moment and right now the moment is concept. And so concept of course is ethereal--

JB: Yes, that's true.

BK: So it is too—I think it would be expecting too much for the concept to be packaged in folk art dress.

JB: Oh sure, yes.

BK: Which isn't the case with contemporary crafts because the dress is—can be the same.

JB: Yes, yes.

BK: It's the form in that case that differentiates.

JB: Yes. And when did you start to—you did occasionally write about the Egg and The Eye gallery.

BK: Sure. That [was] when I was doing some little snippets, I guess you'd call them, in *Craft Horizons* that would be included because it was part of this **[1:35:00]** complex of Southern California, sure.

JB: Yes. Yes. Well a lot of those snippets, as you call them, are in the Craft and Folk Art Museum archive, and they were undoubtedly very helpful to the gallery in terms of publicity.

BK: I think that one of the problems—we talked about the stairway dividing the thing—I think one of the weaknesses of the whole thing was lack of signage. You know there was—I tried to get Edith to sort of think of having a sign made that would differ—that would say, "Lenore Tawney: Textiles," and then, maybe, over here, I don't know what you'd call it—"Shop," or something. That never took place.

JB: Oh, interesting.

BK: Whatever signage [there was] was something they could do upstairs, rather than a [professionally made] sign. So it was—or, in the case of Lenore's show, I remember we put up a specific piece, very visibly, up front.

JB: Yes.

BK: But you can't do that with little things.

JB: Right.

BK: So I think that was a weakness from the start, on which was which.

JB: That's interesting, but later on—I actually don't want to talk too much [today] about the Craft and Folk Art Museum—I want to focus on the Gallery—but during the Museum days, of course, they did have a graphic designer on staff, at least for a while, and signage was certainly an important part of the Museum. Let's see—it just occurred to me—you were talking about little things and certainly with many of the shows that you designed, you were dealing with relatively little things.

BK: Yeah.

JB: What are some of the problems of that?

BK: Well, I guess trying to present the differentiations between them. So that if they are dissimilar, in whatever way, that that would be evident, rather than just a collective of

look-alikes. And I think that's a continuous problem. And small objects are hard to deal with that way, especially things of jewelry, scale.

JB: I guess lighting would play a big part.

BK: Sure.

JB: Well, uh, did you—let's talk a little bit more about Edith and Frank. You got to know Frank, did you?

BK: Yes, of course. And Edith and I would have arguments.

JB: Oh—I'm not surprised! [laughing]

BK: Yes. She had very strong ideas on certain things. I don't remember the special things that we argued about, but [laughing] we argued! And that was one quite different thing that took place with Eudorah [Moore] and me. We didn't—we thought too much alike I think. So, we didn't have those kinds of, you know--

JB: Yes, discussions!

BK: Knock-down, drag-out about this or that! [laughing] And Edith, of course, was the curator, and that's fine. So, she should have the—take the position of placing the works that she liked in a certain way—and I wouldn't always agree with it. And that's fine.

JB: But you were able to argue with her and have it not be the end of the relationship.

BK: Oh yes—we didn't throw things at each other! [laughing]

JB: But that's a—I think that is [was] a special feature of her—not that she didn't have certain relationships that sort of ended—but I found as a staff member that you could argue with her and—so that was your experience too.

BK: Yeah, and there was always—I think there was not enough time devoted to just the installing of things.

JB: Well I know—I was amazed to realize how many different shows they put up and took down. I mean it was every—I guess sometimes **[1:40:00]** every two or three weeks—certainly no more than four weeks was a show up. And I think that was even something that she had to be kind of weaned away from when the—when it became a museum.

BK: Yes.

JB: Well, so—we started to talk about Frank. Did you have much to do with Frank-- ?

BK: No. He didn't offer any kind of view about what the exhibitions should be or look like because he knew that it was Edith's thing, not his at all—that he would be there to support her and

pay for it and stuff like that. And Edith would, you know, float around, kind of being Edith. And that was fine.

JB: Yes, and you would see him at openings I suppose.

BK: Oh sure.

JB: Well can you talk about just—try to step back for a moment and think about what The Egg and The Eye gallery—your impressions of The Egg and The Eye gallery—if you can—think of yourself as the visitor or maybe some of the first impressions you had of the gallery and the restaurant—you know, the whole concept. I'd just like you to describe that.

BK: Before it became a museum.

JB: Yes.

BK: Well, I think, generally speaking, it was that not quite separation of the specified exhibition from the merchandise and the clarity between the two was the weakest part. I mean I don't think it was all that clear and that was why I mentioned the signage factor. And see if you went in and you saw a show that was one person and then you saw that same person's work over in the--

JB: Oh, I see.

BK: --merchandise. That didn't make sense to me. And let's say Vivika Heino's pots, for example. I mean—this isn't anything out of my experience, but I was thinking of that as an obvious way—Vivika Heino made lots of pots. She could have a whole bunch of pots over in the shop and then big pots over here with the same glaze. That just didn't seem like—why are we having this show here? Maybe those should have been drawn out of the shop, either put here or left out of the [shop] until after the show was over. And there were those situations—no, not in the case of Lenore Tawney or lots of cases where there weren't any repeats. But that's what seemed odd to me.

JB: Yes, but nevertheless, you were attracted to the place and—just tell a little bit about what made it unusual for its time—if you think it was.

BK: Well I think the unusual part for its time was that it—craftspeople were being recognized. And it was taking place in a very interesting environment, where it was social, and the sociality lay in the restaurant. And it was always a pleasure to go there for lunch, because you saw not only the omelettes, which were good, and the personality of the person, you know—what's her name—I can't remember her name, who ran the thing.

JB: Rodessa Moore.

BK: Rodessa was there, you know, and she had a presence which was very good. And then you could wander around and if you didn't have a table, you would wander around and buy. All of that was super duper, I think. And then when it became the museum and the restaurant went away there was a certain kind of lack when you went there that wasn't repeatable because there wasn't the food factor. **[1:45:00]**

JB: Yes.

BK: Or the kind of charming mix of people that came there in bunches.

JB: Yes, at that time in the sixties and early seventies, museums did not just automatically have a restaurant. I guess LACMA did have a restaurant, although it wasn't very highly thought of.

BK: No—I don't think it is yet. [laughing heartily]

JB: [laughing] I think you're right! So often people did go to the [Egg and The Eye] gallery with the prime objective of having lunch there and it was only sort of as an afterthought, I think, for some people to--

BK: But you know it was good to have someplace to take an out-of-town visitor--

JB: Yes.

BK: --and know what to do with that person if you had to wait for a table. You didn't have to, you know, make do.

JB: Yes.

BK: It was worth doing!

JB: Yes, yes, yes. Let's see—can you talk about any of the other personalities that were at the gallery? Did you know Betty Chase at all?

BK: Yes, a little bit. And they [the Wyles] were neighbors up on—Betty Chase's husband.

JB: Alfred? Albert!

BK: Albert.

JB: He was a doctor, I think. [Albert Chase was a dentist.]

BK: Yes. They were neighbors up in where the [Wyle] ranch is [in North Fork, near Yosemite].

JB: Oh right, yes.

BK: They had a house [there], not far. And that's about all that I know about—she was around from time to time.

JB: Well she was a full-time manager during—I wasn't there but, this is what I know from, you know, reading a lot [in the archives]—for the first two years she was ostensibly the manager and she left after that. And she was—she and her husband were one of the first shareholder [families]. There were about 30 shareholders in The Egg and The Eye gallery project].

BK: I don't know about those things.

JB: Yeah. What about Dorothy Garwood?

BK: Yes, she was there for a while. I wonder whatever became of her.

JB: The last I saw her it was just before the museum opened in 1995 after it had been closed for a while and she had moved away and I can't remember [where]—maybe in Colorado or someplace like that? But she was the contemporary craft curator for quite a few years in the gallery and then I think for just the first year of the museum. [Dorothy Garwood left CAFAM in November 1975.]

BK: Probably. But you know, speaking of the changeover of the properties--when they got the architect to do the stairway--

JB: Right. Hodgetts and Fung.

BK: Somehow it seemed . . . less workable. Now I don't have . . . much basis on—because there was more space—but the grand stairway seemed too grand for that building.

JB: The present one.

BK: Yes, and it didn't ultimately become—you know, go across to the other corner building, like it was first intended to do. So, there was a lot of waste space, it seemed to me, with that grand stairwell . . . [It] wasn't thoughtfully explored to give maximum viewability [as] it could have been.

JB: Yes. Well a lot of the problem was the last-minute changes—*really* last-minute changes because the original intention was to merge the corner building [with the original building] and, if that had happened, as it had been planned to do, I think the whole future of the museum would have been quite different, let alone the design. Of course, when it originally opened (reopened I should say) in 1995 it was—it did include both buildings.

BK: Yes.

JB: But that didn't last very long.

BK: And that little terrace in the middle—the terrace--

JB: The patio [or courtyard] --

BK: When they had openings, that was a nice place to spread out, **[1:50:00]** but meanwhile, most of the time . . . that seemed like a vacant and kind of arid space.

JB: Yes—I know they're trying to come up with a solution to that. Well let's talk about just a couple of other things. You must be a collector.

BK: I don't think I ever would be considered a collector.

JB: Well, but you have collections, personal collections.

BK: Oh well, I have a few things, but they don't amount to a real collection. I collected ancient textiles for a while, which are fine, but my house is too bright to have any on the walls, so they're just rolled up and stashed away so they're kind of useless.

JB: Did you ever belong to the Ethnic Arts Council or any of those-- ?

BK: No. You know I mentioned the Design Division of the American Ceramic Society, which was ages—you know the first thing I'd ever done—they still exist and they still send me their monthly bulletin. Isn't that amazing?

JB: Yes, now, when you said that I realized for some reason I didn't get that at the Craft and Folk Art Museum library—I'm not sure why—so I'm not that familiar with it. The Society as a whole, was that more ceramic engineers then?

BK: No—no—it was--

JB: Well why was there this subsection—design subsection—what was the distinction between that and the larger--

BK: Well the larger section would be the industry.

JB: Oh! Like dinnerware and that kind of thing.

BK: Sure and this was really—the design division was for the independent, one-of-a-kind potter in his studio with a kiln, for the most part.

JB: Oh I see!

BK: And so it [the newsletter] carried also information about where you buy the best potter's wheel, where do you get certain better, you know, stuff to do this with and that. And they would have meetings to discuss, really, how do you manage this and how do you get better results with your kiln--

JB: Yes.

BK: --and all of that. But it also had programs with interesting people. And so you see when I mentioned Susan Peterson—she also had a big meeting of the Ceramic Society when Shoji Hamada was here, which was different from the collection of people that gathered

around her and him. So it brought together—it was a vehicle for bringing together a lot of people to exchange ideas with—on the local level.

JB: Well I think I missed the boat when I didn't get their publications in the library. I got the—we subscribed to *Ceramics Monthly*, which I think was the national--

BK: The national, yes. This one wasn't interesting like those. [laughing] These were so-and-so selling his potters wheel.

JB: [laughing] Well, even *Ceramics Monthly* had that aspect to it—but, yeah, there was also another publication. Do you remember—it was called *The Crafts Report*? It was published by someone named Michael Scott, who was pretty big in the craft world. And it had as its focus the craft artist as a business person. Inotherwords, it wasn't minimizing the role of the artist, but it was giving practical information too, which I think was appreciated by some people.

Well, maybe we should begin to wind this up. This has been a fascinating, fascinating discussion.

BK: Well you've allowed me to chatter away!

JB: This is very important chattering! And I'd just like to ask one more big question: as a writer and a teacher and a curator, you **[1:55:00]** must have given some thought to the place of contemporary craft in the broad spectrum of contemporary art. Now you've already acknowledged that today's contemporary art, as opposed to, you know, the contemporary art of the fifties-sixties-seventies is quite different. But . . . the contemporary craft field is quite vital. Now--

BK: Oh, absolutely, absolutely!

JB: --do you feel that there is still a great divide there between--

BK: Well, it's blurred in a . . . healthy sort of way. Because of course in any hobbyist's view of the arts, you get little copycats of this, that, and the other going on all the time. But—now Ralph Bacerra, for example. He took the pot and the plate and he pushed it into, really, something quite significant, and quite beautiful.

JB: Yes.

BK: And those things, I think, that kind of pushing from something expected to something unexpected that has value—inherent visual and structural value—is super duper. And I'm so sorry he died.

JB: I didn't realize that he had died. Was that recent?

BK: It was just in the paper the other day. [Ralph Bacerra died June 10, 2008.]

JB: Oh, oh, I'm sorry to hear that. That reminds me. I have to add this: he was one of the people who were exhibited . . . at the museum. There were many artists who either were already internationally known or were about to be that were exhibited--

BK: And some of those were in more than one field also. What comes to mind is—well, there were some potters that veered off into sculpture and some that also retained their same kind of form-building in another medium. Ken Price, for example. And I think he's done very interesting stuff out of paint on clay and other surfaces. You know, of course, there still are those people who feel that if you make it out of clay, it would have to be fired and glazed and then there are those who think that, well, you could make it out of clay and harden it by firing, but then you don't have to put a glaze on it; it can be painted, a surface, like a canvas to paint on. Well, why not? So, there can be interesting things out of enamel on metal, for example, and how you treat that and the process that changes. What comes to mind—that wonderful lady in Sausalito who did electroforming on metal [June Schwarcz].

JB: Oh yes, I think I know the one that you mean.

BK: Yes and she did forms that don't have any—you know, they'd be volumes of shape, but you didn't have to feel that you had to use it like a bowl. It would just sit there and be itself.

JB: Yes, Chihuly, of course, is a famous--

BK: Yes, in glass, of course, of course.

JB: He's really taken it completely [into the sculptural realm].

BK: Right.

JB: Well, I think it's still an exciting time to be involved in contemporary craft.

BK: Sure.

JB: Do you feel that it's—the envelope is still being pushed?

BK: Sure.

JB: Well thank you very much Bernard.

BK: I've enjoyed our chat.

JB: And we'll do it again next week, all right?

BK: OK. Same time, same place . . . .

End of Session 1 [1:59:31]

CRAFT AND FOLK ART MUSEUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW OF BERNARD KESTER

Session 2, Friday, July 18, 2008. Interviewed by Joan M. Benedetti (1 hour, 54 minutes, 7 seconds).

JB: All right. Today is Friday, July 18, 2008, and I'm again with Bernard Kester at the L.A. County Museum of Art and my name is Joan Benedetti. First a correction: when we met last Friday, I mistakenly said that the date was June 27, when it was actually July 11. (June 27 was the date that we were originally going to meet.) So, when we met last week, we reviewed your very wide-ranging career as a teacher, a writer, a curator, and an exhibition designer, and you reminisced about your involvement with The Egg and The Eye gallery, the precursor to the museum that still exists today—the Craft and Folk Art Museum. And today I'd like to talk about how the museum evolved from the gallery, how it differed to the extent that it did from the gallery, and your role in it, both as a participant and an observer. And just to review, The Egg and The Eye gallery—the gallery—opened on November 1, 1965 and I was—I was interested to see that two of the three opening shows were contemporary craft shows: J.B. Blunk's furniture, Richard Phipps, who did rugs, and then there was Kenujak, an Eskimo sculptor. Did you attend the opening [of The Egg and The Eye gallery], by any chance? . . .

BK: Yes, I think I did. I don't remember much about it. The greater event was when they [the Craft and Folk Art Museum] reopened [in 1995] after the modification—when they had a big tented party back in the--

JB: Oh yes.

BK: --you know. That's the one that was more memorable. But now, getting [back] to J.B. Blunk.

JB: Yes, yes, who was one of the first--

BK: He was a contemporary student—I mean we were students together at UCLA.

JB: Oh, how interesting.

BK: He was—he made pots as well, as I did. But he was from Northern California and when he returned to Northern California—it might have been Guerneville or someplace in that area. [Blunk lived in Inverness, California. He died in 2002.] He specialized in wood that was consciously . . . wood . . . . [It] was . . . interesting to see his attitude as a woodworker was influenced by his environment of course. And his woodwork was very close to the original, that is, he didn't make two by fours and standard sized things, you know, for fabrication. He carved out of the natural wood and like that.

JB: He used those burls—redwood burls.

BK: All that, yes. And very handsome stuff that he was doing, yes.

JB: I think there's a large piece of his—or at least there used to be—at the Oakland Museum.

BK: Yes, yes, a big circular one, if I recall, yes.

JB: So you were fellow students. That's very interesting. And I was just saying—or thinking—that it was interesting that--at least at the beginning of The Egg and The Eye days—it seems like there were more contemporary craft shows than there were later on—in proportion to the folk art shows.

BK: Well probably because they were saleable things for the most part. They—Edith wanted to show things that were of course part of the sales operation because that's what it was: a shop. **[05:00]**

JB: It was supposed to be a commercial enterprise, wasn't it?

BK: Yes.

JB: Well I was just getting to that aspect of it and the change—when the change began to happen. It had, of course, to get approval from the IRS--

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: --to be a nonprofit—401(c)(3)—or whatever.

BK: Yes, all of that.

JB: But in fact, as I understand it, the gallery never really was profitable, even though it was extremely successful in every other way.

BK: Yes, and that, of course, was part of its problem. In the formation of this—I remember there was discussion about the kind of parallel aspect between the formation of this museum and the Museum of Contemporary Craft in New York, which was founded by Mrs. Aileen Osborn . . . Webb at 19 West 53rd Street in the property that she owned, which is now [the MoMA—Museum of Modern Art] Museum Tower. And Aileen formed a board largely of her friends. Of course, her friends were even more monied than Edith's friends, but—because Edith has many more friends in the--

JB: --in the art community--

BK: Yes—than Aileen did. But there was a similarity in viewpoint by the people who attended and knew anything about museums.

JB: The two museums.

BK: Yes. And the kind of attitude was that Edith--and Aileen--chose people from her friendships with them and that she did so because it gave her more kind of power to form it in her

own image or her own likes because she knew her friends would follow and support [her]. Now that only is good enough, you know, if it works. And I don't think that was the soundest base on which to do it. And it was the same thing. I was on the board at the Museum of Contemporary Craft.

JB: I was going to ask you about that.

BK: Yes, that's why I'm getting at this because I attended many of the meetings. And she [Aileen Webb] had big people—August Heckscher—and various people in New York cultural and philanthropic society, even—who was the president of CBS at that time?

JB: Oh--

BK: Anyway, he was there because she wanted—he was going to build the . . . CBS Tower that went up across the street. That wasn't to be built yet.

JB: Was it Paley?

BK: [William S.] Paley. And a very interesting man. And she wanted to get from him a commitment because she was knowing, even that far, that long ago, that the Museum of Modern Art would be expanding and they were neighbors, you see, and it expanded in a retail—that is retail rentals and sales and so forth of that apartment complex. She was trying to get from him a commitment to give her space in the CBS Tower, to move the museum there. And it [the CBS Tower] was on the property that used to be at 44 West 53rd Street. It was the property that she owned for the shop part of the Museum of Contemporary Craft. Because they did not have a sales thing in the museum there at all. But it [America House] was located across the street. And she wanted . . . Paley--to provide that. It didn't work—but [laughing] **[10:00]** anyway—and [she had on the museum board] some other people that were really well-known—and from the crafts [world]. And the reason I was there was because she started out wanting representatives from various parts of the country to make it a true national museum there. And that's how I—I don't know how I got chosen to do that, but it was--

JB: Do you remember when that was—approximately?

BK: Well, it would—it would have had to be—it was after the big [Asilomar] conference—so it would have been around 1960.

JB: OK.

BK: And I was on it [the Museum of Contemporary Craft board] for about three years, I think it was. And so that was it.

JB: And so, when Edith Wyle was starting her idea—she and, I guess, Bette Chase--she knew something about what had occurred with the Museum of Contemporary Craft?

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: Had you talked to her about that?

BK: I don't remember that we had any definitive conversations about it. But she did involve her friends.

JB: Yes.

BK: And the attitude of the—the hearsay, let's say—was, you know, Edith's just going to have her friends around her and the friends will be friends, but they're not going to dig in because they don't have anything to dig into and that, therefore, Edith will have free rein—to the degree that they—she and her husband could provide the money. And of course, the people in New York [also] realized that Aileen [Osborn] Webb had all the money! I mean, they needed more of course because her views were very big, but it was a—it was a similar kind of thing.

JB: Yes, well it always—I always wondered because in both cases there were certainly people on the board who could have given more.

BK: Yes.

JB: But didn't. And perhaps the issue of personality did have something to do with it then.

BK: Sure.

JB: Well, one of the things that I noticed—I wasn't around at the time, but—apparently during the gallery days, Edith and the others involved with the gallery were very interested in educational matters and there were lectures and seminars and--

BK: Oh yes, sure.

JB: --there was even a film series—I'm just trying to remember the name of the producer of those [Doug Edwards]. He went on to produce some very important film series in Los Angeles. The film series he put on at the museum didn't have much to do with crafts--

BK: No.

JB: --but they were excellent films. So early on—I have a date of February 15, 1967—just basically, not even two years after the . . . [gallery] opened—there was an organizational meeting of a "group interested in founding a folk art museum." Now I don't have documentation of who was at that meeting. Is that something that you remember?

BK: Well, I remember about it, yes. And I've forgotten—around that time there was the formation also—I think it preceded this—the formation of the Southern California Craftsmen's Society—that's not correct, but it's--

JB: Designer-Crafts.

BK: Designer-Craftsmen, yes. It had various disciplines represented. And it had good programs because the people in it at the beginning were really dedicated to bringing good material before the membership. And often the membership met prior to that time at that school, which [has] now moved to Westchester, **[15:00]** which was down--

JB: Otis.

BK: Otis. Otis Art Institute or whatever it was called. It had a series of names. And we met there because I remember one time—let me think now. We had several sessions on textiles and sessions on ceramics with, you know, figures that were willing to—not demonstrate—but to give lectures and/or show films or slides. And we had some very top people do that. And Anni Albers was one, whom I had known—the reasons of which I had told you last time--

JB: Yes.

BK: So when she came to town—with her husband—we had a program with her. And it was a big program and it was very successful. And there were other such visitors that traveled around that we got to do that.

JB: Now you were an officer, I believe, in the SCDC.

BK: Maybe I was. I kind of [laughing] --kind of don't remember.

JB: I think that was a line in your cv.

BK: Might have been. I don't know. But that was—that was a good part of bringing some recognition about the variety of craftspeople that attended those and participated in them—that Edith then—because she was attending also—could call upon those resources for her exhibitions, for example, the good ones. And stuff like that.

JB: Yes, I remember hearing that SCDC support was really important to the gallery and to the museum at the beginning. Well, in 1975—'73—excuse me—the IRS finally granted nonprofit status to what [was]—an entity that was known as the . . . [actually, The Egg and The Eye] Cultural Center. The Center merged with the Folk Art and Contemporary Craft Society Incorporating the Egg and The Eye; the name was then changed to the Craft and Folk Art Museum Incorporating the Egg and The Eye.] And at that point, of course, there was a lot of work to be done besides that. That was a big hurdle to cross, but then there was the putting together of the board and the beginning to hire the staff and so on. And so on it really wasn't until two years later that there was a meeting of the—what became the Craft and Folk Art Museum board. Now, from reading the minutes of those first meetings—and there were three of them on one day—on June 4, 1975—I

read that the officers that were chosen for the Craft and Folk Art Museum Incorporating The Egg and The Eye were: Bernard Kester, President--

BK: Really!

JB: ERW—Edith Wyle, Vice President. Ruth Bowman, Secretary. And Proctor Stafford, Treasurer. Now I believe that they were very happy to have you and those other people as the first officers, but apparently, this matter of the three meetings happening was a legal maneuver to transfer the status from what had been a--

BK: A shop.

JB: Yes—a shop—to a museum—and also to change the name so that then just one month later—July 28, 1975—I read that Bernard Kester's resignation was accepted. And—and they did not choose another president immediately. Eventually Frank Wyle **[20:00]** did take that position, although--from talking to him--I guess he was somewhat reluctant because he was still very involved in his business at Wyle Laboratories.

BK: Yes, yes, that's true.

JB: But eventually they did form quite a large board and began to have exhibitions, which were put on by the Craft and Folk Art Museum Incorporating The Egg and The Eye.

BK: Now, it occurred to me also that early on before that formation took place—besides the location of having programs of the Designer-Craftsmen at that school--

JB: --at Otis--

BK: --at Otis.

JB: Yes.

BK: There were very interesting activities at the Center—the [Westside] Jewish Community Center on Olympic near—I've forgotten—it's still there—and they even had a few exhibitions in their kind of open space for the members of the Designer-Craftsmen—or whatever it was called. And I think Edith saw some of those there earlier on, you see. And it was active for a while with cross-media. That is, it wasn't ceramics more than it was other sorts of things. And I remember setting up a couple of those exhibitions at the Jewish—Westside Jewish Community Center. Whether it has that name, still, I haven't any idea. But I think that those existing—though fragmented—presentations . . . [influenced] some of her view about forming the museum.

JB: Yes, it must have—although I was interested to see that the inaugural exhibitions of the museum—that the Museum Incorporating The Egg and The Eye—which happened August 3, 1975, were more or less folk art or you might say, folky. One of them was

something that I've—I've seen a few pictures of and it's a little hard to imagine. Maybe you can enlighten us—called "Totem Poles from the Northwest Carved by Polish Folk Artist Ray Kowalski"? Do you remember that?

BK: No [laughing].

JB: And then there were some Native American things from San Idlefonso and Hopi Second Mesa and some Appalachian woodcarvings.

BK: Hm-hmh.

JB: So—that was kind of interesting—that that seemed to be the thrust at the beginning. But, you know, who knows? Sometimes what actually gets put on—as you well know—is not necessarily carefully thought out. It might just have been what was available--

BK: Well I'm sure of that, sure.

JB: --at that particular time. Now, shortly thereafter, you did become involved with a group at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, which I'd like you to talk about, and that was the PIC, the Programmatic Input Committee.

BK: Really!! [laughing heartily]

JB: Yes. You were—you were quite active as far as I can tell. [Kester chaired the PIC (Programmatic Input Committee) for several years.] I have minutes of the meetings for several years [in the archives] and it started in October of '75 and went for—through at least 1980, and I guess the idea was that it was to be an advisory group.

BK: I guess it—I guess it was. We sat upstairs at a little table, I remember, in the daytime, usually these were, and I was on the faculty at UCLA, so it was easy to come over in the afternoons some of the time that I didn't have classes, and we had some two-hour sessions about program ideas. And Edith was very **[25:00]** sensitive to how much it's going to cost [laughing].

JB: You know—I have to say this (you mentioned this the last time [in Session 1])--you're the *first* person that I've talked to who indicated that Edith was the one who had some sensitivity to the cost!

BK: Yes, she did!

JB: How interesting!

BK: Yes, she said—she would say, "Oh Bernard, that's too expensive. We can't—we're not—you know, some other institution that has resources!"

JB: Well, that's very interesting because there were other people who were trying to keep the costs down and they had a different impression! [laughing]

BK: [laughing] Now, who was—let me think—who was the guy who kind of stepped up to be all things for the museum and was the vice-president or something and ultimately came to be the director or the assistant director. The tall young man with blonde hair—and he had a wife at the time and a couple of kids. Now what was his name?

JB: You're talking about Patrick Ela.

BK: Patrick. Patrick.

JB: And I do want you to talk about Patrick Ela. Let me just say a couple of more things—let's talk about this PIC committee just a little bit more.

BK: OK.

JB: You were actually the chair at the beginning of that committee and Dorothy Garwood, who consequently resigned just about a month later, was the Secretary at the beginning, and Rita Lawrence was the board liaison. She was on the museum board. Also, Sam Maloof would occasionally come to those meetings. There were quite a few interesting people on that—I'll just throw out a few names to you and if you have anything to say—Pat Altman?

BK: Pat Altman—she was in the department of anthropology at UCLA--

JB: Right!

BK: --and of course was involved in collections management and collections—well, in attracting collections and—very nice lady and—Pat Altman, I think she was advisory and she—I don't remember that she provided any loans of material, because she was in charge of a lot of the acquisitions and things that were going on--

JB: --for what became the Fowler Museum--

BK: Yes, yes, that's true, and everybody that—that's a big, long story too, but—it landed with the Fowler Museum, and the Fowlers weren't the least bit interested in--

JB: They were the silver collectors, weren't they?

BK: Yes, of all things! And they got stuck with silver in a gallery that carries the name. And Franklin Murphy was Chancellor at the time and it was weird and it was a weird circumstance.

JB: Yes, but somehow it all went together. I remember hearing that Pat Altman actually was quite influential with Edith. In fact, I believe that Edith said at one point that it was Pat Altman who told her: "Don't forget the context."

BK: Yes.

JB: Which—at the time—was pretty radical for an institution that thought of itself as an art museum. Inotherwords, she was bringing a point of view that, within ten or fifteen years, was to be the norm—but it was a relatively new idea for an art museum.

BK: Yes, she was very smart, and very lovable. I mean, she was a really *human* being—like Edith was. So they were friends—instant friends, I think.

JB: Uh-huh. And then there was Josine—Josine Ianco-Starrels.

BK: Yes. She was—she became—I don't know whether she was at the time, but she was Director of the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, and—I saw her not too long ago as a matter of fact—and I knew her quite well when she was here and she was very **[30:00]** sympathetic to a variety of expressions in the art field.

JB: She put on some very interesting shows over there [at the Municipal Art Gallery].

BK: Oh yes, she was super duper.

JB: And Milt Zolotow? Wasn't he on that committee for a while?

BK: I guess he was, but I don't remember really much about what he contributed.

JB: Of course, he was the designer of The Egg and The Eye logo, but at this point now we're talking about the [Craft and Folk Art] Museum, so the logo, The Egg and The Eye—what happened—just for the record . . . was [that] the restaurant continued, but it carried the name of what had been the gallery [as a whole, so it] now became The Egg and The Eye restaurant.

BK: Right.

JB: So that was the place for The Egg and The Eye logo [after the gallery became a museum]. And the—there was some talk—and I don't know if this actually influenced the final decision not to include a restaurant (this was much later on), but there was from time to time, when I was on the staff, talk about whether or not the restaurant detracted from the museum's image as a museum. I think you and I both agreed that it was a mistake not to continue the restaurant, but nevertheless, there—it's undoubtedly true that people would come into the museum and often overlook the galleries on their way to lunch or to stop in and get a--

BK: Oh, absolutely!

JB: --gift at the shop—so there was always that tension.

BK: Yes.

JB: But—but it did continue to be a wonderful restaurant. It went through a series of different managements. Some of them were not as good as others.

BK: Well everybody remembered how successful the omelette lady was--

JB: Rodessa Moore.

BK: --and it worked so well that anything less, you know, became obvious. It wasn't what it used to be—and that was too bad!

JB: Well, I want to get back to that again a little bit later. In—as far as I can tell, around early 1981, you were invited to join the CAFAM board and you did join the board.

BK: Yes, I did, and I think it was a mistake. But—[laughing]

JB: Go on! [laughing]

BK: Well, I think that I went to the meetings and it seemed like they didn't go anywhere, really. And Edith would shake her head and things. I just think that they didn't fulfill what a board member—what a board should do. And no—no commitments were made, as far as I could see, for a donation criterion to become a board member. And if it had, I probably wouldn't have been capable of being a board member—but to get the thing rolling, they would have [had] that. But they never came around, as far as I recall, that you had to be a donor of x number of dollars annually to become a board member. Now I don't know whether that was Edith's oversight, or whether she wanted not to do that on purpose or what. But—that procedure is not parallel with any other museum that I know of.

JB: Yeah, I remember having a discussion with Robert Bishop, who was the director of the Museum of American Folk Art in New York and he said, "Nobody gets on my board for less than $10,000 a year." And that was just, you know [the minimum]—and at that time, that was actually fairly reasonable.

BK: Yes it was.

JB: I know that at some point **[35:00]** and I—I was going to—well, I guess you've answered my question—I was wondering, because I know that at some point, they did institute a $2,500 a year [contribution] for board members.

BK: I don't remember that.

JB: But—then they also said that it could be an "in-kind" donation, so if you, you know, threw two or three lavish parties, for example, that would be your contribution.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: So I know that it was not very enforced at all. And even $2,500—and I don't know that that has ever changed.

BK: I don't know whether it has either or not. Now compared to the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York—the people who were there—I mean the big names—they did contribute. It was the craftspeople [who couldn't]—Jack [Lenor] Larsen was on the board and people like that also.

JB: Sure.

BK: --and they didn't because--I didn't . . . when I was on that board—that was done for regional representation, which was, I think, splendid, to have that.

JB: Yes.

BK: But it also meant it was a like a three-year commitment and then you went and somebody else came on instead. That [wasn't] the case with Edith's board. I think that it just never—nobody came with a pocketbook.

JB: Well, there were a very few who did. Joan Palevsky was one of them early on who did.

BK: Yes, oh absolutely.

JB: And I guess she was responsible for giving the money to do a lot of the renovations that were done early on . . . —they might have been [done] around the time—in 1975—when it became legally a museum—sometime in the 70s that happened.

BK: Yes, well, she was responsible for being generous to other institutions--

JB: Yes, here at LACMA--

BK: Libraries and LACMA and she did—she brought the Heeramaneck collection for LACMA and right now what I'm working on is a little show in acknowledgment of Max Palevsky's arts and crafts gifts, yeah.

JB: So—I would like to talk about Patrick Ela. He was hired in October of 1975 as Administrative Director.

BK: Yeah.

JB: And, uh, he came to CAFAM at the behest of Ruth Bowman--

BK: Yes.

JB: --Ruth is someone, actually, I wanted to mention because I think she was still on the board when you came on the board--

BK: Yes, yes. But I also knew her here. She was Education—Director of Education here--

JB: Yes, yes.

BK: --for a short period of time, but I can't remember the dates, you know the plus or minus dates. [Ruth Bowman was Director of Education at LACMA in the seventies.] And so I remember her from this and I see her—she comes traveling from time to time—and she's a friend of June Wayne's and others. So, I see her from time to time with her new husband.

JB: Well yes.

BK: But he's not new anymore [laughing].

JB: Her companion, George Bookman. I've also been lucky enough to see her; in fact, I was able to interview her.

BK: Oh good.

JB: Yes, yes. And so I did get a bit of her story about working here and I gather that Patrick Ela had just started to work for her--

BK: Is that right?

JB: --as her assistant--

BK: I see.

JB: And she was at the same time just starting out on the Craft and Folk Art Museum board. And she could see—she was a person on the board who because of her experience with museums--

BK: Yes.

JB: --and I'm sure this was true of you as well **[40:00]--**she knew what a professional operation should be like and she was concerned and thought that there needed to be something like an administrative--

BK: Yes!

JB: --director to work alongside of Edith.

BK: Right.

JB: So Edith was the artistic director or Program Director and Patrick [Ela] was hired as the Administrative Director. He was then made—when Edith retired in 1984—he became what they called the Executive Director, but he was the sole administrator at that point. And then he resigned in April 1996. So he was there for a total of 21 years from the very beginning of the museum until just before it closed. And one thing that I think is worth mentioning, in view of your interests, is that when he became Executive Director in 1984, he added design and architecture to the program. It had always been contemporary craft

and folk art and he added design. Now—let's—I just, you know, wanted to give a brief summary of Patrick's career there because it was so long, but—so do you remember when you first met him or--

BK: Well, I'm sure it was through Edith and he also—Edith and—meanwhile, regarding the importance of the national craft movement and the Museum of Contemporary Craft in New York and I mentioned last time about the 1957 World Congress of Craftspeople--

JB: --in Asilomar--

BK: Yes.

JB: Yes.

BK: Well, that organization had every few years—and I've forgotten how frequent that is exactly—an international meeting.

JB: Oh, you're speaking of the World Crafts Council--

BK: Right.

JB: --which is, yeah, OK--

BK: All right. So, he and Edith would always gather a group of people to attend, so that he was very influential at that time in garnering kind of worthwhile support for special activities, and one of them was to attend the World Crafts Council [meeting], wherever it was. And he would always go along. And I often went—I went to most of them in those early days. And he was very good with people. And very good with talking them into doing things. [both laughing] And so that went on, I think, for several years, because I remember going with them--meaning Edith and her little kind of coterie—to Ireland and to Peru and to Japan and [to Vienna], you know, those various international congresses, and it was very—always delightful and well-planned and organized. I don't know how much of that planning was done by the craft museum—I think probably none—it was all the national or the World Craft Council thing that did it, but they were good for the people that attended.

JB: Yes, yes, I have those in the archives—the programs.

BK: Yes, yes. Well he was always there.

JB: So Patrick was--

BK: --always there. And he was—yes—and he was the one who would make the hotel reservations and get the cars that we'd have to have for whatever and getting the ticketing together to go as a kind of groupie [laughing]! And he was, you know, very good at that!

JB: And of course he attended all of the CAFAM board meetings.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: What was your impression--

BK: Well, I thought he was a very good person in all of those ways. But as far as raising money, I didn't see that he was doing any of that. I saw no results—I mean I couldn't see any result of money coming into the coffers. **[45:00]**

JB: He did raise—he did—he was able to get some grants from the Institute of Museum Services or what used to be the Institute of Museum Services and from private organizations. [And later, during the capital campaign, both the Neutrogena Foundation and the Ahmanson Foundation gave substantial amounts of money.] But . . . Mort Winston, who became the board president--

BK: Yes, I remember him.

JB: --when you were on the board--brought a couple of people from Tosco—the Tosco Oil Company—and one of them was Mark Gallon, who actually served as the [first] development officer.

BK: Yes, yes. I remember him, yes. I remember them as well and they—and they were both good friends with Frank Wyle. And Edith too. But I mean those gentlemen were always clustered together at the end of the table, kind of—and they were much more executive-like than Patrick was.

JB: Yes, well he—Mark Gallon really established what fund-raising, what standard fund-raising activities the museum had. He's the one that established the annual dinner-dance benefit, which continued annually, all the way practically to the end. And he started to do some of the research on foundations and so on.

BK: Yes.

JB: I don't know if he was responsible for [all of the fundraising]—he was "on loan" from Tosco so the museum was not paying his salary, but eventually the museum did hire a woman, Judith Teitelman, who acted as development officer and from then—and that was in the mid-eighties—and from then on, we always had a development officer.

BK: Well that was after, I think, my time was over because I don't remember that person at all. But--

JB: Yes, well, there's—there was a saying—in fact, I think Edith said this—that the way it was supposed to work was Edith was the accelerator and Patrick was the brake.

BK: [laughing heartily]

JB: [laughing] I don't know if they fulfilled their roles, but [laughing] Edith certainly was the accelerator. That's for sure. [This portion of the interview has been sealed.]

[50:00] [Patrick] and the Wyles became very close.

BK: Oh, I know, I know. They would hardly make a move without him . . .

JB: Yeah. So, I don't know how possible that became finally.

BK: But I became less interested in the museum. But also, that was because I had other more complications developing—here [at LACMA], for example, especially when Rusty Powell appeared here.

JB: Yes.

BK: And he came in 1981 or something about that time.

JB: Yes, so that really jibes with—it was about—I think you were maybe on the CAFAM board for one more year after that through 82, but--

BK: Maybe.

JB: --but yes, it seemed like I didn't see your name as much after that. Let me just mention a couple of other people—Ann Robbins, who was in—was the shop manager.

BK: Yes.

JB: John Browse was the manager for a very long time.

BK: Yes, I remember him, yes.

JB: But he had his own importing business and he decided to [go and do that full-time] and Ann Robbins was hired.

BK: Yes.

JB: And she had a special interest in contemporary crafts.

BK: Yes.

JB: And I figured you got to know her fairly well.

BK: Yes. I didn't make enough pots at that time to, you know, she kept saying, "Well, bring your pots over and we'll put them in the shop," you know, and all that, which was fine, but I wasn't—I was really more involved in other things and wasn't so much a producer of crafts as I used to be.

JB: I was wondering—you did continue to a certain extent for a while.

BK: Yes that's true.

JB: But by then you had been chairman of the art department--

BK: Yes.

JB: And then a few years later you became Acting Dean--

BK: Yes.

JB: That sort of must have taken over your life! [laughing]

BK: Yes, all of that.

JB: Well, yes, so Ann Robbins . . . became quite active with the American Craft Council, at least the—I think it's called the American Craft Enterprises—the—I don't know what you would call it, but it was an arm of the ACC that marketed the fairs--

BK: Yes, that's right and that's—that Council still does that and it's got a different name now and a different building, but that's practically all they do. They speak about having—sponsoring—shows, but they are not museum exhibitions. They are shows--

JB: --for the vendors—for the different [craftspeople]--

BK: Yes, and they go around the country. They go to Maryland and then they go to Chicago and they go here and there—which is fine, but it isn't—it isn't what it started out to be.

JB: They are—or they used to—juried. Are they not--

BK: Well, they may be juried, but it's all for sale. And it isn't composed of—often exhibitions have a message or a story or a—something that guides what they contain. None of that is the case anymore. And I don't think they have any curators. I think it's a business enterprise and--

JB: Well the American Craft—what is now—used to be the Museum of Contemporary Crafts and is now the American Craft Museum [in 2008 the name was changed again to the Museum of Arts and Design]—broke away from the American Craft Council, so, yeah, I think the curators are all with the American Craft Museum, although the ACC still runs a very fine library, for example—that the curators are able to use.

BK: Yes, that's true. In fact, one of the—there was a very divine lady who was a curator here [at LACMA] when I kind of got involved. She was a curator of ancient—ancient art—I don't know which segment of ancient art, but she was interested in glass, ancient glass and all of that. And she and her husband then moved to Seattle or something, and—her name was Tina Oldknow-- **[55:00]**

JB: Oh yes, I've heard the name.

BK: Yes. So then by and by, from Seattle they moved east when she then became curator of glass—or contemporary glass—at the Corning Museum and where the factory--

JB: Oh yes

BK: --and all of that is. And so then she got into the Council in an administrative way. So she is now--

JB: Oh--

BK: I got a folder not long ago—just in the mail, like up to date—I still get mail from them although I'm not a paying member anymore and it was because--

JB: But you're a trustee emeritus, aren't you? [Kester is a trustee emeritus of the Museum of Arts and Design.]

BK: Something like that. I don't know what, but I get their stuff.

JB: I think you're permanently on their list!

BK: I don't—but there she was in color on this magazine. This magazine—she holds some post in the American Crafts Council while she is now curator of modern glass at The Corning Museum of Glass. . . . and she has--she has the use of the Corning plane to take her to meetings and things--

JB: Oh my goodness!

BK: And she ranges—there's a Corning show house in Manhattan.

JB: Yes, yes.

BK: And she goes there for part of the week and arranges this, that, and the other. But she's a darling person. [Tina Oldknow is on the board of the Museum of Arts and Design, where she is chair of the board publications committee.]

JB: Hmnn. Interesting.

BK: Yes, it is. [laughing]

JB: It is really interesting how many connections there are between people and institutions. Well, I did want to mention—you had the—and there probably are more than I'm going to mention--but you did have several direct involvements with Craft and Folk Art Museum exhibitions.

BK: But I think not as many as you might think. The only two that I kind of remember, specifically, were one about L.A. Collects—that isn't the title but--

JB: *Made in L.A.*

BK: *Made in L.A.* and we did, I think, we did a relatively professional job of evaluating and bringing that together—and then *Women in Crafts.*

JB: *California Women in Crafts.*

BK: Yes, and we did a couple of catalogs for those that were nice. Now—let me see—my co-curator—or co-whatever—for one of them was--

JB: Rita Lawrence.

BK: Rita Lawrence.

JB: Yes.

BK: She was a darling person. Now whether she was really a devoted, paying member to Edith's enterprise--she was, of course, a—making her way with the products that her organization developed (and her husband, who is still alive, canned tuna or whatever he did to finance her projects), which weren't largely money-producing—at first anyway—with Architectural Pottery and so forth—but when it got underway, of course, it became a very significant thing. Architectural Pottery then branched out into Architectural everything else made out of plastics and so forth.

JB: Yes.

BK: And that was great! And then she came on the board of Eudorah Moore's organization of California Design.

JB: I'm not surprised.

BK: And a very lovely, lovely woman.

JB: She was one of the few people associated with the museum who were actually—not just willing, but actually--interested in talking about what contemporary craft and folk art are and what it means in today's world. And she put together a wonderful special issue of the museum newsletter--

BK: Hm-hmh.

JB: --that included quotes from many people—you may have been one of them.

BK: I don't know.

JB: But it was especially wonderful. I do have a couple of other shows on my list that you had some involvement with. One was *not* contemporary craft. In 1976, one of the first exhibitions [at the museum] was 19th Century American **[1:00:00]** Coverlets [June 8 – July 11, 1976.] Do you remember that?

BK: Oh! Yes, I think I do.

JB: There was a woman named Sabra Petersmann, who I think gathered the--organized the show.

BK: Then there was a lady—Mrs. Fox—what was her first name?

JB: Oh, Sandi Fox, yes.

BK: Sandi Fox. I did two or three shows with her—one here at the museum [at LACMA] and then one at the Fashion Institute downtown—and one other partial one.

JB: She was interested in quilts--

BK: Right.

JB: Sabra was interested in coverlets—I had to learn this—what the difference was—coverlets and quilts are very different—let me put it that way: Coverlets are woven, rather than constructed.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: And I know that Sabra helped organize that, but you, I believe, were overseeing the whole installation--

BK: Well at least the hanging of it.

JB: And as well the small catalog that was the first Craft and Folk Art Museum catalog.

BK: Was it? I don't think—I'd forgotten about that.

JB: It was very sweet, really—it's a small—about 24 pages I think—two colors—very, very nice. And then in 1977, you did the California Women in Crafts [January 18 – February 27, 1977.] Now tell a little bit about that, about how that process was—and I'm going to ask you the same thing about Made in L.A. Talk a little bit about the jurying process or the choosing--

BK: I think that—I don't know to what degree of autonomy I had, if I did have autonomy—but I did make most of the selections of those two exhibitions.

JB: UH-huh.

BK: Rita Lawrence, we were co-curators of the—of one.

JB: Of the California Women in Craft.

BK: Right. And that was—we felt—well, for one thing, California Women in Crafts should have a curator who's a woman.

JB: Good point!

BK: Yes, to start with. So, she was a very appropriate one and we worked very well together and we knew what we thought one another would like and all of that sort of stuff. And so we put that together and we went looking together at studios and people with work who--not necessarily came to our attention because we knew about them already--but were brought to our recognition. And I think it worked out very well and we saw people in it that hadn't otherwise—some of them—hadn't broad recognition. But some who had, national recognition of course.

JB: Yes. It was also part of—oh, no—that's the Made in L.A. that was part of the L.A. Bicentennial.

BK: Yes.

JB: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I just wanted to note too that for the California Women in Crafts—Max King designed the catalog and I'm sure that you had a lot--

BK: I don't remember who designed it.

JB: She—I think it was the first one that she designed—she worked for the museum for eight or ten years. She really designed all of the graphics in the museum after that. But it was a very handsome catalog and—did you get to know Max at all?

BK: Well, I'm just trying to remember what she was like. I don't remember her at the moment anyway.

JB: She was—well, I think of her as tall—but I think that's because she wore high heels a lot. She—her offices were in the little cottage around the corner where the library was--

BK: Yeah, yeah.

JB: --for quite a while and so we got to know each other. She was, you know, a really hard worker and had a lot of good ideas, and really when you talk about, you know, someone's [**1:05:00]** title—graphic designer—it didn't begin to describe what she did. She really helped to organize the museum--

BK: Yes.

JB: --in terms of scheduling things, you know. As you very well know, whenever you plan anything like that you have to have a timetable and I-I think a lot of the time those at the museum that should have been doing that were not always doing that and she kind of kept everybody in line that way. So, yes, that—California Women in Crafts—that was a really important show in 1977. I think the feminist movement was still very strong--

BK: Well, yes, it was getting underway!

JB: Really, yeah.

BK: Yes.

JB: The Women's Building was an important institution in L.A. and some of those artists were involved. I guess—this just occurred to me—did you hear—were there artists who said, "Oh, I don't want to be associated with a women-only show."

BK: No. I don't remember anything like that.

JB: OK. So then in 1981, which was the L.A. Bicentennial year, you put together this very large exhibition, Made in L.A. [Made in LA*:* Contemporary Crafts '81, A Bicentennial Celebration; Bernard Kester, guest curator; January 28 – April 12, 1981.] It, I think, took all of the gallery space, both upstairs [and downstairs] --

BK: I think so.

JB: Well, *California Women in Crafts* may have also. I don't remember.

BK: It was a pretty big show.

JB: But I know that *Made in L.A.* took up all the space that we had and covered all of the media.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: So tell about that. There were so many artists involved. [*Made in L.A.* included 59 artists: 22 in clay; 14 in fiber; 3 in glass; 12 in metal; and 8 in wood.]

BK: Well, yes.

JB: How long were you working on that, for one thing?

BK: Oh, well, a few months. But it meant visiting—going and visiting in various areas that weren't just on the tip of my tongue. You know--and seeking out significant new things from un—un—unknown artists.

JB: There certainly were some known artists included--

BK: Oh yes.

JB: --but you consciously looked for some newer people,

BK: It was to make it kind of a broad-based thing, and to encourage, therefore, young people to enter the field of crafts without having to wait until they're fifty-five or sixty to see themselves in a museum exhibition. So, yes, we did want young people.

JB: Well, well that's very interesting. The catalog was—and I think continues to be—well-known—a beautiful catalog--

BK: Really?

JB: Well, it was photographed—I don't remember now who the photographer was, but he did a tremendous job. [Roger Marshutz was the principal photographer.]

BK: I'll have to get mine out and look at it again. I'd forgotten, more or less what it--

JB: Max King did design the catalog and she worked with the photographer and I remember that—that was quite a project—not all of the artists had photographs, but many did--

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: --most of them did.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: In color—in full color. I think that was—up to that point—that was the most lavish catalog that the Craft and Folk Art Museum had done. And that show traveled to Washington, D.C.

BK: Yes, and I'm trying to remember what the circumstances were that made that happen.

JB: Yeah, I was wondering. I know that Edith was--

BK: It seems like there was one more venue—or maybe there was one more venue planned that didn't materialize. It ran in my mind that we were going to go to Washington and then it would go someplace else, but I cannot think where it went—if at all. **[1:10:00]** It may have fallen--

JB: Yeah, I don't know—you know, I may be able to still discover another one, but I do know that it went to the Federal Reserve Board galleries.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: And it had a slightly different catalog that went with that.

BK: Yes, and I don't remember the wherewithal that the second catalog—we didn't print the second catalog for anything larger than here—so I guess the reprint was totally in the hands of the second venue to do it for there with their kind of typeface and you know--

JB: Yes, I don't think it had color photos--

BK: I think you're right.

JB: I was wondering how that contact—how that contact was made?

BK: No. I think it was—it must have been by Edith or--maybe if Patrick was involved at that time. Maybe it was he who looked nationally to make a contact. I know I didn't do it because I was also too [involved] in other things to be, you know, looking for a venue.

JB: Yeah, I—of course the big Washington contact was with the Carters and Mondales: "Joan of Art." [laughing]

BK: Yes.

JB: “Joan of Art” Mondale [Joan Mondale was Vice President Fritz Mondale’s wife and she had a special interest in art, particularly contemporary craft; she is a potter.]--

BK: Right, right.

JB: --had come to the Craft and Folk Art Museum a couple of times. [She was the honoree at CAFAM’s first Primavera Ball in 1977.]

BK: Yes.

JB: But that was a little bit earlier than that, I think, but that still might have helped.

BK: Maybe.

JB: I don’t know. And then, in 1987, which was about the time, I think, that you took the job of Acting Dean, but you--

BK: Yes, that did start in 1987.

JB: But at some point you were working on a show for the museum called California Classics: Laura Andreson, Sam Maloof, and Bernard Kester [April 28 – May 24, 1987].

BK: Really? Oh, oh OK.

JB: And I don’t recall if you—if any of your pieces were in the show, but some of your students were represented--

BK: I don’t remember. Hmn hm.

JB: Uh—but I thought that you helped to organize it--

BK: Well I think that I—maybe I was in it—I just don’t remember doing--

JB: Could Shan Emanuelli have--

BK: Maybe.

JB: --been involved with that?

BK: Probably. Yes, probably.

JB: But of course, the intention was to honor you, as well as Laura and Sam--

BK: I do remember that aspect, but no—I do remember that—let me think now—the first time that you had a conservator--

JB: A conservator--

BK: And registrar rolled into one—kind of—now what was her name—she was--

JB: Laurie Beth Kalb?

BK: No, no, I don't know—I--

JB: I don't remember our having an *actual* conservator—unless it was a contracted job.

BK: I think that—I can't remember her name—she was very jolly and fun to work with--

JB: Marcie Page--

BK: Marcie.

JB: --of course, was the registrar for a long time.

BK: Registrar—so—she was the one, but when we worked together we really looked into the condition of things.

JB: Well, she was—yes—she was very careful about things. She wasn't a conservator, but she was very aware of the issues.

BK: What happened to her?

JB: She has—I think she may have retired now--

BK: Oh.

JB: She got a wonderful job at the Pacific Asia Museum. She was—is—head of their collections management [department].

BK: Oh well great! Good.

JB: Yeah, she--

BK: That's a struggling museum still.

JB: Yes, I guess so. But it's continued.

BK: Yes, that's true.

JB: She's gotten some terrific grants for their management, you know, computer management systems from the Getty and other places. So, you worked with Marcie on that show?

BK: Yes.

JB: So you don't **[1:15:00]--**you haven't been able to remember any other—you don't think you've had any direct involvement with other shows.

BK: I don't think so.

JB: I suppose after you took on the Acting Deanship, you had less and less time for any other involvements.

BK: --for anything. That is right. That is true.

JB: Well, I was going to ask you about a few of your other involvements—and we've already talked about some of them—well, I guess, first of all, one other CAFAM activity was the Contemporary Craft Council, which started in 1979, and you were one of the co-founders of that.

BK: I was? Oh, my gosh.

JB: Yes—you and Dora De Larios.

BK: Oh De Larios.

JB: You and Shan Emanuelli and a woman named Suzy Ticho.

BK: I don't remember Suzy.

JB: Well, in 1979—I don't know this may have been one of Mark Gallon's ideas—you know, he had a lot of ideas for increasing memberships and, you know, increasing activities. And he—or someone—had the idea to start—just like LACMA had their councils related to the different curatorial departments—that CAFAM should have a Folk Art Council and a Contemporary Craft Council. And then a little while later there was the Associates program, which was a kind of high-end group of people who did a lot of traveling. But the Contemporary Craft Council—you were involved at the beginning, and I'm just wondering if you remember anything about that.

BK: I don't think I do.

JB: They did—I wish I had some of the particulars—but I believe they did help to sponsor some contemporary craft shows or they were involved in supporting them in some way. And they had that annual auction for a while—an auction of contemporary craft—and that was very popular. It was a fundraiser.

BK: I guess so. I think I was not involved anymore much with the museum by then.

JB: I think you were starting to have a lot of other interests. And then I mentioned the Associates. And I know that Mark Gallon was involved in that—in the founding of that along with Judith Stark.

BK: Yes?

JB: Did you go on any of those trips? Were you—you know they went on these sort of extended weekend trips to—usually in the U.S.—where there were lots of crafts or folk art.

BK: I don't think I did. But I do know the Starks—I mean [I] did know the Starks--during that period. I'm wondering—aren't they still alive?

JB: I don't know. . . . [Judith Stark was a CAFAM board member and the founder and president of the Theatre Vanguard organization, a center for avant-garde and noncommercial cinema, dance, music, and performance art. She passed away December 1, 2006.]

BK: And I thought that they were kind of being courted for cash for [the] museum. And I don't know if it happened or not.

JB: I know that the museum always had problems trying to get money from, you know, people with Hollywood connections. I guess that's true of other museums as well.

BK: Yes, yeah.

JB: Oh here's something else that I thought you might remember about. In 1980, October of 1980, Santa Monica Place was built, designed by Frank Gehry, and the Craft and Folk Art Museum was asked to—was given a space in Santa Monica Place--

BK: I sort of remember--

JB: --they called it Gallery 3.

BK: I sort of remember something about it, but I don't think I was ever involved in it. **[1:20:00]**

JB: They did do quite a few contemporary—in fact, it may have been entirely contemporary craft shows.

BK: Oh I think it would be.

JB: There was a problem because the location was in a kind of out of the way location. And actually, they closed just a year later. But there were some very good shows. The last one, in particular, I remember, with Buster Simpson and—oh, another Seattle artist [Richard Posner]—they were—it was called *Two Schools of Fish* and they were kind of kinetic sculptures of beautiful fish, and part of it was somehow outside of the mall, like—I don't remember—or maybe it was just in the atrium of the mall. I guess that's where it was. I remember a lot of sunlight on these beautiful floating fish. And Shan Emanuelli was very involved in that. She and Susan Skinner, who was actually Ann Robbins' assistant. Susan actually was the main one involved with the [shop part of the] gallery [Gallery 3].

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: Now here's something we haven't talked about at all and I don't know if you ever even attended—but the Festival of Masks--

BK: Oh yes. I remember the Festival of Masks. Of course. At the outset I thought it was just a brilliant idea and it became annual, I guess. And it got bigger and bigger and then it seemed to me to be so redundant that I kind of lost interest. It was the same thing over

and over, the same crowds came. The same Wilshire Blvd. segment occurred. The same people came in the same masks. [laughing] So I didn't get very excited about those and I didn't--

JB: The first few you did--

BK: Well yes, but that ended quite quickly because they didn't have—they seemed to me to be just redundant. But then--

JB: Now do you remember when at least two or three years there was also a masquerade ball that was part of it?

BK: Well it seems to me that I remember something about the first one, but I don't think that I followed up on any of that.

JB: Well, I don't remember if it was--

BK: Where did they hold them?

JB: Well they were different places. One time it was the—oh what was the ballroom?—Myron's Ballroom?

BK: Yes, yes. Oh, I remember that. Now that was down on South Grand Avenue. Maybe it's still there. I don't know. Probably not.

JB: I'm not sure. I remember one that was held at Santa Monica Place. It was probably the same year that the CAFAM gallery opened there in 1980 and somehow or other they got David Hockney to be a judge for the masks and the costumes that everybody wore. And who—there were two or three quite well-known—oh, I think I remember Rose Slivka came to that one.

BK: Oh really. Yes.

JB: And it really was fun.

BK: Good.

JB: I've still not found anyone that is able to tell me—it's one of these things, you know, when someone has passed away, you wish you could find out from them—she never did tell me—and Frank Wyle doesn't seem to know—where the idea for the masks—for using the masks as a central concept came from.

BK: Well, I don't know, but it does hook living souls with symbolic artifacts from around the world where masks came into play. And it would engage a real live person to make it active, so, to that degree, it was interesting—but it didn't hold much interest to me somehow. The parades, you know, that they had--

JB: Yes, it started out as just a parade.

BK: Yes, but the parade—you know, the parade idea is fine, but many of the masks were so tiny **[1:25:00]--**when you see them out in the middle of the street when you're up in the [risers, which were provided for VIPs]— it didn't seem to me to be the essence of something that would be memorable.

JB: You know, we have thousands, literally thousands of wonderful color slides in the CAFAM archive at UCLA and many of them are from the Festival of Masks. Of course, they're close-ups--

BK: Yes!

JB: So that's my memory of it.

BK: Right.

JB: But certainly, you're right—from a distance they wouldn't have the same effect. It also was a way of drawing in people who were both interested in contemporary art as well as folk art.

BK: Sure.

JB: Even though I think you could probably argue that it was mostly a folk art kind of festival. Still there were many people who used their creativity to [make contemporary statements]—and certainly the maskerade ball was an example . . . of that, where there were just fantastic masks and costumes made. [For several years, CAFAM sponsored a maskerade ball on one evening of the Festival of Masks weekend.]

[interruption in recording]

BK: [Speaking of LACMA West—the former May Company Department Store], the first floor has a twenty-foot ceiling, which is good for exhibitions, but the first floor also has a forest of columns that are on a—it's weird—they're on a 22' north-south grid—and a 24' east-west grid. So it's not quite a square between the columns. And the columns are big—like this.

JB: Yes, I remember.

BK: So the columns go all the way up and then, beginning on the mezzanine, it's a very low ceiling, and from there on, it's only 12' ceilings. So what they're [the LACMA administration] planning to do now is to move everything to do with office—people who need offices over there. And . . . all the people who are not directly associated with the existing exhibitions would move their offices to the May Company and devote the present office structure to enlarging certain activities of the museum that need more space, but not more people—and storage of art and so forth. So they've bought that funny empty

building across the street, and I don't know what they're going to do with it; it looks like an impossible thing, but, anyway, who knows?

JB: Oh, is that the building that used to have furniture and--

BK: Oh, I don't know what it used to have. It's empty now. You can see it's dark now, just a shell of a thing.

JB: Oh, you're talking about the building that was burned out, that's right across from the front—to the west of the front of the museum. [Not sure where this is.]

BK: Yes, right. So that's what's going to happen, and the director's office and everything are going to move over there. They have plans for the restaurant and the shops and everything that are not exhibition and not art *there*, and everything else will be for the display of art, and the conservation of it. Conservation won't move from downstairs. So everything related to registration, conservation, and exhibition of art will [stay in LACMA East].

JB: Yes, and the library, I guess, is going to remain here—

BK: Yes.

JB: --although I believe it's going to be expanded somewhat. I think that's not certain yet. Well, of course, as we've said, you were otherwise involved by the end of eighties and the beginning of the nineties. But I—there was a lot of talk—people were worried about [CAFAM] losing membership because of our—what some people thought—was our invisibility inside the May Company.

BK: Sure. Yes, of course. **[1:30:00]**

JB: Did you feel that?

BK: Yes! I mean, it was a cute idea, but it was just like a department—it could have been hats!—I mean--the millinery department! [laughing] could have been as—you know—it was that kind of aspect that people would say—well, on the fourth floor you have this thing and hats are on the next floor and the restaurant's upstairs, and--

JB: Yes.

BK: --kitchen appliances are someplace else.

JB: Well, the library was on the mezzanine—which had, originally, been a luggage department [laughing]. And all of the CAFAM offices were on the fifth floor.

BK: Well that was the best part of the--

JB: It actually was because--

BK: Right.

JB: --we had access to the roof. But, you know, we had been promised by the May Company administration that we would get lots of help from the employees in terms of directing people and actually--

BK: --nothing took place.

JB: No. They wouldn't—you know—someone would come in looking for the museum and they might be looking for an exhibition or they might be looking for, you know, Patrick Ela, or some other staff member. Well, the employee down in the perfume department didn't know, and we were in three different locations. So it was just—it was very difficult from that point of view. From the [CAFAM] staff point of view, however, it was a very practical space. It was, you know, it was not this big, wonderful new museum building that we had been promised, but it served our purposes well during that time. Then we did hear—well, two pieces of news, one right after the other: one was that the Ratkovich plan, basically, had failed because the financing was not forthcoming. But that the board was working to try to come up with an alternative plan. And I have to say that some of us on the staff were somewhat relieved, actually, because we were worried about how we were going to possibly afford to operate this enormous building that, you know, was going to be several times the size of [the original museum at 5814 Wilshire].

BK: Sure.

JB: So when they finally announced a plan to merge the corner building at 5800 and the 5814 building, it really seemed like a very practical idea--

BK: Yes.

JB: --*and* one of the most beautiful parts of it [was] the fact that the building on the corner had an enormous parking lot that went with it!

BK: Yes.

JB: What had been our parking lot, small as it was—I think it held maybe ten or twelve cars at most—but still, it belonged to the Craft and Folk Art Museum—that was being turned into a really lovely courtyard, which was fine as long as we had this other parking lot.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: Well, so we absorbed that information, and then, suddenly, in early 1992, the May Company—corporate headquarters—announced that they were closing forever the May Company department store.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: And we were not going to be allowed to stay there by ourselves. We had to get out. So once again we were hunting for a new home.

BK: Hmmh!

JB: Now, you must have been aware of some of this going on.

BK: Yes, sure.

JB: Did you know Hodgetts and Fung, the architects that were--

BK: Yes, because Hodgetts was on the faculty at UCLA.

JB: Oh, and they had done that temporary library at UCLA.

BK: Yes, and he—before he was on the faculty of architecture, he was in the faculty of design as a part-time teacher of three-dimensional design. And his wife wasn't part of that situation. And so then he—that **[1:35:00]** part of his career was terminated when he got appointed to the school of architecture. So that's all that I know about him. I know enough to talk with him and speak with [him] about, you know—[architecture]--and things like that, but—I thought that was a wasted effort on their part—what they did to the building—the existing building, I think, did not improve—of course it had nothing to do with the exterior [i.e., it didn't affect the exterior appearance] except on the side in the back. But it didn't—it didn't provide extra gallery space—maybe it organized spaces better than they were before—but I don't think that it helped the exhibition space at all.

JB: Well, of course, the original plan was to merge—for the museum to buy the building on the corner--

BK: Yeah.

JB: --and the original plan that Hodgetts and Fung came up with--

BK: Yeah.

JB: —did physically merge those two spaces via the courtyard--

BK: Yes.

JB: --and the doors entering [the courtyard]. Then it turned out that the museum was not able to buy the building.

BK: Yeah.

JB: And we lost not only that space, which at that point—and, really, the Hodgetts and Fung design *depended* on our having that 5800 space--

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: --because virtually all the offices were there; the library was there; there was a rather large gallery; and storage space—

BK: Yeah.

JB: --*and*, as I've mentioned, this wonderful parking lot out in back.

BK: Well, it also had an elevator.

JB: And an elevator--

BK: For a bridge.

JB: Yes, although the bridge was—it turned out—the bridge idea, although it sounded fine, would have taken up way too much space on the second floor. So—at any rate . . . . I knew, from what you said, that you did attend the opening party—the Gala party--

BK: Yes, it was a tented thing in the parking lot out in back.

JB: In May of 1995--

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: --we had a gala dinner and the whole weekend was—Saturday was especially for members and Sunday was the opening for everyone. And we had a Native American woman come and give a blessing—it was—from the staff point of view—I think, really, from everyone's point of view that was involved with the museum at that time, it was certainly a high point. What were your thoughts?

BK: Well, I thought all of that, but I was suspicious, frankly, that—because of the thing that had happened before—that is, the plan for the new building, that washed away--

JB: The Ratkovich [plan]?

BK: Yes, well, yes, all of that. I thought—I can't imagine, unless there would be quantities of money put into it, that it would go any further. That's what I really thought.

JB: Well, I—I think that you were very insightful, and, as wonderful as it was for a few months, thereafter the money problems began to surface--

BK: Yeah

JB: --very quickly, and within a year, Patrick had resigned.

BK: Um-huh.

JB: . . . . A new director was hired—Paul Kusserow, who had been associated with Williamsburg—but actually in the financial department—not in the Program department. He did hire Martha Drexler Lynn.

BK: **[1:40:00]** . . . She was smart. She married a wealthy man.

JB: Oh!

BK: And he's the one who—she's written two or three books.

JB: Yes.

BK: And they've been published—he publishes them!

JB: Oh, really?

BK: He provides the money.

JB: I didn't know that.

BK: And so she was smart in certain ways. But as far as being a good curator or having vision about who does what or any of that—I thought it was the weakest period in the history of this decorative arts department.

JB: Well—uh--I guess I have very mixed feelings about that time. It was a very sad time, and a very mixed-up time, and even though Paul Kusserow, you know, was charming and a good talker, it quickly became apparent that he really didn't know anything about museum [work], and didn't know how to go out [and] get exhibitions or plan exhibitions and he [relied on] Martha and—uh—well, setting aside any personal feelings that we had about those individuals--they really didn't have time, as it turned out. Things went down the hill--

BK: Yeah.

JB: --so badly, so quickly--

BK: Right.

JB: --financially. And so they left within the year.

BK: Yeah.

JB: And at the end of 1997—I was the last one out of that building. We had [earlier] managed to form a committee. Elizabeth Mandell was on that committee--

BK: Yes.

JB: --and Wally Marks and Edith--to decide what to do with the library [collection] and what became the [CAFAM] archives--

BK: Yes.

JB: [The materials—all the staff files from 1965 – 1997 that] are now the CAFAM [Records], which are [in Special Collections] at the UCLA [Research Library], were just going to be

tossed out. And I had had no—no thoughts about having anything to do with the archives. But [laughing], it turned out that that was my job [both laughing]! There was nobody else. I mean, I finally realized how valuable these files were—with the whole history of the museum going all the way back to 1965—that people that had worked on the staff of the gallery and the museum had, [over the years], when they left, they'd squirreled these files away. A few people took things with them, but most people left their files. They were, you know, in tattered boxes and filing cabinets. And they did look like, you know, they should be thrown out, but, fortunately, I was able to get on the phone and call most of the major art research libraries and—we got seven proposals to take them.

BK: Really!

JB: To take the library—well, seven proposals to take the library and three proposals to take the archives. And so the library went to LACMA and the archives went to UCLA. And I went to LACMA for a few more years before I retired. Everyone thought that that was the end of the museum—this was the end of 1997.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: Do you remember hearing about that--

BK: Yes.

JB: --and what your feelings were at that time?

BK: Well, I was feeling badly about it, but I think I wasn't too awfully sympathetic, knowing the wherewithal by which it plummeted. So--

JB: Yes, it was certainly a confusing time for the staff. As it turned out, it was not really the end.

BK: Um-hmh.

JB: The permanent collection was sold first--

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: --at Butterfield's. Did you go to that auction?

BK: No, no.

JB: Well—uh--my husband and I went to it. I must say it was more like a wake than a--

BK: Yes.

JB: --and although we did actually buy a few things, which I'm very glad to have, **[1:45:00]** in great part because of the association with the museum. But it was a very sad occasion, and by that time Edith was quite ill, and it was beginning to be obvious, and—*but*—in April of 1999—I believe the museum was closed completely for about 14 months—we

suddenly heard that the museum had arranged, [had] made an agreement with the City of L.A. with the folk [art] department of Cultural Affairs of the City of L.A.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: And I haven't talked to Patrick Ela [yet] about this—I will be interviewing him—but apparently, he was influential in at least talking with Al Nodal, who was there--

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: --at that time. And I believe it was Al who--

BK: Yes, I think so.

JB: --who made the arrangements. So—the museum has had a whole other life!

BK: Yes, in fact a friend of mine became director—Jim Goodwin--

JB: Oh! One of several--

BK: Yes, one of several right in a row. And he was very enthusiastic about it and I think he was quite dedicated and knowledgeable. But he had a vision about it, and—so that folded.

JB: Well--

BK: I mean his role in that folded—and he was out—and then, you know, Martha Longenecker and the museum in San Diego--

JB: The Mingei, yes.

BK: Yes. She then announced that she was going to retire—which I just didn't believe for one word—and so he went down there and was hired by the board, and—this is an aside, which seems dumb to even mention--but he was quite enthusiastic about their collection, and everything that she had done for 100 years—it seems like—and so when he was appointed, he went down to open, you know, to move into an office. And he said on the opposite side of the desk was sitting Martha Longenecker, and he knew immediately she would never leave. [Martha Longenecker was the founder and director of the Mingei Museum in San Diego. She passed away October 29, 2013.]

JB: Oh, my God.

BK: And he said he didn't want to be second to Martha Longenecker. And so he said goodbye. [laughing]

JB: I have never met her. She seems like quite a formidable--

BK: She is formidable. And she's determined. And everyone was surprised that she would announce her retirement and seek—interview and seek a director. Well, Jim found out that he—that that wouldn't be what a director would be [laughing]. So anyway--

JB: Now you have not been involved with the new Craft and Folk Art Museum?

BK: No. I met the—the lady whose name I don't even remember--

JB: Joan [De Bruin]—the first one who was associated with the city?—with Cultural Affairs?

BK: No.

JB: Oh, you're talking about the current director--

BK: She's still--

JB: --Maryna Hrushetska.

BK: Uh-huh. So I met her. But I don't know what she does or what her capabilities are or anything like that.

JB: Well, she does seem to—she's a strong woman—and she does—although her vision is slightly different than Edith's—she does have, I think, a vision. And she's managed to hire some very talented staff.

BK: Oh good.

JB: They're only about—ummh—about five, maybe six of them all together, which is—uh—well, we always had at least 12 or 15 people on the staff, and, you know, at one point [before and during the time in 1995 when the renovated museum opened], it had gone up to 20 or 25. So she's doing a tremendous amount of—a tremendous job with a small group of people. **[1:50:00]** And I think the exhibitions have been interesting. They're not—in my mind—as exciting as—have you seen any of the shows?

BK: Not . . . that she has put together. But then the lady who was in charge of the shop, whom I liked a lot--

JB: Oh, Stella Krieger, yes.

BK: They ultimately left--

JB: Stella's [the Shop Manager] at the Fowler! It's perfect I think!

BK: Yes, yes. So they were such nice people and they, of course, were in the rug business I guess. And they are knowledgeable in that field--and stuff.

JB: Yes, well, yes, it was unfortunate the way that Stella had to leave. As I said, Maryna is a very strong person and she apparently just decided that she wanted to start with a clean slate.

BK: Hmmh.

JB: And, uh, she was not [sigh]—it was difficult the way people were let go.

BK: Yeah.

JB: So—well, I have also not been that involved and, of course, the Craft and Folk Art Museum archives really go only through to the end of 1997—so, well, I did want to just mention, uh, uh—that Edith did pass away in October of 1999. Did you attend the memorial service for her?

BK: No, I think I was out of town at the time. But I loved her very much. I thought she was a divine lady. I was never very close to Frank, although I knew them together a lot. Because they were together and they were made for each other. He seemed like a very gentle and serious, you know, man and all—and they continued to send me honey from the—each Christmas—

JB: --from the ranch?

BK: --from the ranch [laughing].

JB: That ranch. It's been so good for Frank to have that.

BK: Oh of course—and it's full of Sam Maloof furniture.

JB: Yes.

BK: --and all that.

JB: Yes. His office is full of Sam Maloof furniture too.

BK: Yes, yes.

JB: Well, Bernard, I—I guess unless you have any other--

BK: Well, I'm very thankful that you're carrying the ball to get it all recorded properly and stuff like that.

JB: Well, thank you. I am enjoying it a great deal.

BK: Good, good.

JB: I'm—I'm satisfying all my little—wonderings—about things. I did spend 21 years there and the people involved—including yourself—were so talented and creative and interesting as people, so--

BK: Now in the meantime, I guess, Patrick divorced and has another wife.

JB: Yes.

BK: --and maybe more children, I don't know.

JB: I don't think so, no.

BK: Uh-huh.

JB: But yes, he did remarry—Phyllis [Ginter] . . . . But he's next on my list [laughing] of victims!

BK: Oh, is he [laughing]?

JB: . . . I am very pleased that you agreed to do this and--

BK: Well, I've enjoyed chatting.

JB: Likewise. Thank you very, very much.

BK: OK. Well, thank you.

End of Session 2 [1:54:07]