*This is a transcription of a lecture that was given at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, an artist's residency program in Skowhegan, Maine (www.skowheganart.org). It is part of an Archive of lectures recorded from 1952 to the present, which are available in audio form on CD at this institution. It is important to note that most of these lectures incorporated visuals, which are **not** available. However, the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture does have a limited number of slides from a selection of lectures in the Archive. You may contact Skowhegan to find out if they exist for a specific lecture.*

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SKOWHEGAN SCHOOL
OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE
Skowhegan, Maine

Lecture by Cheryl Donegan

Skowhegan, 2011

Transcriber: Judith Stoodley

[Transcriber's note: There are many minor inaccuracies in the quotes from the "Junkspace" essay. These have been noted with the designation "[sic]" and one should not use the text here as source material for quotes from the essay.

LECTURE BEGINS WITH VIDEO IN PROGRESS (0:00-5:57)

Introductory remarks (Craig Drennen, Dean): Hello, everyone. Welcome to the second of Skowhegan's Barbara Lee Lecture Series. And as always, I ask everyone to please turn off or silence your cellphones. And if there's anybody who's coming to hear a lecture for the first time, if you need the restroom, exit through the back screen and go to the library. Tonight's lecture will be Cheryl Donegan, who's going to be introduced by another of our resident faculty this summer, Miss Marlene McCarty. I'm going to turn it over to Marlene right now.

Introduction by Marlene McCarty: All right. I have to have help turning it over. All right…. So when you introduce someone, my assumption is that the introduction is to provide context about who they are. Of course, my knowledge of Cheryl is actually something super-personal. It's

something that's specifically molded in my brain based on her public artwork. So I decided I should go to the Great Oz, the worldwide Web, to see if I could expand my knowledge of who is Cheryl Donegan? Well according to WWW, here she is.

IMAGE?

I'm not going to go through the "she was born here, went to school there, has this honor and that honor and this degree." She has all that. But anyone with a Wi-Fi connection can find that information. I will tell you that it is with great excitement that I get to introduce someone who produced what came to be an icon of 1990s video. For me this is way more exciting and interesting than a list of degrees and honors. And exhibitions. In my mind, during that Nineties time the girls had Cheryl, with her low-tech DIY lively qualities; and the boys had Matthew Barney, with his macho over-productions. The influence of her early video work lives on, and is evidenced in artists such as—to name a few—Sue de Beer, especially the early work; Trisha Baga, and Ryan Trecartin. It's exciting for me to introduce Cheryl, due to a sort of energetic personal connection. Though we weren't what you'd call close acquaintances—I think we only met a time or two back in those days—it was 1993. I had been working on painting since 1998 [sic] that concerned female sexuality; the mythic status of painting; what it meant for a female to even try to enter this mythology; the introduction of specific content into an art world that favored the white male oblique; the idea of women speaking for themselves and not as the status quo wanted them to speak. I was also dealing with ideas of the Master. And pretty much any other established myths surrounding art-making. Okay. It was a busy time. In the fall of that year, 1993, this young upstart, only five years apart in age, but in those days that seemed monumental—this young upstart blasted on the scene. She gave us sound. She gave us color. She gave us movement. She gave us humor. She gave us desire. It was delicious. It looked

easy and it was so fun for the viewer. I do believe entertainment can be a great lubricant. And Blymy! It was all the same stuff that I was dealing with in boring old canvas and black letters. Except it was video; it resonated. That was Head, 1993. To that I say, "Well, kiss my royal Irish ass." That was 1992 and I'll let her tell you about that. Okay, that was then; time goes on. There appeared to be a rupture. But what appeared as a break was, in fact, continuity. Cheryl was merely freeing herself from—in her words—"the feedback loop" she was stuck in. In actuality she was merely forging forward on the track of painting exploration she had always been on since the early Nineties, or maybe even before. She's endured being seen as an imposter; she has shape-shifted; and she's come out on top. This is where I think every person in this room can learn from her. It's one thing to get out of school, have some exhibitions, maybe even have a big moment of attention from the art world. But this love rarely lasts. The real challenge is how to be an artist for your whole life, to constantly be evolving even when the fancy lovers have turned away. Cheryl does that all the time. And I think she can tell you that sometimes the lovers return. She is an irresolute structure. She wallows in deliberately unresolved space. She's fast and furious, and to me she's so punk. Meet Cheryl Donegan.

SILENCE (VIDEO?) (12:31-14:04)

VIDEO WITH SOUND

CD: I'm just going to turn her down for a minute. (VIDEO POSSIBLY CONTINUES WITHOUT SOUND?) Thanks, Marlene. I don't really know if I can… compete with that introduction in terms of… the performance of it is amazing. I'm overwhelmed. But I do— Speaking of overwhelming performance, perhaps we were in line when we… planned this thing not together. But let me just read you a little bit about what you might have seen when you came in, which was the beginning of The Nude Restaurant by Andy Warhol, 1967. Critic Stephen

Koch wrote about Nude Restaurant and its star, Viva, in particular: “It is absolutely impossible to imagine how anyone could conceivably give a damn... I cannot think of a single inch of footage in Nude Restaurant that seems to me worth looking at. Watching it is rather like being present at the most boring party of one's entire life... And [sic] yes, the superstars. They get on one's nerves." I became fascinated with Viva’s monologue in this movie. I always think I talk too much, especially when I’m nervous. It’s one of the things I dislike most about myself. I was thinking a lot about the art world and how nervous it makes me. And I was thinking a lot about my old videos where I never said anything, and how much people liked those. So I decided to talk in a video. I’m not an actress, and I wasn’t sure what to say; so I decided to say exactly what Viva said. I read somewhere that Warhol said her voice was the most mesmerizing and the most grating he ever heard. He should have know. He was a connoisseur of great talkers, although he didn’t say too much himself. So I cast myself as Viva, and my then nine-year-old son as Taylor Meade (spelling?), Beauty and the Beast reversed. Vintage headphones and a Nintendo DS keep us in our zones. The more I talked, trivial, breathless, at a breakneck pace, the more it reminded me of me getting on my own nerves. The relentless voice, hooked up to a nervous system of images, everyday jolts. It’s just Mom in the kitchen, serving up a cool dish of hot leftovers. Or actually a hot dish of cool leftovers. So I’ll just turn it up a little bit.

VIDEO WITH AUDIO (19:15-19:35?)

(Begins speaking as sound cuts out, then back on) So the sound—This was actually a perfect intro, ‘cause the sound in the original movie cuts out at random intervals, because there were—

VIDEO

{unintelligible}. So this is a video from 2008; and it’s the longest video I’ve ever made. It comes in at about twenty-one minutes. So I’m just going to click through it a bit.

VIDEO

At a certain point, as with a lot of my more recent videos, things sort of happen in the edit. And with this one I started with the Viva thing, and wearing the headphones, and repeating Viva's monologue. And in the edit I started adding my own bits and pieces. And it sort of—There's kind of a transformation, where I thought I was adopting this character. And the more I talked, and the more I sort of became Viva, actually the more I became myself. And the video sort of has—I won't play the whole thing, but it sort of has these bits and pieces of my own footage that I had collected and archived, and not used for years, suddenly found its [sic] way into this piece.

VIDEO

So in my version it didn't really become Nude Restaurant; it was more like Underwear and Diaper Kitchen. And partially, I [sic] have to realize, I didn't think I would play the last scene of that video; and then I realized it was actually very selfishly motivated, 'cause I miss my kids and I wanted to see images of them. So… at any rate. But I'm getting, as I usually do with a lecture, both ahead and behind myself. Because the real question I want to ask, and the question that was actually so nicely set up by Marlene's introduction, is how did I get from here, in 1993, to here, in 2010? And it's a question that I sort of feel compelled to talk about in every talk I do, even though it's also a question that I feel equally compelled to refuse to make sense of, refuse to present it in a linear fashion, and pretend to make sense that it all made sense to me, and that it was all just one thing after the other, quite simply. Because in fact it wasn't. And, in fact, there are bits and pieces that don't make sense, that drop out, that refuse to align. And that is both annoying and as it should be. I think that, you know, what defines the trajectory, though, is, I think, the desire, stubbornness, and a kind of a willfulness to just do what I want to do. And sometimes—as also Marlene was completely right in mentioning, sometimes there's a price to

pay for that. But it's always seemed to a price not too high. So in answering my own question: How did I get—I like to go backwards a lot in lectures-- How did I get from there to there? I could ask the following questions. Or there. Was it through deconstructing painting through a series of ironic actions and gestures, as in, Kiss my royal Irish ass? A kind of bare-assed painting. Was it about exploring surfaces? Painting where it shouldn't go. In this case on the screen of an old-fashioned television set. Or on Plexiglas or plastic bags.

IMAGE

Or the surface of the body, like this example from a video called Rehearsal, from 1995, where I had a friend shave off my hair, and then I kind of repainted it in.

IMAGE

This is also from Rehearsal, talking more about exploring surfaces, where I paint on a plastic tarp as if it's a ceiling that's collapsed upon me. Meanwhile my naked body kind of acts as an eraser, sort of obscuring and destroying the image as it's painted. So was it asking if painting is a performance, as in those last examples? Or is painting a story that one tells oneself about painting? So this video is Line, from Nineteen…. Also—I think it's '96 or 7. It's a very kind of complicated story that I basically lifted from the Jean Luc Godard movie, Le Mepris, or Contempt. And if you know the movie, it's a story of a cast of characters; the center dynamic in the relationship is a playwright who's a revolutionary, and is screenwriting for Hollywood just to make a buck, and his wife, who's played by Brigitte Bardot, develops contempt for him in doing—you know, sort of selling out. I kind of transposed the story to tell a very elaborate story about painting, casting myself as all the characters, and sort of—instead of film—struggling to make a painting, as told by a video. So it was very circuitous, but one of these ways of which, you know, I'm kind of trying to allow myself to sort of re-narrate the story of painting for

myself. So within the context of this video, painting gets made in all these peculiar ways. Paint on the heel of the foot dragged across a canvas as if it's shit, trying to drag it off your heel. It was—Another one of those questions if finding painting. You know, if it's under your shoe, is it also in the landscape? And this is a video called Scenes and Commercials. It's really the first video I made that I am not in. It's an abstract video, one could call it, of the marquee—the canopy—that is over a service station in Knoxville, Tennessee. And it has also a very elaborate soundtrack. Actually the story is more on the soundtrack than it is in the visuals, in this case. Or is it finding painting by doing painting, but also trying to tell oneself the story of one's own search?

IMAGES(?)

So these are a series of paintings that I made for a show that had a title that I can't remember any more, but it was from 19… maybe '97 in Basilica of Fine Arts. And it was a series—This was a show that, you know, as Marlene so eloquently put it, when the lovers really turned their backs on me, and I was left bereft. This show, which featured the video Scenes and Commercials, and then scenes of the scenes, as commercials, in the paintings. So you see, in trying to define painting I really went down a lot of different rabbit holes or, you know, a lot of different blind alleys, as it were, trying to discover like how I could make a painting. And one might ask at this point, "What was so fascinating to you about painting? Why did you want it so much? Why were you willing to do anything to find it? You were having so much success with the videos. Why didn't you just do those and just forget about painting?" And to that question I can only reply, "I don't know.' I still don't know. Because it would have been so simple to just make my videos and enjoy the feeling of, "I'm a video artist." But there was something, almost a perversity, where I wanted to have it every which way and every way I could possibly have it all

at the same time. And maybe that's something that characterizes my generation; you know, this kind of like myth you get growing up in the Seventies that you can like have it all. You know, like a Virginia Slims woman from some 1970s cigarette campaign. Or Mary Tyler Moore or whatever it was. Whatever type of—you know—thing was in me, it was—I can only define it as the word *perverse*.

IMAGE?

Once again, finding painting in a landscape. And this is a scene from a video called Flushing, from, I think, 2004. Going out to the Flushing Mall in Queens, a place I would perhaps never have gone unless I had a small child who was interested in purchasing as many plastic guns as could be found.

IMAGE

Well, again I'm getting ahead of myself. Oh, I know what I was going to talk about. Actually… I have to go forward to go back. As always.

IMAGE

I figure as long as—Yeah, that's what I wanted—As long as I'm here and talking about all the blind alleys, let's kind of go back a little bit and talk about the times where I hit the nail on the head. And this is Head. I don't know how many of you have seen it. It did cast a long shadow, and was really kind of as well a passport. It has been—you know—widely seen in countless shows; I've lost track of it. It's been on the Internet for years. And it really is, as I say, a calling card, a passport. And also somewhat of an albatross in my own life. But I can talk about that more in a minute. So I'm going to show a little bit of it, and then I'm going to fast forward into it.

VIDEO RUNS

{unintelligible} we can just talk through it. So, I mean—you know—I've just—In a way to kind of—I always distance things with humor, I think. And I think, you know, one way I've described this is, "This is what happens when Madonna meets Fluxus." "This is safe sex action painting." And… you know, talking about perversity, I think one of the—You know, some people could find this video a little perverse, but I think, you know, perhaps the most ridiculous thing about it is that I always thought it was about painting. And, you know, not many people shared—initially—that point of view. In fact, I mean, you know, taking place when it did, in terms of what was going on in video, and that kind of sexual politics around performance, and video art in the time when I made this, you know, the kind of riot grrrl aesthetic that was around at the time, it was seen as about a lot more things than painting. So there's Head. And when I say that I have a—Well, I'm just going to play this while I talk.

VIDEO

This is "Kiss My"-- Oh, what did I just do? Here we go. When I say that, you know, I have a very contentious relationship with Head, it is because of the fact that it is so popular that, in a way, it kind of—you know—there's a way that Head created an effect of blinders for other interests that I had, in terms of the public reception of my work. People would come to the studio and I'd be eager to show them, you know, other things that I'd made, and people seemed rather disappointed that there were no more videos like Head, and that none seemed to be forthcoming. And that, you know, can be like a painful thing. But one carries on. This video precedes Head, just by a few months. This is called Kiss My Royal Irish Ass.

VIDEO RUNS, AUDIO ON

I'm kind of back to my notes. You know, for a moment there I kind of blanked out and I couldn't read them anymore; and it was like really scary for me. But now I can read again. Okay. So… you know, part of the… as we see in Head and Kiss My Royal Irish Ass, it's really an examination of painting as behavior. And actually the person who I think coined the expression "painting is behavior" is none other than Julian Schnabel, who I find, on some way, I'm much horrified to quote him. But at the same time I really think I agree with Julian, that painting is behavior, or it can be behavior. And certainly in these videos I was behaving painting. So whether it was behaving it through the kind of polymorphous perversity of the body, or whether it was behaving it through burlesquing it, as I believe I'm doing here, that—and burlesquing the idea of identity too… there's a number of behaviors going on in this early work in terms of how I was interacting with this obsession--and I can really only term it as an obsession—with painting. So it's—Whether I'm refusing it, or I'm narrating it, or I'm failing at it, or I'm degrading it, or I'm finding it everywhere, or I'm reincorporating it, they're all manifestations of this idea of finding ways to behave it. The second—I'll just cut to the end of this, 'cause it's amusing. I get the artist—Here we go. Here comes Sean Landers, my studio assistant, the artist Sean Landers, who pours me a Guinness, which I proceed to drink at top speed. It didn't occur to me that I would get wasted, 'cause I drank the damn thing so fast—and I don't even like it. But I figured it must be done. So… to the strains of "Oh Danny Boy." Anyways, so you can see me like struggling to finish it. All right…. A few trucks going by. All right. So. Enough of that. The third video that's probably—and I'm going a little bit more into depth in this early work just because I think it sets up this kind of exploration is this video called Practice.

VIDEO

The sound track is James Joyce reading his own—reading from Finnegan's Wake. So basically what it is, is a series of painting gestures on the plastic bag, on the video screen… and the video screen reveals it has a piece of Plexiglas in front of the camera lens… etcetera, etcetera. All right. So…. So what happens after, you know, this long, long period of this catalogue of early videos is that kind of rupture, really, that Marlene talks about. And I can only myself talk about it as a rupture. And you know, it's around 1999; and a lot of things happened to me around 1999. I had my first son. I lost my gallery. I just got really sick of myself and being in my videos, and was kind of at this moment that, you know, felt sort of despairing. But I can—as painful as it was then I can kind of see it as a sort of a fruitful moment now. I described to Marlene, and I think it's really-- In my case it was very true—one thing, one powerful effect of having a child on my practice as an artist was really that it got me out into the world in a very different way. And, you know, I joke that, "Oh, we have to go to the Flushing Mall to buy plastic toys;" but in fact being just out, and not in your studio, and looking at things, and seeing the world, and seeing the world through someone else's eyes, and taking him places that interested him, not particularly me, I found things that interested me.

IMAGE

And so—like this amazing sculpture that was on the street one day. But now I have to go backwards, 'cause I realize, even though I spent three days ordering the slides, I don't like the order they're in. So what I want to read to you know—You know, also around this time is, when I'm talking about space and being out in the world… something that hit me so profoundly was the Rem Koolhaas article, Junkspace. And I always go back to Junkspace, because I really think, as much as Head was sort of like this profound moment of breakthrough in my own practice from like the work I'd made in undergraduate and graduate school, Junkspace was also a

profound break. And I'll describe why in a bit. But I'll read you a bit from Rem Koolhaas's Junkspace, if you don't know it. Koolhaas calls junkspace a low-grade purgatory. He describes it as a "product of the encounter between the [sic] escalator and air conditioning, conceived in an incubator of sheetrock (all three missing from the history books), which might have been exactly what I was looking for. He describes it as a continuity as the essence—"Continuity is the essence of junkspace; it exploits any invention that enables expansion, deploys the infrastructure of seamlessness: the [sic] escalator, air conditioner, [sic] the [sic] sprinkler, the [sic] fire shutter, the [sic] hot-air curtain… It is always interior, so expansive [sic] that you rarely perceive limits. It promotes disorientation by any means necessary [sic](mirror, polish, echo). Junkspace is sealed, held together not by structure, but by skin, like a bubble." And that's why I put the Matisse in, because funny enough, people describe Matisse in a similar way. They talk about late Matisse as his spreading out the paint on the surface of the canvas, as if on the skin of a bubble, evenly distributed, so that there's no point of detail or point of a focus in the composition that will break one's attention into specifics, but that it will be a continuous experience, like the surface of a bubble, or the surface of a fabric. And that everything is held in tension, edge to edge, corner to corner, across the entire surface. So therein I find what became for me a strategy, a way to go about organizing imagery, a way to go about organizing composition, and a way to go about organizing a dynamic of what I wanted to happen in a painting, that prior to that I really had no way to do that. So it provided this kind of key, that like I knew all these other things: how to degrade it, how to debunk it, how to sort of fuck with it, how to get in there and behave it, and act it out, and burlesque it. I was very good at all that. But what I lacked, I think, was a kind of a mechanism of getting it down. And that's funnily enough, what Junkspace provided for me… this essay. It sort of provided me with some kind of a key, in which I was able to unlock

something that I had just rattled at the bar—literally., you know, rattled at the bars for quite a long time. So…. Okay, I did all this.

IMAGE

Okay. So I'll read you a—And I think this dress is Junkspace too; so I'll talk about that. It's Balenciaga… so it's not "junk." Balenciaga, people. Okay. Okay. "It substitutes hierarchy with accumulation, composition with addition. More and more is more and more. [sic] Junkspace is overripe and undernourished [sic] at the same time, a colossal security blanket that covers the earth in a stranglehold of seduction." I'm just jumping around the piece. "… a seamless patchwork of the permanently disjointed." "Because it cannot be grasped, junkspace cannot be remembered. It is flamboyant yet immemorable, [sic] like a screensaver; its refusal to freeze insures instant amnesia. Junkspace does not pretend to create perfection, only interest." "Junkspace is additive, layered [and] lightweight, not articulated in different parts but subdivided, quartered in [sic] the way a carcass is torn apart—individual chunks severed from a Universal condition. There are no walls, only partitions, shimmering [sic] membranes frequently covered in mirror or gold."

IMAGE?

Oh, no. How could someone work for three days on a presentation and not have their slides in the right order? Okay. So you see where I'm going with this. This is an installation from 2000 at White Columns. Such an interesting series of events, because I had a white room at White Columns when I was thirty-nine, maybe; and I'd already been in a lot of group shows and had one-person shows. But I'd never had a white room, and at that point I didn't have a gallery. So it was the perfect time to have a white room. And… so, at any rate—I talk like everyone knows what a white room is; so perhaps I should explain. There's an alternative space in New York

called White Columns. And they sort of feature the work of emerging artists in group shows, and in these little solo project rooms called white rooms. And it seems like the proper narrative is to have a white room sort of when you're an emerging artist; and then you emerge and the story, you know, is--goes forward like that. But look, what I'm trying to say is in my own narrative I had sort of done all that and then had a white room. But it was perfect, because it was just what I needed. So this is the white room. And you see, there's mirrors and caution tape and paintings all around that are up on the walls; and then the images of the paintings…. I've got to go back. The images of the paintings were sort of images of what was being seen in the room, so—you know. But it's sort of incorporating painting and video. I'm going to start going a little faster now, 'cause you know, this is just like images.

IMAGE

So this is painting and video combinations from around 2001. So you see I sort of start to build these like primitive sets in the studio, and then sort of paint them, sort of trying to create my own sort of sense of like junkspace, and have the painting mark the gesture, kind of correspond, you know, with what I'm seeing. So these are that series of paintings. And there was also a video, because I had a friend perform a kind of a dance. We made sort of this music video based on the movie Tommy, with Ann Margret, inside this little set.

IMAGE

So these are images—collages—that kind of come out, and paintings that kind of come out from, you know, this kind of newfound excitement of like how I can put things together. And you see there's a lot of commercial imagery, and so forth and so on.

IMAGE?

And you know, they're all very light, thin structures, super sort of gestural. A video that comes out from around this time that sort of follows the same tactics is the video called File, which I'll show you a bit of. {unintelligible} So what happens in File… The sound piece is something I was able to get permission from my friend, the musician—Well, he's really a sound artist—David Schafer. It's all the muzak that there is, layered on top of itself. So I thought that was perfect. So what I did was I wore every striped shirt I had, and I made this like this four-inch collage in the studio of like mylar and, you know, just stripey junk that I collected; and then I like I walked in front of it. And so you kind of see it—It is kind of like an ambient painting in a way. And you see glimmers of the body sometimes…. You know.

VIDEO

It is—To me I was thinking like of a shopping trip, like when you're walking down the aisles, you know, like at {unintelligible}, you know, you see all the—yourself reflected in all the mirrors, you know, and in the display cases; and you see all the products, and you just get kind of sandwiched into this world of like endless consumption. And it's pleasurable, and you kind of drift with it. And that was what File was about.

IMAGE

This is another still from the video called Old Temporary. It's kind of a story about Yoko Ono; but I shot it in the Manhattan Mall. So suddenly, you know, a change that occurs is like I'm not in the studio anymore. Like making the videos. I'm out and shooting things on location….

"Old Temporary was probably the first one I did where I used the Manhattan Mall as kind of this set—found set—that was kind of like a time machine; and we just went up and down the elevators.

IMAGE

This is a still from the next video I'm going to show you in its full length, which is called The Flushing.

VIDEO

{unintelligible} you didn't understand, he says, "Your battery is *dead*."

VIDEO

Oh, okay. So… actually I do mean to go right into the next video, which I'm only going to show five minutes of. So that's Flushing, from 2003, and it's shot at the Flushing Mall in Queens on like a family trip. And the next video that I want to show is one from a few years after—2005—and I have to remind myself to tell… that there's a piñata connection with Dave's lecture from the other night. Because I had a piñata at a children's birthday party I was sent a catalogue called U.S. Toy that is all the little toys that go inside a piñata; and I just became fascinated with these images. I ended up making a video—and I point this out because now I start making camera-less videos... I mean just to show how far I'm removed from like my own presence in the video. This is a camera-less video. I downloaded all of the images on the website for U.S. Toy. They come in at 25K; they're only 25K each. I loaded them all into Final Cut and used the sort of cheesiest out of the box transitions between them. And the soundtrack is a found soundtrack that a friend who is a DJ at radio station WFMU found. And the best we can figure is it's some kind of a home shopping network motivational talk for the people who sell the Artistry cosmetics. Oops! That's not what I meant {unintelligible}

VIDEO

I don't know. I mean, the fact that her name is Cheryl (spelling?) just freaked me out to no end. And the title of the video is Cheryl. And you know, I also thought there was this other thing. You know, this is in like 2007, like right—or 2005, like right as the art world is having this like

major crest; and I just love that her text is, you know, as she recites it, is like "I'm fired up about the business. You know, everyone likes me. People want to be my customers. You know, I like people and I always know what to say. You know, I'm fired up about the business." You know, and then she has all this religious stuff, like God is no respecter of persons. You know, I don't know even what that means. But you know. And so this—There are so many images on the U.S. Toys site that this video goes on for about twenty minutes, with them being shown for like four seconds each. So at any rate… {unintelligible}

VIDEO (First CD ends, and second one begins)

Okay. So at any rate, the stills—

IMAGE

And these are a series of stills from that video that I just grabbed—seem to me really kind of interesting compositionally. So I just show them 'cause I think they eventually—I'm looking at these cheap toys; you know, I'm talking about junkspace in architecture, but also as something that like is in our daily lives. You know, the Balenciaga dress, yeah, sure. But more likely party favors. So at any rate, I start, you know, being—And maybe the time I start spending on the computer, you know, downloading things to make my videos, I start finding these interesting images of party favors and you know, home décor elements that…. You know, actually I don't have an ironic and contemptuous relationship to-- because I grew up with these kind of things. And these, you know, things—I mean, my mother goes bananas decorating the house for Christmas. You know, these kind of things are part of my family history. And so I have a sort of special love for these kind of things.

IMAGE

And so these are paintings that kind of come from looking at these kind of very cheap decorative

things that are decidedly un-permanent and sort of un-valuable, but yet have a very emotionally charged presence, I think.

IMAGE

And then there's Prada. So—But I'm just—I'm curious about the relationship, you know, where the sort of very low things, like the glittery Barbie table setting for a sweet sixteen birthday party translates into high end consumer goods. In this case I think there was a fashion review; they said, "Well, not every woman wants to spend seven thousand dollars on a skirt that looks like a bath mat." And… I would if I had the money. So, you know, this is a Prada collection from—you know—some year. But I think—And I think there was an interview with Miuccia Prada where she says, "Yeah, I go and I look at like the plastic tubs for washing up, and, you know, the cheap toys and these other goods that are all around us." And she brings that kind of color and texture into her work. All right. Now I've got to even hurry up.

IMAGE

This is a—At this point in time it was 2007, so I'm almost near the end. For reasons I don't know I just started making three different types of paintings. So you have the colorful one that I just showed you. Then I started making these silvery ones, which you know, typical of me, comes out of frustration and despair. Like destroying something. Like, "That painting sucks. I'm going to cover it with silver tape and slash it with a razor. Ooh! That kind of looks good." So—And these paintings are on cardboard.

IMAGE

So there's ones that look like this.

IMAGE

There's ones that look like the silver and gold ones.

IMAGE

Oh! Well, this is—This is the kind of thing I like to do now, put like fashion into my things, ‘cause I find—Oh, back to my notes. I find that what I like about the connection between my ideas about junkspace and fashion is that in fashion you find things that they’re sort of a lack of lasting effect. You know, when a style or trend appears, one might ask, “Well how long is this going to last?” And the answer is always “not long,” because the next thing comes. It’s kind of condemned to disappearance. There’s a built-in obsolescence to it that it embraces. And I find that related to ideas of an apocalyptic nature… that aren’t original to me. I mean, Walter Benjamin wrote about this. There’s a really excellent article that is sort of my new fascination by Boris Groys, called The Weak Universalism, where he sort of talks about the apocalyptic nature of modernity. The sort of sense of like we don’t have enough time, that everything is about to be—We’re living in this age of perpetual change; and as soon as we conceive of something we’re aware of its demise and its destruction, because it will be—the next thing will come to take over. And certainly fashion—to me, the idea of fashion embraces that. It’s always aware of its own destruction, that it will be… not good in a very short time. And I think someone like Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garcons actually is really aware of that in her work.

IMAGE

This is a piece from a few years ago where you’ve got this sort of military vest over a blanket over a skirt; it’s a single garment.

IMAGE

More stuff.

IMAGE

And then there are these black and white paintings that just came out. So all of this went into the

show called Luxury Dust. And sometimes I think now I'm starting to do only painting shows; and I like to show the installation shots; 'cause I think that the way I install things is also really part of contributing to the meaning. So—And I'm going to say "we" a lot, because I think from this time forward—from 2007 forward—I'm kind of collaborating in a funny way with a very, very good friend of mine, an artist called Tom Meacham. And Tom is kind of a genius of space. And I've really learned a lot from him. And he's helped me install these shows. So in this show at Oliver Kamm, Luxury Dust 2007, we ganged up paintings really, really tight, and then took like the best wall in the gallery and left it virtually blank, just to kind of signify something about the way the paintings needed to be looked at, and what they were—the energy that they were trying to create in the room. So this was—2007 is the first all-painting show I ever did.

IMAGE

These are paintings from after that that kind of-- where all those three separate bodies of work start to get mushed together. I sort of said what I wanted to say in regard to some of the conceptual underpinnings, so I'm just going to kind of flash through these images just because.—so you can look at them.

IMAGE

I did a show after Oliver closed—Gee whiz! I did a show which—Once again, you know, your gallery closes, and the next best thing is right around the corner, which was in this case a show at an artist-run space in Chicago called He Said She Said. And what it is, is an apartment. And it's now defunct; they moved to Vermont. But it was in Oak Park; and Pamela asked me to come and do an installation of paintings, and I could use the whole house. So what I tried to do is—You see the wainscoting on the left. So I hung all the paintings up high, so that there'd be this uninterrupted line of paintings running through the entire house, kind of like, you know, ants at a

picnic, just marching through; because I didn't want to give the impression that she was a collector. So we hung the paintings like—we made some mathematical system to allow for obstructions, and we hung the paintings throughout the house. And these were all on cardboard.

IMAGE?

So, you know, part of, like—I want to just go back a minute to talk about Boris Groys and this idea of weak imagery. I'd already sort of been investigating things like this, that have their DNA, you know, in modern sculpture and modern fine art, but are definitely kitsch and, you know, decorative. And they were kind of finding their way into paintings like this.

IMAGE

So that…. Prada—No, this is Miu Miu.

IMAGE

That….

IMAGE

This…. This is more Comme des Garcons; but you know—So I'm just kind of mashing everything together, like this sort of junkspace for the body. You know, she makes this garment that, you know when you wrap your sweater around your waist, this dress has coat arms that hang down with no function.

IMAGE

So now there's like—I'm getting a little bit disjointed, 'cause there's a whole bunch of paintings. I'm still working on—you know, because I'm always working on, if not two separate project, you know, with video and painting, then they're sort of subsets, like different bodies of painting work. This is one body that's now… with sort of Plexiglas and fabric. They're sort of relatives of the early cardboard/razor paintings.

IMAGE

And these ones which are on canvas. And I think that, germane to the video editing process—and also just the idea of looking at computers and screens, I try compositionally to do a lot of things that kind of like undercut the picture's sense of itself. You know? And what I'm talking about is like, you know, I almost want you to feel like when you look at the painting that could resize it. Or that there's other screens, as it were, like open maybe in front or behind that picture; so that little things like, you know, stripes that interrupt it, or a sense that the frame is like both here and here, as a way of like composing something.

IMAGE

Oh. And here's Jill Sander-- the color, the kind of very {unintelligible}. I mean, I think it's funny how everyone in the audience is dressed in black, but these people are suggesting that you wear these hideous colors. So no one obviously takes their suggestions; so we do—I do, in the painting.

IMAGE

This is a layout of a shopping mall. And you see that center painting. This is a really cruddy slide, but I wanted to show it because I wanted to show that—you know—the—just, you know, where I can get like compositional ideas from…. So it's not just like this idea of, as I've rehearsed junkspace as a philosophical thing; but even just the way that space is configured as a—in their planning strategies—as a way to kind of think about how to compose things.

IMAGE

So these are all new paintings.

IMAGES

And maybe I should read this now, while I click through them. Okay, so this is just a description I wrote when someone asked me to write about abstraction. So I quote from Koolhaas, and then I say,… Okay, so this describes the world that--as I see every day, the "transient couplings of brick, plastic, neon and paper; the display windows; the orphaned particles of construction sites; all the surfaces, glamorous, neglected, broken, transitory, waiting to be undone, unscrewed; the temporary embrace with high probability of separation." The World Trade Center attack also happened around this time, and I'm talking about the time when I first started to make abstract painting. "Shortly after, Kenny and his friend went around the city photographing a catalogue of images they called Broken New York. Their focus was on the small things: the cracked pane in the corner of a plate glass window in midtown; a bent sign; a disconnected standpipe. The things that continue to be ignored. These are things that would never get fixed, that didn't matter. A little duct tape, perhaps, would take care of it. While the whole country focused on an enormous tragedy downtown, these other images of New York ruins were interesting to dwell on. They didn't cry out for answers. They didn't hold out for a meaning that would never come. They were just part of the surface of things." And earlier in the piece I quote Warhol saying, "If you want to know about me just look at the surface of my paintings. It's all there." "Now… when I was very young I remember thinking that abstraction was something you had to grow into, something you had to earn. You couldn't just do it. That would somehow be fake or false. But maybe that's because I associated abstraction with truth or wisdom. Now I just do it because I think it is how to paint the world. My paintings with their loud colors, divergent angles, and competing layers, seem to indulge in a language of expressionism; but upon inspection the colors are thin and artificial, the compositions are deliberately unresolved. The layers do not build, but cohere and drift, ignore or clash with each other. Despite this lack of conviction a certain

buoyant—even jubilant—attitude is communicated, almost happy depressive. The drugs are working. In making paintings I begin with a structure, and yet I never end up describing that structure; 'cause I'm equally compelled to overwhelm it by decoration. The decision-making process in the painting is more or less a fight among these impulses for the upper hand. The reasonable gesture, the extravagant highlight, the inarticulate geometry compose a straightforward approach to dancing backwards. Décor and structure are not hierarchical, but integral and concurrent, elaborate and abandoned all at once. Unstable, with a flourish. Uncertain results." So… I just, while I was reading, kind of quickly went through a series of exhibitions, some with Tom Meacham, one on my own, just to kind of show you like what my shows might look like nowadays, although, if I have time… and stop me if you've heard this one before… I have a few minutes, so I thought I'd just show one last video that, in a way, it is the most recent video—Not in a way. It is the most recent video I've made. And I think it combines some of the earlier willingness to put my body in the video and tell a story about a woman—She could or she could not be me. She's in her home. She's thinking about her home. And it's also somewhat inspired by some of the images in the paintings. So it's kind of a video that sort of…. I won't say it resolves anything, but it kind of—you know—as I said in the beginning, it takes me both ahead of myself and behind myself. So this short—It's about three minutes long—is called I Still Want to Drown.

VIDEO

Thank you. And now…. I can answer questions.

Question: Hi. I'm interested in your identity as a—well, as a—making films and videos, and also your really strong interest in painting. And while you were talking I was curious, when you were making the much earlier work, like what paintings you were looking at. What paintings

were exciting to you then? And then also curious what paintings you're interested in now, as in other painters.

CD: Thanks for asking me that. I think in that early decade I was—Well you know, of course there are miles and miles of canvases that never saw the light of day… that, you know, I don't show as part of this kind of thing, but that reflect interest in, you know, painters as varied as like Philip Guston and… Picasso, and, you know, the kind of—or Elizabeth Murray… and people like that, that I don't show, because I think it's very immature work. Then in graduate school, when I really started to—and that was very much like RISD in the Eighties. You know, those were people you'd be interested [in] then. You know, I wasn't interested in what was going on—you know, David Sallie…. I'm still interested in his work. You know, things like that. But what happened was, in graduate school it all turned very, very critical; and it was sort of like, "You know, enough of this touchy-feely RISD kind of stuff. Like let's, you know, get critical." And suddenly I'm in a seminar with Rosalind Krauss, and I'm like freaking out, because you know, it's all like really hard-core theory, and critical stuff. So at that point, you know, I think some of the interest turned away from painting, but it was with artists who still, nevertheless—like Bruce Nauman—are still like very much invested in the studio practice. You know, making things, working with simple materials, and playing with language. So I go through a period where I really don't look at painters, but I'm sort of more looking at people like that. But I'd say in that period who was really important, and I consider really sort of a painter, is Duchamp; because there are great books, and great articles written about Duchamp as somebody who, coming out of painting, was really critical of it, but have [sic] this love for the visual, and understanding how the eye functioned in an erotic way, and how painting could trigger that. And I think leaving painting was, for him, about investigating that eroticism of vision. And so, you

know, that was really important, to discover a kind of – you know, it was very obvious {unintelligible}—you know, discovering eroticism through…. And the connection between eroticism and vision. And maybe if I didn't find that in painters, I certainly discovered that in Duchamp. And then later, when, you know—and currently—you know, painters like— The discovery for me of German painters like Michael Krebber was really crucial. I remember walking into a Michael Krebber show in 1995 at Luhring Augustine when it was in Soho, on Prince Street, and going, "What is this? This is what I've been looking for." You know, it was like…. I don't know if you know Michael Krebber's work, but you know, it was kind of thin, and wonky, the stretchers were all warping. And it was just like a couple of little paint marks, but it was so casual, as so almost offensively casual; it was like wow. He didn't seem to have this weight of horrible responsibility about the painting. There was something rather irresponsible about the painting that I was craving. And I had a chance to meet him later; and I said to him, "Oh my God, you're Michael Krebber. I—That show in Luhring Augustine— " You know, and he hadn't show in New York for a dozen years. And I said, "I love it. I loved it." And he was like, "Oh, what a miserable failure." It was like he didn't want to talk about the show at all. He was clearly traumatized by the reception that he got in New York. And you know, now he's considered quite important. You know, I'm a huge fan of Albert Oehlen…. You know, stuff like that. Matisse… always.

Question: So this is a really simple question, or—But could you actually talk a little bit about music?

CD: Yeah, I get that question a lot, because I don't necessarily during the talks like emphasize it; but I think that sound is really, really crucial to the video. And in fact sound often comes first. I mean sometimes like I'll just hear sound or… some kind of weird element of sound or noise and

I'll be just like obsessed with like figuring out a—figuring out what to do with it or how to react to it. And you know, I'm lucky in that my husband, Ken Goldsmith, was for many, many years a DJ at WFMU, and he's kind of like a crazy collector of stuff. So there's always a lot of interesting things that he's like, you know, letting me listen to, and…. You know, so I have a really good like librarian in him. You know, so there's a lot of different things, you know, I'm exposed to that I can make use of. So, you know, I mean for example like the… "I Love Being Cheryl." Like that sort of came through a friend of Kenny's. You know, I think that like I've always been—I sort of feel like in some ways there's no reason to move beyond the music video. I mean, it's the perfect form. And I'm really invested in it. And so you know, a lot of times I'll gravitate back to it. Like, you know, no shame. I'm just going to cut to the sound. I'm just going to cut it to this music 'cause I really love it. And I do sort of believe in some ways it's a perfect form. So you know, it can range from that—I mean, I didn't show you guys Old Temporary, but the soundtrack to that is this crazy bootleg recording of Yoko Ono just sort of monologuing a la Viva in the Nude Restaurant while the Beatles are rehearsing The White Album tracks like Revolution in the background. So it's kind of like very subversive, like Yoko Ono using the Beatles as her like backup band, while she like talks about, you know, what she had for lunch. And I used that in that piece. So it's really varied, but I think probably the most important thing to know is that oftentimes it comes first.

Question: It seems from the slides that your paintings are all the same size and shape, the same scale. I was just curious if you could speak to that.

CD: That's also a nice question. I feel like—Well, especially with the canvas paintings, you know, and I like the idea of everything being the same size, because I kind of am resistant at this point to—maybe to the idea-- like when I exhibit them, I almost don't want them to be

experienced as single events, in a funny way. I kind of feel, you know, what I was talking about earlier about this like apocalyptic like sense of things. A lot of—you know, the idea that there's not enough time. There isn't enough time, and there's not enough time to do and see everything. And certainly, you know, the Internet just enhances that sense of there's too much and not enough. And so I feel like using images that are from the Internet, images that have a kind of -- what Boris Groys calls in his wonderful essay-- a kind of weak visibility or low visibility. Images of things that are for sale on eBay that no one will ever even look at, let alone buy, that are being put up more and more every day. This sort of sense of like you don't have time to see it all. There's something about that experience, since I'm deriving imagery from that, that I almost, in a funny way, want—I want to make the painting difficult to see, in a way. I don't want it to be—I mean, it's very weird, but I think you can—I'll try to make it clear—like that I really don't want the paintings to be almost seen as like something discrete. Even though they are seen as discrete, I sort of want the tension to feel like it's leaving them. Like as if it was—Well, I mean, my friend Tom put it best. He's like—He said, "The painting feels like the murder takes place off-stage." Like that there's something missing from this painting, and you're being kicked out. You know? Like you're missing, and it's missing, and there's this sense of lack; so that the tension is so high in them that you almost have to leave the room. Or like something bad happened here. Or some elsewhere. So there's a sense of like a rush of urgency. And I think by having them all the same size, to me it kind of enhances that, because you're not allowed kind of stop and pause in front of like a discrete experience; but there's a certain relentlessness that I'm trying to achieve. And so right now it feels right to have all the canvases the same size, and occasionally push them very close together.

Question: Hi. My question, actually is more about life than about art practice.

CD: What a relief.

Question: No, I mean your life.

CD: I'm glad.

Question: You seem to be quite sort of satirically critical about consumption and built-in obsolescence and… sort of the mall as a junkspace. But at the same time—I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but once your kids sort of started growing up you were sort of forced to go into these sort of spaces and actually go into that consumption cycle. So was that a big conflict in terms of your art practice as compared to life and how you were living it?

CD: Hm. Hm.

Question: And if it was, how did you resolve it or how would you work around it?

CD: Well, I think if I understand the question correctly, it is about—it's about this kind of dilemma of, you know, that you have these sort of—Well, let me think if I can quote Koolhaas, because he sort of always is a better…. Better at it than I. He—Hold on, I have to think for a minute, 'cause he kind of talks about… this kind of idea—Well, I think I maybe read the quote where he talks about like that this… continuation, but it's absolutely immemorable. And you know, when you're reading that essay, there's something incredibly pessimistic and depressing about what he's talking about, because he's really talking about, you know, filling the world with, you know—He calls it—What does he say? It's something like it's being condemned to a Jacuzzi with millions of your friends. And, I mean, it's a horrible—It's an image from Dante, isn't it? You know, it's a horrifying image. And yet, you know—I mean, to say "Jacuzzi," even the word is silly, you know? So that there's a sort of nervous humor that it creates. And I think there is that sense of imminent doom, you know, when you go to a Walmart, you know, that you—As much as it's sort of like, you know, happy shopping, and there's so much stuff, and you

get sort of intoxicated by the sense of the abundance, there's also this undercut of "Where will this all end?" And I think it's a dilemma that we live with. And I think that like, you know, in that sense—I mean, you know, there was an image of a… from the Jill Sander collection of a model; and she has a very form-fitting gown, and she's holding what looks like a plastic bag. And in some ways, you know, to me it's sort of like that image, there's something obscene about it; it kind of glamorizes the worst—you know, the plastic bag—and as if a woman in an evening gown would be carrying a plastic bag, like she had just done her shopping. So there's something that's in that image that I find, you know, very sort of sickening; and at the same time kind of wonderful, because it sort of embraces, you know, both sort of the most enhanced experience, and at that same time it allows for the lowest and the worst experience. It doesn't really solve it, but I think that the fact that it addresses it is something that art can do and needs to do. I mean, I feel like I want the work to kind of embrace the worst, and at the same time try to—at the same time feel like it's creating something—Well, I don't want to say—You know, it would be very cliché: "creating something beautiful out of it." I mean, that's horrifying. And that's not what I mean. But I think it has to feel like contemporary life to me, it has to feel like contemporary life. And it has to have its dilemmas in. So I think that's what I want to say. Yeah.

Question: What you say about junkspace somehow makes me think of what Ilya Kabakov once said about the spirit of space. He says in the old Soviet Union, like all the houses are so neglected and like the furniture is very old; so like all the houses are like so haunted; and he says if there is a spirit in the house. And I think about {unintelligible} the junkspace kind of the Western version of it. But I think…. Well, when you experience Kabakov's installations, you certainly feel that there is something wrong about it, which makes you critical about like the space or culture he presents; while I think like your work like interprets the lower part of the

lower culture of the Western culture so well that… like I don't feel that there is something wrong while I'm looking at it. It almost feels like kind of nice thing, since you're like embracing the lowness of it. And I don't know if you intended or what you think of like having a critical distance or if you think it's needed. {unintelligible} my question {unintelligible}

CD: Well I think that… it's interesting; because I think, you know, it's a complicated question. But I think that maybe one of the things about painting is maybe back to the idea of one might practice a behavior. And so I think that like the…. I have to think hard about this, 'cause I think it's a provocative question: How do you show critical distance in a medium that, the way I use it, demands a kind of end action. I think it's a provocative question, 'cause I think there are other types of paintings, and other types of ways to go about painting that maybe the medium is used in a different sense; 'cause I think maybe sometimes the fact that I like that they're messy or they use bright colors, you know, or that they have a kind of exuberance to the surface signifies that I think all this is just awesome. And I don't think that that is the most…. That might be an immediate read, but I think that that's hopefully not the only read.

Question: I'm trying to think about exactly how to put this. It seems like your work seems to be responding to a particular kind of aesthetic that has to do with commercialization and a certain style of architecture and general junkiness. And you're absorbing that, and exaggerating it, and making like a hypertrophied version of that particular junkie vibe. And it seems also like a critique, maybe. But I'm curious what you think about embodying junkspace in your work as—What's its critical function? And does your work actually involve a kind of resistance or surrender?

CD: It seems like—That question sort of seems like, yeah, a variation on the first question. And I sort of feel that like…. Wow, these are tough questions. Actually, what was the word you said

before “surrender?” It was—there was—I want to cite that word again. “Resistance” and “surrender.” You know, well, since my thoughts are with Groys, let me try to go back to some of the things he says about the idea of “the weak.” Because I think, you know, in some ways, you know, the idea of weakness can both be associated with resistance, if you think of passive resistance…. and it can also be associated with surrender. You know, like to… to just let it--- let it flow over you. And both would be kind of, you know, if you think about it, the idea of the weak as a sort of a resistance technique that ultimately will triumph or will vanquish, or will survive; as opposed to a revolutionary force. Do you see the point I’m trying to make? That sometimes this idea of the weak can actually be seen as critical, as resistant, as well as weak being, “Oh, just pass the chips. I don’t give a fuck.” You know, “I’m just…. I love it.” You know, channel surfing. And so I think that like this investigation that I… want to be practicing into the weak image is maybe where those ideas are located. So when I say “weak image,” I don’t mean, necessarily, weak image like bad painting. I mean a kind of an image that almost kind of escapes itself. That in its own kind of way it’s sort of immemorable, [sic] or it comes from a place of immemorability. [sic] And it almost seems that like it is… in its formation it’s un-forming itself. And so I think that like when I’m working on the paintings I’m trying to play with this idea of making them—these sort of different interpretations of “weak.” You know, because sometimes they’re—You could say, “Well, they’re garish, you know. They’re harsh.” But that doesn’t necessarily mean strong in my regard. It can sort of mean… something else. You know…. poisoned. Or toxic. You know. I don’t know if I answered that or if I could ever answer that; so I just stopped.

Question: Hi. Over here… Why is it that you didn’t make another video like Head, if you felt such a breakthrough from that?

CD: Hm. I kind of did make some other ones that I just don't show as much that did like sort of use—that were like involving like liquids, and eroticism, and stuff like that, that just weren't as—I mean, I'm totally going to contradict everything I said—The weren't as strong and memorable. But I always just thought like—you know…. It kind of terrified me, you know, to look into the crystal ball and say, "Okay, well like let's do it with milk. And then let's do one with, you know, Kool Aid. And then let's do one with beer. And then let's do one with wine." You know, I mean it could go on and on, and then it would just be sad. You know. I just didn't want to be that…. I didn't want to find myself doing that. I find it would be just—you know—personally embarrassing. So I really—I really wanted to resist it, and kind of just kind of keep moving. I mean, you know, because like, yeah; it's like a funny combination of like intense stubbornness and short attention span. So yeah, there really isn't one that—you know. I mean, there are other ones that involve the body, and involve the body in provocative ways. But there's nothing—Yeah, there's really no companion piece to Head, as it were. Hm.

Question: Hi. I was curious—when you were talking about spaces sort of negating themselves, or losing themselves, I was thinking a lot about mazes, which I guess has kind of an integral relation to the junk architecture structure. What I was curious about, especially apropos of movement, is the relationship between one painting and another painting among those kinds of unresolved compositions, and how you see them moving over time, or just impacting one another.

CD: You mean like…. Can you clarify "moving over time"?

Question: Yeah. I mean just in terms of the resistance you have to being sort of stagnant with Head as a work, in terms of just permutating [sic] materials like liquids. What is—'cause you've

been doing these paintings for so long, what is it specifically that's the variable that keeps you there?

CD: Right. {unintelligible}That's interesting, because, you know, it's like…. Yeah. I get what you're saying. 'Cause painting is much more—lends itself to working in like series; and you can kind of just like do variations. And here I am saying like, "I don't do variations on themes, man." You know. So, like… yeah. I mean, I feel like…. Yeah. Well, I would-- Maybe it's the sort of cop—I don't know. The word copout like occurs to me. Like if I say, "Mm, well, it's two different mediums, and… {unintelligible," because painting just kind of lends itself to this idea of, "Let's make another one. Let's make it on a rectangle. Let's make it on the same exact rectangle." And you can kind of just keep going that way, whereas video, it's—I always think that video, in a funny way, is…. It has this property of a non-medium, you know. It just—it's like liquid. It takes the shape that you pour it into. You know, so if you're going to look at it, you know, on—I mean, you know what I'm talking about. If you're going to look at it this big on a wall, but you could look at it, you know, on your iPhone. You know, and it's just kind of like it has this kind of fluid property. And so by that sort of shape-shifting fluid quality it kind of—it molds itself, you know, and it sort of almost gives itself over to differences in a way that painting is more rigid, I suppose. Or at least in the way I'm using it, that I'm—I am kind of conforming to—very much so—to the conventions. Rectangles on the wall, you know? And I think that, you know, also too has been like a really hard thing by the way, over the years, for people—curators—people like—you know—that—to be like accepting. Like, okay, "Why are you working in these two mediums? And then you go and handle them both so different!" You know? And there isn't that—That's a huge contradiction, and I like admit it, you know? So that the painting—you know, not to rehearse it all over again, but to say, "Oh, well you're doing a

painting in such a traditional way. Like, you know. And then you deal with video in this other way." And in fact there is very little formal overlap. Yeah, I admit it. You know, it's like, "I can't help you out."

Question: I'm thinking of the use of your children in the one video. Maybe others? And also perhaps some of the other paintings you briefly showed that maybe didn't—weren't pursuing this junkspace aesthetic to the same degree. And I'm wondering if you find yourself also trying to offer kind of alternatives—alternate ways of approaching the world—you know, entirely apart from junkspace—in your work? Yeah, in addition to this sort of…. Yeah, this other approach we've been dwelling on.

CD: Yeah…. Wait. How did the kids fit into it? I didn't get that part.

Question: Well I don't know. I guess I was just…. That piece, and their presence in that piece—and I would imagine in your life, you know, that they're not representations of junkspace, right? They are something different and more fulfilling, etcetera.

CD: Sometimes.

Question: Okay. Or correct me if I'm wrong.

CD: Um….

Question: Or they were the gateway drug too, I guess.

CD: Pardon me?

Question: They were the gateway drug into junkspace.

CD: The gateway drug, right. Exactly. Well, I mean, you know, I think like, you know, gee, it's too late now to say, "Let's not make so much of junkspace." It's too late for that now, isn't it? Far too late. But…. Well, I think, you know, it's like, yeah. That video doesn't fit necessarily into these thematics, [sic] except for the fact of, you know, the kind of like endless blather about

nothing that Viva performs. It really is, you know, like just un… un-nutritious language. And, you know, she—So in that way it's junk. You know, it's filling but not nutritious. I mean, you kind of push away from the table of her, and just say like, "I've had enough." And it's in a restaurant. And I think, you know, that's kind of one of the themes of the Warhol movie, is that, you know, there's a sense of like over-satiation and absolute lack of satisfaction in that movie. And I think, you know, to reappear in my own video. I mean, there is something about the shift of character, from being like a thirty-something-year-old woman, and then, you know—and performing these kind of like pantomimes of like, you know, sex and exposing your body and all this kind of stuff, and using your body as a tool, and an image, and etcetera; and then to come back and talk, and not shut the fuck up. You know, it seemed right to me. Like, if I'm going to be in it again I have to be different; because I am different. I'm older…. You know, I've had—all these different things have happened to me. So I can't—If I'm going to be in it after nine years I can't be the same. How can I be different? I can sort of take all that sort of pleasure that I gave the viewer in those early sexy videos, and kind of give a different kind of pleasure, that maybe isn't pleasurable at all for some people, to have to listen to me talk and go on like Viva, you know. And so I thought, "Okay, well that I can do. I can be in it again, because I'm going to be different." And then having the kids at the end… if you watch the whole tape it kind of makes sense why they come in at the end. You know, it's also an homage; it's sort of a quick remake of the Warhol; so it's suddenly like I'm waiting on them; I'm in the kitchen; you know, I'm the waitress… giving them bananas, which was kind of this Warholian sort of sneaky little thing to put in there…. And, you know, so it has its own reasons.

Question: There was a painting that you showed that was on canvas that you talked about having desire to put in sort of like a digital space, where a feeling that you could almost resize it. And I

was thinking that in the—I was thinking about what you were saying about obsolescence earlier in the talk; and I realized that a lot of the paintings that you showed were on cardboard…. And I was just wondering if you had anything to say about that relationship.

CD: Yeah. I think the paintings on cardboard were definitely a kind of like gesture that was kind of undercutting their authority. Like almost like not ready for prime time, you know? And I remember thinking consciously, like going back to the student days and undergraduate school at RISD, where we would all just like dumpster dive and paint on cardboard, because we were making paintings really rapidly, and like, you know, couldn't afford always canvas; and I just remember thinking like, "Yeah, you can paint on cardboard. It was really liberating." And just really cheap, and kind of low-grade. So it just seemed like sort of nostalgic, maybe in one part, to my own kind of youth, but I liked that it had this kind of a low-grade, not-ready-for-prime-time kind of message to it, even though, you know, it was archival cardboard, and it had this kind of more deliberate presence than just like dumpster diving in Sophomore painting. So…. But yeah, it was—I also wanted the idea that you look around the painting from the side, and that you could see the corrugation, seemed, you know, really a part of the kind, you know, undercutting the sort of authority; because it's still, even as late as like 2007, I'm still having anxiety about, like, you know, can I really get away with this. And especially since, you know, in that venue, that was the first painting show with no video that I did. And that's still pretty recent.

Question: Hi. I have a question about…. Well first of all, it was very inspiring to hear about this roller coaster of career that happened; but I have a question that, in a way, you know, like in fashion there is no copyright. Anybody can borrow from anybody and steal patterns. And in a way, in the junkspace you can borrow, and use it in painting. And it kind of provides this sense of anonymity and lack of authorship. I was wondering if that was the space for you of a certain

freedom that was regained after this kind of being acknowledged as a video artist and then it just—you had the space of a sort of lack of maybe shows, and therefore certain recognition; but that was a way of rebuild[ing] yourself as….

CD: That's a really…. It's a really good thing to talk about, you know, because especially like in the kind of art world context it's all about being recognized, and being an author, and having a—you know, I mean God forbid say the word—a brand, you know. And I mean, you know, maybe…. I don't know, sometimes I think those things are going away, and sometimes I think they're stronger than ever, you know. The idea of like an artist as brand. I mean, I know it was like obnoxiously conversed about in the last couple—you know, maybe the last couple of years, about like, you know, your brand as an artist. And I always found the idea like kind of intensely repulsive. And you know, if that's what it's all about, then that's a thing I'm particularly bad at. But I think that to acknowledge it has been a roller coaster ride in the sense of like, you know, there's been times when I have galleries, and then there's been really long stretches were I haven't; and, you know, no opportunities to show. And there is a kind of-- I guess I'm free to say it now. It's like, "Oh, it's easy for her to say; she's showing at Barbara Gladstone." But I'm not. So I mean, right now I don't have a gallery in New York. So I can kind of say that and not feel like I'm just being an idiot about it. But there is a kind of sense of… that it's okay. You know? That the next thing will come along, and that those times that—I don't know. It's like when you don't owe all that to people. And I think there is a sense of obligation that people—inherent, you know, when they—that they owe something to somebody. Like they owe people to make more of that work. And, you know, I don't think so far-- I have never been tested that way. You know, like where I felt like, "Oh, shit. I really should do more of that, because they want it." I mean, more often than not the case has been like, "Oh, they forgot about me."

"Okay. Like I don't have to—They have no allegiance to me." So I can just keep doing what I want to do. And you know, I mean hopefully like…. I don't know if that will continue, or if it will change. You know? I guess only time will tell. And the demands of the work. If-- Maybe I like doing what I'm doing and I'll keep doing it, or maybe it will change again, you know. But we'll see.

Question: Well, you answered my question, but I guess I was really interested in exactly that place where you have no identity in a way, you know. And I see that, like what's really inspiring about this presentation was the sense of, "I'm going to do what I' want." And that's not always the case.

CD: Hm. Well, I think another thing that's important to mention in terms of like doing what you want, is, you know, one gets the idea that support only comes from one direction; and that is from the top down. That there's people that have things that you want, and you have to wait for them to give them to you, and that's the way it works, right? You know, there's people who have positions as curators and gallerists and la-di-da; and they're the ones who are going to tap you with the magic wand, and then you're going to get up there. And even in terms of age, that, you know, you're a certain age, and you're young and an emerging artist; and the people who are older than you are going to recognize you. And yes, that is true. That happens. But I think as one gets older, then—and this is my experience—support comes from other directions. It comes from below. And what I mean by below, I don't mean that in any kind of pejorative sense of like below/lowly. I just mean that, you know, people who are younger than you, people who didn't—don't have the same investment in a dialogue that happened five years ago, who kind of come from another direction or another place, and—or another city—and, you know, get interested in your work for other reasons. And, you know, they may be younger than you. they

may not share the same history and the same social context—and that happens. And that's been very interesting. And in my case kind of like, "Gee, what would I do without that?" Because Marlene in the beginning was right. People do, you know—People move on. And that can be really painful if you think it's always going to come from the top. You know? It comes from other directions. And you just have to be open to that, 'cause that's great. I mean it's been really great for me, you know, and I think that's—You know, I mean everything in this culture tells you that there's nothing good about getting older, and don't let it happen to you. But I think in art that it is a very – getting older has been a really nice thing, and I hope it will continue to be. Want to just do one more video, really short?

VIDEO

CD: Let's dance.

END OF RECORDING