*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 & SCULPTURE
Skowhegan, Maine

Lecture by Lisa Yuskavage
Summer, 2003

Transcriber: Judith Stoodley

Introduction by Joanne Greenbaum: Good evening. My name is Joanne Greenbaum; I'm one of the resident artists here; and I'm going to introduce Lisa to you tonight. Usually for these talks, the introducer says a few words about either their relationship to the artist, or how the artist's work has affected or influenced their own practice. I think that for me it is neither.

I just remember… about ten years ago or more I was sitting around with a group of female friends; and a heavy argument went on about Lisa's work. I had yet to see any of it; but I took note of the intensity of the opinions… and the rainstorm coming. It is not until I saw some of the paintings soon after that I realized how her work affects others. I do not know Lisa very well, but her work has always filled me with contradictory emotions, thoughts and fascinations… That we are both engaged in the physical properties of paint on canvas was enough for me to feel I am able to make some sense of the work.

In her recent show at Marianne Boesky, which just closed, the artist took some new directions, playing with interior space, decoration, and formal balance. Those new elements gave the work a quirky feel to me. I was struck by one particular painting, in which a reclining woman is wearing panties made up entirely of small colored balls. I love that it really didn't make sense in the real world; but it made total sense in the painting world. Those non-verbal decisions, and the freedom to play with distortion, became a vehicle to create enclosed self-sustained complex paintings.

Lisa has shown her work internationally and nationally for the last fifteen years. In addition to a large museum show at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia in 2001, she has exhibited at the Whitney Biennial… the Corcoran Gallery… the Royal Academy in London, among many other museums. She is a graduate of the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia; and holds an MFA from the Yale School of Art. She is represented in New York by Marianne

Boesky Gallery, in London by Greengrassi, and in Italy by Studio Guenzani. I am proud to introduce Lisa Yuskavage. (applause)

Speaker: Can you give me feedback? Can you hear me?

Comments: (multiple voices: No)

Speaker: Okay. Is that better?

Comments: (multiple voices: Yes)

Speaker: Okay. I was told if you get too close it gets bad, unless you're…. All the people in New York who don't like my work made this happen…as sort of the… *witchy* thing. (laughter) (*Transcriber's note: This and the previous remark about rain appear to refer to a storm which can be heard faintly in the background.)*

Okay. So… I'm going to—this is sort of freaking me out here. I'm going to—because you guys are—I know I'm not supposed to say students—*participants*… (laughter) I don't know how to deal with that, but anyway… Because you guys are still working towards being no longer something… like participants… (laughter) the… We keep on thinking that it's like a *cult*, you know… participants… that… I'm going to show student work… because it seems like it might be helpful. I was never a *participant*, (laughter) so I have to show student work.

SLIDE

Okay… so the first—(microphone feedback) the first slide is a painting, a little tiny painting that I still have this slide of of something I did at undergraduate school. What's important here to me is… I mean—in a sense this is 19… let me think… 1982/1983? And… this is some of the work that I got into Yale with. What's important to me in this work, and still sort of is—and I found—I would have never known at that time that it would remain… themes in my work would remain for years… is that of… (thunder) (pause) (laughs) (laughter) that of a woman… and the inner world of a woman… the *outer world of a woman*… And this figure….with the bathing cap on, in this red… room… What I was doing at the time was I was working as a lifeguard to make a living while I was in undergraduate school; and I was studying with abstract painters and non-objective painters. And… I always wanted to be a figurative artist; but I was not trained to be one other than taking figure drawing classes. So I used to come home and work from memory—not that I ever actually *saw this*; but… I was sort of very interested in the idea of the language of color creating an emotional… (thunder clap, laughter) Someday somebody's going to be listening to this tape; it's going to be very fun. (laughter) I just want to make a shout out to the people in the future who are listening to this tape. (laughter) (laughs) Okay. (laughs) So. Anyway. This painting I think is… You know, there's the *boys' world* in the background. People always say, "When are you going to paint men?" I said, "I've done that, like—"So the painting in the—the space in the back is the sort of *cool* world of these sort of boys hanging around the Jacuzzi. The place I worked was called "Body Beautiful;" so… it was this kind of weird place, and so there's this awkward woman sort of trying to make her way from this red world into this blue world. And it was really kind of like trying to figure out a way to work from

memory… to make paintings that were… important. They were sort of about the way I felt awkward… about working at Body Beautiful. And this kind of little narrative sort of came out of that. Do you go to the next? Oh, I have to do it, right?

SLIDE

The technical… It's not working. Oh. Okay, so… this is—I went to Yale; and… they told me I sucked. It's like a long story; but they told me I sucked; I got depressed; and… I stopped being able to paint these incredibly vivacious paintings of these figures in these swimming pools. And… I stopped painting for a while; and… I went into therapy, and the therapist said, "You know, well I understand you can't paint because every time you make a painting the faculty tell you it sucks; and you are so associated and so connected to your work… you don't really see a difference between your work and you… that you sort of… get completely—you know—vaklempt I guess." So… I… She said, "What you need to do, obviously, is to sort of go back and paint where you're at right now." And I was not able to get out of bed, because that's what being at Yale did for me. Some people asked me what did Yale do for me; I was like "I learned to be depressed." (laughter)

And… anyway… this also is a small painting. I mean I had been making big paintings all along; but anyway I'm just sort of sticking these things in… And it was this painting—When I finally made it I felt this incredible relief; and it's this sort of… character… I mean I *know* it's a woman, and I know it's… some part of me that is not able to get out of this… soup of paint. And this is a—really the subject of fragility. And this one—and I made another one—and it's like there was so much medium in this paint; and I—There's no hard edge in these paintings; and they really sort of became these kind o metaphors for my inner world. And… it actually was my first true experience of manipulating an audience; and… it was actually a great experience; because the faculty left me alone. I got what I wanted. And it was actually a kind of an important thing, because they were like, "Oh my God!" You know. "What did you do to her?" Like they started saying to each other, "What happened to her?" You know, so… (laughter) in a sense… I sort of like happily was able to move along with what I needed to do in my work, which was to place myself in it, and to sort of really care about. I didn't know how to make paintings… of… still lives, or landscapes, or things that were not about my own… life, in some way. And so I went on to… Some people were talking about these "Sacred Conversation" paintings at dinner; and… this is the tiniest painting—I mean it's really quite literally about four inches. And… it's—you know—looks ridiculous on this scale, but… these were—So then I started doing paintings… again—still—I mean this was sort of like 1985, and if the subject is still… and has always been even then of a woman or women in these spaces… kind of not speaking to each other and just sort of meditation—*in a* meditation… And light… and color… as the carriers of the meaning. These paintings again are all invented; there is no model for these paintings. And… I did this body of work… I don't want to get kind of caught up in this… Then I kind of got screwed up. I got out of school and I started making these sort of abstract-y kind of paintings of these women's backs. I became like the poster child for like fat girls or something with these paintings; there was this weird… fat—(laughs) It was like "fat backs" or something; I don't know. And it was like they—I thought that they were sort of romantic paintings about… this heart… this woman turning into a heart; and this kind of longing… and sort of embarrassment and shame… And… what happened—I had a show at this gallery; and every single painting, when I walked into the

gallery, 'cause I didn't hang the show… Every single painting was… the figures were completely turned away; all you saw were the backs. And… I actually hadn't realized I made a show… my first show in New York… about not wanting to be looked at… at all. And I actually…

That was my second experience of manipulating an audience, because I was whole-heartedly ignored. The show was kind of failure in that sense. But it was a success in the sense that, whether I meant it or not, the work got what it wanted, which was that nobody looked at it. And… I had to think about… like… this is not really what I want. And some of you have met Matvey [*Lisa's husband*], and one of things that I was sort of puzzled by with this work, 'cause it really just sort of—I really hated this work. I mean I was really kind of freaked out because… you know… I was sort of young to be having a solo show; I was about twenty-seven… I mean now it's not young; but at that time it was sort of young… and… I walked into the show and I didn't—I felt so embarrassed that I hated my work terribly. And I thought, "Oh, my God!" I wanted to take it down from the walls and pretend this wasn't happening. And… it was kind of an awful experience. I thought, "Oh my God, they're going to run me out of town. And I was sort of unsure of what to do. So the show came and went; and I didn't paint again for a year. And I was trying to figure out, in not painting, maybe that the problem in my work was *painting itself*, that there was a way in which… I'm sort of a lower middle—raised in a lower middle class, or working class family, that painting loomed so large for me… and I took it so seriously that I couldn't… control it, I couldn't shake—it was sort of empowering—I was power*less* when I was doing painting… and that was part of what these paintings were showing; and…Matvey… At one point we were talking it—about a year into it I was trying to figure out… should I just give up painting and follow these subjects into like video—not that I knew how to do that or anything; but I was, like, "Should I change?" And I've been talking to students a lot; and a lot of people are asking themselves those questions, like… "You know, what happens? Do you?—You know, when do you give up what you're doing and go on to something else?" And Matvey said to me, "You know, Lisa, you keep on getting"—we kept on having this experience where I would say something or get in trouble with people with people we knew; and… get dis-invited [sic] or kicked out of… some dinner; so it'd be everybody'd say like, "Oh!" You know, like—So I was this kind of ball-buster of a person, and I was getting into (laughing) trouble all the time, 'cause I was pretty wild. I've calmed down a lot. And… so… we were kind of talking about how… as a person, I was like really wild; but as a painter I was incredibly demure. And Matvey suggested that I change places with my work. He was kind of hoping that I would turn demure and my paintings would get wild. (laughter) (laughs) So anyway, I thought about that; and I thought it was kind of… amazing… the idea of changing places with your painting; and it made sense to me, because… I realized that…

SLIDE

--This is another painting from that show—This was the first painting I made after a year…. I just became incredibly frustrated… with… everything that I decided to make what had been introverted extroverted… and what had been hidden exposed. I really sort of decided to make these images to save myself… and sort of… I wasn't—and to shock myself… and to… make myself feel. I wasn't…. I was pretty sure I'd never have a show again. I was pretty sure nobody would ever—I mean I thought that I had blown it; I didn't know that… you know you could sort

of wait a few years and people would look at your work again. I sort of thought I was basically now working in isolation. And so I made these paintings as a way to taunt myself, and to sort of—And I was incredibly excited about my work for the first time since I was very young… I was—Basically I would do everything that I was told *not* to do… like I would…. I decided that the paintings themselves were girls, not the subject. And that the paintings had feelings… and I was sort of doing this really kind of insane project where I was sort of trying to make pictures…--the images in the paintings would portray how the paintings themselves *felt*. And… you know paintings are silent… and mute; so I sort of shoved all these flowers in her mouth. And I was trying to be aggressive; I actually was saying, you know, "Shut the fuck up!" When I was painting these paintings (laughs) I was kind of having this whole… persona… when I was painting them. And it felt a lot better to paint them from this persona that I was painting them from that I did as painting them as Lisa. You know, Lisa paints these bad paintings of people's backs; and… whoever was painting this painting was having a great time. I had said to somebody… it was about the difference between digging ditches and doing disco dancing…? You know, it was like… I felt like… before all I was doing this work… Before I was doing this work I was digging ditches; and that I was doing… *due diligence* in my studio? And that I think that there is a lot of art that is made—and that might be fine for other people, but due diligence brings out the worst in me. And I was interested in saving myself; I wasn't interested necessarily in being concerned about what kind of effect I was going to have on the… *art* population, or if I was going to bother other women… or—I was trying to save myself… because doing this kind of due diligence, and kind of what is now known as kind of—I hate that sort of thing, *good girl/bad girl* art; but… there was no term *bad girl* at the time. I mean, there was a show afterwards which I wasn't in, but it was like this idea of… You know, I just got sort of tired of… playing by the rules, because they were killing me as a person; and I really wanted to *enjoy* what I was doing in my studio. So what I would was… I would try to sort of fuck these paintings up a lot, and… make them as awful as possible… And… so I used to put these two little eyes in them, sort of somewhere on the canvas; and they like… start with that. Like I had—the canvases were about thirty-six inches square—or not square, like thirty-six by something… and… I'd put these two black dots; and then… like the painting was looking at me? And that's *really bad*. (laughter) That's like… you know… like I can just imagine… I had studied with William Bailey; I could just *imagine* what he would say to me if I… you know… did that, and you know, like asked him, "Is that good?" You know. It would be like… "No." (laughter) But I was so… you know—and this big giant black pubic thing here… And what I was thinking about with this painting was the idea of… creating a kind of a monster, where I was putting together these parts from all these different sources that were kind of rolling around in my head… Like the eyes… and the tilt of the head was sort of based on… the Save the Seal posters, you know, (laughter) and… like "Don't hit me;" and… (laughter) the trashy kind of mullet was sort of something always wear where I grew up—that kind of mullet hairdo…? And… this Flash-dance outfit…? (laughter) And then there was this girl I went to college—grad school—who was my roommate in grad school, who told me she *invented* Flash-dance look…(laughter) and wasn't getting any credit for it; but she always walked around the house with a top on like that and no… pants. And I was like kind of puzzled, because I always thought women usually kind of put the band down around the waist and… they showed their boobies; but… this girl (laughing) always dressed like this—around the house. She wasn't trying to come on to me or anything; she was *very*, very heterosexual; but it was like this *weird phenomena*; and I just… kind of… was letting these kind of various things kind of come up in the image. I wasn't trying—I was kind of putting them

together. But also I was interested in sort of making anything but a well-behaved painting; I was sort of interested in making a painting that was sort of like… would go out and do… do things, you know… there's that movie, "The Brood…" sometimes I talk about that movie and I get in trouble, 'cause it sounds bad; but it's like… (laughs) these were the kind of *drawings* I did for these paintings…. They're not very good, skillful drawings. I mean I had learned to draw academically; but I wasn't interested in drawing academically; I was sort of interested in… you know… making very stream-of-consciousness drawings in my sketchbook… to mess around with this. And so these series of paintings were called "Bad Babies;" and… there were different kinds of bad babies. There were that didn't want to, the ones that couldn't, the ones that didn't know how, and the ones that shouldn't—or something—can't, don't know how, shouldn't… there was a whole bunch of them. And… they… They were sort of based on the idea also of… the monochrome being the sort of… place where… you know, when you kind of feel the need to sort of confront the viewer… but the monochrome is always recessive. So the figures were kind of torn between… being confrontational and saying to the viewers, I was really kind of thinking—even though I wasn't sure if I had an audience I was thinking…"If you're going to look at these paintings, it's going to hurt you as much as it's going to hurt them." And I was sort of very interested in that kind of aggression. And… I was—You know, it's funny, 'cause when I made these paintings there was a lot of discussion in the Nineties about child abuse—I mean, it's interesting that it—like it comes and goes… I mean, as if it's something only happens every ten years or something. But it was like there were a lot of child abuse cases; and I remember I used to overhear people talking about me and saying… --'cause nobody ever knows who I am when I'm walking by; I have that…lucky… you know, kind of blend-in face; and people were like you know like, "*Obviously*, she's been raped… " and—And it really kind of like I was sort of like… confused that people would always discuss work in terms of my own—Like that the…--especially artists… that's it's so like… you know, like as if you can't talk about Vincent Van Gogh without talking about the fact that he cut off his ear. And like I don't think about Vincent Van Gogh's when I look at Vincent Van Gogh's paintings…. You know, I think about what a clear and brilliant painter he was. And so I was kind of puzzled by the idea that so many artists, especially, were sort of having difficulty looking at work as… sort of a layered… object that… maybe had other meanings. And even when I was talking about these paintings as the idea that the images were images of the abuse of an image… it really never seemed to make an impression. But anyway…. My mother is kind of wacky, because she was so proud of me for—you know, I'd finally had a show; and sort of these paintings started to kind of get out there in the world, and it wasn't a complete disaster…. My mother would run around the hospital she worked showing people these slides; and then she'd say, "You know, it's so weird; people say she's been abused…" And they would like, "Well, we were kind of thinking that too." (laughs) (laughter) And… (laughs) unlike Mom, you've got to kind of, you know, not show them to (laughing) people you work with; 'cause I just said—you know, it's like—but then again, like could a… You know I was thinking, how can the—if the art—if there's such a large population in the art world audience that is looking at it that way, then maybe… obviously… people in… the real world might also. But… when I was talking about **The Brood**, I was talking about this…Cronenberg movie where I always thought it was really funny, and sort of like this woman goes into therapy and…simultaneous—she's locked up somewhere and… off… in the world… people in her life that she has trouble with, like her *mother*, or her ex-husband… end up getting slaughtered. And they—and this policeman cannot figure out—He knows they're all related to her and he can't figure out—'cause she's been locked up—how it happened. So… what it is is

it's like the crazy movie that—where she's-- in therapy she'd produce these little monsters that go out and kill people for her? And I always thought (laughing) it was kind of like… after I'd made these paintings I always sort of thought of **The Brood** as this kind of—that these were kind of like these little crazy monsters that were out there kind of making little stink-bombs for me. (laughter) Anyway, while I was making those paintings I was making watercolors… which was—ended up being a series that was about forty… total… that were—the more developed drawing that I was doing alongside the paintings. And the interesting thing is that these paintings were so wet and unplanned; and they were always sort of like… they were… combined… title of these watercolors was "Tit Heaven." And they were always—like the only rule was there had to be a tit; and… the rest of it was up in the air. And again I was sort of interested in this because… it was *wrong*. And I sort of became interested in—Anything that was *wrong*… kind of seemed to… work for me… You know, like that I actually am interested in being annoying to—with my work. And that I was sort of really intentionally trying to find a way to throw myself off-balance when I made a painting; and to… not feel this kind of due diligence, like, "Oh, I'm going to my studio today and the world is a better place for it." I liked going to my studio and knowing the world was a far *worse* place for it. And… it sort of—Like "Tit Heaven…" was sort of a way for me to sort of mess around with that. And—Because in way it's like I came up with much more—*I* felt much more interesting paintings… out of that kind of… lack of self-congratulations (laughs) in a way; it was like I just always felt like I needed to throw myself…off. So then I was just trying to figure out a way to kind of continue the monochromes; so I made these really big—over six feet painting—six-feet square paintings of these… This is sort of probably where I got into the nude the most, is like… "Blonde Smoking…" because I was having a show in LA; and I thought I would try to annoy the LA (laughing) people by making blondes… and… (laughs) (laughter) I don't know. (pause) And these paintings… I mean one of the things about these paintings is that the process by which I made them… I would mix up these *giant* piles of… color that—and it always had to have lead white in it—Old Holland Lead White—because they're very dry-looking paintings. I was very influenced by the watercolors when I made these paintings; and… these paintings have this sort of… They're not as flat as they look; when you see them in person—I've seen this painting again recently…. What I did was like I would sort of pre-mix all of these gradations of color; there's more gradation in here than it appears in the slide; and I would kind of put it on and then scrape it off; and then take a giant brush and sort of drag back and forth across it, so that… in the body there's this inc—'cause a very heavy and course linen… the pebbliness of the drag would sort of pick up… and the edges; and so the figure was really built over time out of dragging the background across the figure, and then back and forth and back and forth. So this is "Big Blonde Smoking." I was telling some people yesterday about this painting getting damaged on its way back from Russia. People felt like the Russian customs people put big black handprints all over her… like I guess they couldn't believe that… somebody had done (laughing) painting, or something. But… anyway, it got cleaned up. And I was sort of experimenting—I sort of—I knew I was sort of petering out with this thing, and I sort of started doing these… kind of… very… militaristic-looking kind of stewardess-y kind of people….

SLIDE

This painting is actually called "Big Blond Jerking Off;" and it's… I got asked to be on a website called "Teen Moms." It's sort of a—It was like this support group for like teenagers who are pregnant. It was sort of like one of those—It was supposed to be a *good thing*… (laughs)

(laughter) and this was sort of like—And I- I don't know. I didn't *mean* anything about that by it; I was actually just trying to be annoy—you know… obnoxious—when I made the painting; and… I like to say that… I don't have the patience to be on my knees… when I do this. It's not—That's not me. (laughter) So this is a Rorschach blot; and… these are kind of like where I sort of became… very disenchanted… again… with my work about this kind of idea of this kind of field (305) painting… I got a little bit disenchanted with the idea that everything was coming out of my imagination—now this is like 1994; and… this painting I was sort of interested in sort of making this the *end* of my work… And I kept telling Matvey that like… "Matvey, I think this is the last painting I'm ever going to make;" and he was like, "That is so extreme; what do you mean by that?" And I said, "It's so… I just kind of am sick of my work, and I want to get to the end of it." So I put this exclamation point for her vagina 'cause it was like the end of the sentence… (laughter) It was like… And I just thought, "Like what's the worst--?" I mean, I was getting reviews that were so much funnier in a way than even my work—it was like this one guy said, "How *low will she go*? How far will she go?" And I thought, "Okay, well why I don't just make a painting where it was like, this is… the *end*. This is how far and how low…" and it was like—there's something about a blond Afro that's pretty nasty; so… there was like this kind of thing, and—And it's funny, 'cause when people talk about my work even today, they will still talk about *blow-up dolls*; and I think I kind of just made these couple of paintings where this kind of mouth was… like this, and these sort of bellies were like this. But this is called "Rorschach Blot," because I took a Rorschach test once… and this is what I kept seeing. (laughter) Not *exactly*, but like—I kept seeing this kind of (laughing) head-on collision… with this monster. And it's this gigantic painting; it is the most obnoxious painting I think I ever made. Anyway.

So… then I made this painting called "Transference Portrait of My Shrink in Her Starched Nightgown with My Face and Her Hair." Is that out of focus? I can't—Yeah. That's better. Anyway. So… I sort of had this moment in therapy where I actually said to my shrink, "You don't really understand my problems because you're so perfect and you—" and I started describing her… pajamas. And I started like really insulting her about like she wears these kind of… really starched pajamas…and kind of went on and on with her about how I thought she wore Laura Ashley clothes, and… (laughter) it was this weird, very bizarre attack, which I learned later was transference. You know, it's sort of like *I'm the one* that really wants to be wearing the starched pajamas. I'm the one that wants to be wearing the Laura Ashley…. (laughter) I bought a pair of these and… I lost them or something, 'cause…-- and it's sort of… you know—But anyway, so… this is an invented painting still; and… I was… felt very interested in this painting because it sort of like became about… I think it's really the first painting where the subject wasn't *purely* in my imagination, that the fact that the transference between my shrink and I became the subject…. It became…The model became somewhere between the two of us; and that's why it became her… --the pajamas in this world… and then I plopped my head on top. And then I stuck her hair on it, because it was something like about this kind of… The image is not one person; but it also wasn't something that was just lodged in my imagination. And this is sort of important for me because I slowly began to try to figure out a way to sort of come outside of my head and sort of bring things into more and more specificity. And I think that one of—the main thing I liked about that painting was that it was incredibly specific about that moment of transference. I'm also kind of very interested in the subject of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis because… since I'd been painting all these women, and women seem to be like—it's sort of the whole Freudian thing; and it's like mostly women in therapy, and… I just realized it had never really been painted before. Anyway, so… this Laura

Ashley thing became a little bit of an obsession with me. After I made that painting I had this kind of amazing feeling like, "Wow. Why don't you just take the rest of the wacky ideas you have about your shrink… and follow through on them as a way of kind of *possessing* something more specific in your work." So I found this book, **Laura Ashley Color**, which is actually one of the best books on color you'll ever read… (laughter) because one of Laura Ashley's talents—and it's mostly so that—Well… they're kind of going out of business… maybe not in England, but here—but… is that… you can mix, as you see, checks and pattern and flat—You know, you can basically buy anything she makes and it'll go together… sort of like that's her thing, you know; and that was kind of like the way the book was put together. And… I kind of became fascinated, because I was teaching, and I was teaching color… And one of the things that I always taught through was complimentary colors… and not… And I sort of had always ignored the primary color triad as… --red/yellow/blue—as a way of… making a painting… myself… or even *guiding* a person to make a painting, because in my mind… red/yellow/blue… I pictured Calder… I pictured… you know… these kind o paintings that were not atmospheric, like the kind of paintings I was making. And suddenly, when I was reading Laura Ashley's book, she can make all these colors look great together. I thought, "Wow, it's so interesting how… maybe it's not red—it's that maybe you can *a* red, *a* yellow and *a* blue… that… are… homogenous, as opposed to completely different; and… so I pre-mixed gigantic tubes of these. It was almost like going to the store, except that I was mixing them on my palette, and I was sort of matching them to Laura Ashley colors… and I pre-tubed them; and then I was sort of like I had my red, yellow and my blue. And then… somehow I decided to make this painting of the blond… and… I decided to make her… since she's *blond*… and I was already kind of working with these blondes… seventy percent yellow… and… smaller… and slowly smaller amounts of the other colors. And then I—Somehow all of a sudden it occurred to me blonde, brunettes and redheads—red, yellow, blue… and that painting was completely coincidentally a three-foot square; so I made two more three-foot square paintings… and I had the experience of making these out of that same palette; so… this was incredibly interesting *for me*, because…again I had—I felt that I had possessed something extremely specific instead of something… very general. And I think general—like I tend… to sort of need to be… specific, in order to be interested in things. So anyway, this is sort of a very key painting for me because, in my most recent show… I actually sort of brought the brunette back… into my work; and one of the things I've sort of realized is that I kind of hope I live a little bit longer, you know… like… I hope I live—'cause I realize like I've got a lot of work to do because… I've been working on the blondes for a long time; and I sort of just recently got back to the… sort of bringing forward this character, whoever it is, of that brunette character and sort of giving her a life. And there's… you know, it seems a little goofy, but it actually *drives* the specificity of the work. Anyway.

So I made this painting also… It's called "Faucet;" and… this was—these—so the shrink painting, and the "Blonde, Brunette, and Redhead" and this one were all shown in LA at the same time. And… I got—I was still sort of feeling a little bit sort of like sick of my work; and one of the things I was describing to somebody like how… the shoulders… in my paintings always kind of looked the same, 'cause I was making them up and I didn't really have a way to draw, because I wasn't drawing *from a model*. And I kept thinking to myself, "You know, you've got figure out a way to draw something; it's like you've got to figure out a way to have something more specific in the drawing, because… I felt like I had sort of figured out a way to make color extremely specific to *me*...and not… color that came from anybody's… teaching…. I mean the color was kind of really wacky for me, but like drawing was not. So… I decided to

take my own advice, which I gave many students; and nobody ever took my advice… which was to make… maquettes. Many times when I would be teaching and I'd have the student who wanted to make a large-scale invented realist painting out of their imagination… one of the things they didn't have as a background, which I had, was… you know, ten years of figure drawing. And… I'd say, "Well… you know, I guess if you want a shortcut that you can sort of—you could make maquettes, and the—idea that I got to do this was when I was a student in Rome in 1982, we took a trip to Venice… And the teacher took us to see the "Escuela de San Rocco," by Tintoretto; and she pointed out that Tintoretto used to make maquettes… out of wax… and put them in a box… and light them… and do small studies before he went up on the scaffold. And I always thought that was very cool. But it took me—Remember that was like 1982, and this is about… you know… '95… you know; and I finally got around to figuring out how to make it—something for myself. So… the figure in the middle, I literally took Sculpey and… made that figure in the middle…that sort of was… that last painting. And I made the other three, and then I went back and made the shrink. And what it afforded me was… I sort of took this little… thing; and I didn't know what it was; and I put it… like on a table, and I put a clip lamp on it; and I started drawing it… and I thought to myself, "Now, have you done a still-life drawing or have you done a figure drawing?" And there was something about the ambiguity about not knowing what it was… but that the drawing had become more specific as a lit thing… I became very interested in these kind of weird boundaries… and I felt that I was getting further and further into art… and further and further away from… you know… even if by accident, politics, or the politics around, you know, "Has she been abused or not?" I was sort of like totally interested in the idea of… the process. I became very involved in this process. So… I started just going crazy with these sculptures; I thought I was a fucking genius. I have to say, I was like—(laughs) (laughter) I was like—I was like, "Oh, my God! Like you can do a *brown painting again!*" You know it was like—I was scared of brown for years, because I felt that it was the reason why I had gotten so disastrous in my own work. So I started doing these like studies of these things;

this is the… "Asspicker." They all had names. There was the "Food Eater…" I'm getting bored with myself. Okay. Gotta forge on here—Okay, "Food Eater," "Asspicker," "Head Shrinker," "Social Climber," Motherfucker." So each one had a character; and obviously… this… -- You can't see that she's picking her ass, but I know that this is the asspicker; and… there were paintings where—Then I took these photographs; I took… -- I bought a focusable Polaroid camera… and I took these… characters… and I started to… I had them cast into… plaster. And I painted them…because I had many copies of them, in various shades of grey. Like I started to manipulate the local value… of each of the figures, so that I could play with how light was crossing these white forms. And in some way I was sort of like able to sort… play with how much a love Morandi; because like Morandi and his bottles… I thought is was like me and my "Bad Habits." That's what I called them, "Bad Habits." You know, everybody gives me new bad habits—they go, "Have you ever thought of the… you know… 'Ass Kisser,'" or something; you know like everybody gives me—no, I'm like, "Well, that's ; because like Morandi and his bottles… I thought is was like me and my "Bad Habits." That's what I called them, "Bad Habits." You know, everybody gives me new bad habits—they go, "Have you ever thought of the… you know… '*Ass Kisser*,'" or something; you know like everybody gives me—no, I'm like, "Well, that's *your* bad habit." (laughter) And everybody's… So anyway, I did all of these Polaroids of these things; and I was just kind of carrying them around the world with me, (laughs) messing around with them, and… creating different lighting situations… And these that

are in the show in Portland were done back in '96 in the summer, looking out my studio window… and… this is the painting that's in the show. And this is the "Food Eater." But what I (laughs)—What I did with the "Food Eater—" This is actually from observation… but what I did was I pretended I was Wayne Thiebaud… and I decided (laughter) that (laughs) like… that I could… -- I put her in the light, in the sunlight; and I took a picture of it so to hold it, hold the light… And I just couldn't believe how fabulous that shadow on the fat was… like the kind of *bloop-bloop*. And then I decided to like go through the spectrum… of… from yellow to blue—just because I could. And I just… was like… "Oh, my God! This is so fun!" So this was kind like what this… you know. And… she had her tongue sticking out… I don't know… like… these were cartoon-y looking, which eventually became one of the criticisms I had of the sculptures and what they were doing, which is that… they were always cartoon-y… and that cartooniness… is—was a little bit too safe… And I eventually became critical of that also. But what I liked was how I was able to, rather than always have to, in each painting, come up with like *seemingly* a new subject, I got to sort of just admit that there was no new subject for me; and that I began to be able to just look at these things differently, and get to re-pose them and reposition them. And then eventually, because I began to sort of like decide I was never going to give up any ground I had already covered, I decided to start making paintings that were *memories* of the sculptures… that I wasn't painting. So I'd paint from life; I'd paint from photographs; I'd paint from memory. So… this is… like… the "Food Eater…" and I made up this little wrist corsage for her… and sort of like looking at one of my older paintings in this kind of weird… world.

SLIDE

And this is a made-up painting. This is like… you know group therapy. I decided (laughs) it's sort of like—There's the shrink… and… (laughter) I don't know… Everybody's sort of mesmerized… And I had such an incredibly good time painting these things… And occasionally I'd sort of take a peek at the sculpture, sort of— 'cause it was—they were always well behaved and posed somewhere in my studio. But… because I'd had all that experience *inventing* paintings, I never had a sort of a stopping point when—they just helped me kind of move further.

SLIDE

And this was a large painting called "Bad Habits." Philip Guston made a painting called "Bad Habits;" and you know his was smoking—He made a painting called "Smoking, Eating… Drinking?"—No, "Painting, Smoking, Eating;" and then he made a painting called "Bad Habits." And I sort of always have liked—you know it's sort of a cliché to say you like Philip Guston, but… you know, I won't hold that against him. You know, he's—Sort of one of the things that was so amazing about him for me was that he was sort of willing to let people think awful things about him in his work. You know, like why is this… man, you know, making these paintings where he's flagellating himself and he's a Jew; and he's now a KKK guy… So in a sense I was sort of thinking about how… you know… Guston presenting himself as a KKK guy was, you know, like—and that he was sort of trying to be… --throw himself into being wrong… so that he could make paintings that were right. I was sort of interested in the idea that like I was continually being called… you know… a—you know, whatever—you know… bad for the Women's Movement… but I was sort of… You know, I was really sort of holding strong the idea that, if I was good for myself as an artist, that I was going to be good in a larger picture; and

that it—that the studio is not the place of that kind of judgment. It sort of like should be all judgment all wack—You know everything should be wacked out. So these kind of paintings… I guess I showed them in New York in… like '96 or something. And they were all sort of based on the sculptures.

SLIDE

This painting has a ridiculous title. It's called… because that in the background is the "Food Eater;" and the figure in the foreground is the "Mother-fucker." And I called it the "Mother-fucking Food Eating Still Life." It's a gigantic painting; and some poor person has to write that on their insurance claim if they ever (laughter) borrowed (laughs)… You know. And I was sort of also—I mean it's like I was being sort of intentionally annoying, because like I got so repressed around… like when I had my first show—around the art dealers, that I sort of liked the idea of—I called one painting once, which I'm not showing you, like "Suck My Tit," once, just because I wanted this art dealer to have to *say it*; because I thought it would be funny—like somebody would say, (laughter) "What's this painting called?" "Suck My Tit." "Oh… well…" You know, and I thought that was hilarious. (laughter) (laughs) Well, maybe I never could—(laughs) Anyway. So I knew that when I started showing with the woman I show with now, she kind of had no trouble saying all that stuff; I thought it was a sort of a good match.

SLIDE

So this is a painting called—Hm! I forget. Anyway. It's a joint painting of the shrink and this… social climber, I think. It's called "Associations." Like free associations. This is a painting that's a hundred and forty-four inches high, and about—I don't know—It's about as big as it is there; that's about the right size for it. And … I wanted to make the shrink… final—I got a little bit sick of painting the shrink, because I'd done the first painting—the *invented* painting of the shrink and the sculpture of the shrink—I have about forty paintings of the shrink that I have spared you of… (laughter) But… I decided like, you know, let's get to the end of this shrink thing here… like cut yourself loose with the shrink thing. And I decided that the shrink always was supposed to be a gigantic monument; and… so I went around New York and I found a column… and sort of photographed it with the sunlight hitting it; and made this painting… So the painting *had* to be a hundred and forty-four inches high, because she had to be a monument; and… I can't remember the name of this painting, too—I think I'm having like early onset Alzheimer's, huh?

Comment: "Manifest Destiny."

Speaker: "Manifest Destiny," thank you. (laughter) I'm getting *scared* here. "Manifest Destiny." Thank you, Matvey. And it—because manifest destiny of this image is what this is supposed to be. So… the little figure at the bottom, which a lot of people think is me… fortunately… 'cause she's *hot*… (laughter) (laughs) So… she… I like that. People say, "Well that's the artist." And I was like, "No wonder nobody can *find* me." (laughter) It's like…so… that's—Actually that looks like my shrink and that looks like me; we sort of reversed… (laughter) --although I've never seen her naked. But the…-- just to assure you… not to worry…. (laughter) But anyway—so the… figure at the bottom, I felt…. I don't know why it was necessary to have her nude… or sexy, but—(laughs) The… I wanted to have a figure that was clearly *flesh* to sort of show you

the difference between… what was clearly stone. Something that was stone had to be put against something that was flesh. *Sooo*… I have a lot old *Penthouses* around—And this is where I got the reputation of being the "porno painter…." And this is the only thing you may remember from this talk now, because I've said that… I just happened to sort of—I'd collected old *Penthouse*s… particularly ones from the Seventies, because I was—Several years before that, I… was sort of—when I was trying to figure out whether or not to do the sculptures or not, [sic] I remembered something about the way the girls in the early *Penthouse*s looked… because they were around when I was a kid… you know… Truck drivers and what-not, you know… policeman next door—They would always be sort of hidden away, so all the kids would sort of look at these things. And they were very—in terms of—They weren't… particularly pornographic—I'm sure that the intention of them was pornographic, but they were basically just sort of… women… who just happened to be naked… standing around in rooms… not doing anything particularly sexual… and just kind of posing. And they reminded me, when I went to a store to buy some of them—and I remember there was this guy next to me who said, "What are you doing? Research?" And… I was like, "I'm doing whatever *you're* doing." You know it was sort of (laughing) like… these… (laughter) like *men* were sort of like, "What are you doing here?" And… so… I sort of bought [sic] some of these things back to my studio; and I started looking at them… And it took me a few years to…--Actually I opened it up and I sort of used some part of them to make this girl. And… I sort of thought, "These look so much like how in art school we posed models…." And how in art school—I mean I did so much figure drawing; and it's so of interesting how in art school it's always kind of… just the standard rule of thumb to… have someone disrobe and draw them, and it's not dirty—And it *isn't* dirty. And if you've ever done it you know it's not dirty… and it's often boring. And… you know, it's like it has to sort of really sort of take your own int—You have to be really interested in drawing the figure to get into it. But these early *Penthouse*s… kind of looked like they were pretty much *based on*… or on these… settings that I… did every year in art school, where they'd sort of like throw a bunch of still life objects around and have the girls stand there. And so I sort of thought, "Maybe these would actually be an interesting way for me to figure out a way to work with a model…" because… what I'm *not saying* is I was trying to find every way to work with a model without having a person in my studio besides me. (laughter) I didn't want a person in my studio; I like to be alone. Anyway—so… So once I did that… and this is like a tiny little study for that—this just sort of looks *more* like the painting—the image in the *Penthouse*—I decided to kind of just… kind of mess around with it more… and… there was an image…where somebody was… not dipping a cookie… but… I call this one "Cookie Puss…" (laughter) 'cause you can't decide what you're looking at there. But—Anyway, but the—There was an image of a woman holding a teacup; but, you know, it sort of didn't—You know, I mess around with the image a lot as a painting. But I kind of messed around with this a lot; but while I was doing that I was also kind of curious to figure out… well maybe the problem with what model to use… maybe there is this person in my life… And there *was* this person in my life… I kept thinking, "*Who* is the blonde? Who is the blonde?" because I kept painting this blonde that was sort of very… general. And as I've said, I was sort of trying to find a way to become more and more and more specific; and I decided to… look up one of my oldest friends, this girl Kathy I'd been out of touch with; and asked her to pose for me… just to see if… *that* was the model… like you know because I was doing at the same time as I was doing the sculptures, and the same I was looking into the *Penthouse*s; because I was trying to figure out what was the right way to go. And… so I think what's kind of maybe important—that's a nice fingerprint on that—Sorry… that's not in the

painting…. This was a painting that I ended up showing a long time later; but… it ended… It… This was weird; this was on *busses*… in New York; I was like in the Biennial and they used this image… And I got on the bus one day, and I looked—I like—I looked up and it was sitting there like on the bus—You know, like you're inside the bus. And that was really… weird for me to sort of like have this very real person in my life, Kathy, kind of end up on a New York City bus… as opposed to any of the kind of work that was invented, because… you know, when I was a kid… --And this is her… kind of… un… adorned… When I was a kid she was sort of the… the *hot blonde*… and… I was the sort of goofy… sort of red-headish… (laughs) I say red-*headish*—sort of depending upon the amount of henna… But it's like she—And then there was a *brunette*… And so I began to realize that this kind of made-up "Blonde, Brunette, and Redhead" thing, and all of this stuff was actually coming out of real life; and it sort of never really occurs to me until after the fact. So I did get her to pose for me; and I sort of started to kind of meld all these things together; like I made her into the "Motherfucker…" sculpture, which—And if you remember that sculpture of the figure with the beaded jacket was based on that painting "Faucet…" So the painting "Faucet" was the first incarnation of that image of the woman wearing the beaded jacket…. And then I made the sculpture of it; and then I made a bunch of paintings of that sculpture… and… then I got Kathy… I made her… Well, I didn't personally; I had somebody make it for me—I tried to make this thing real, like this beaded jacket… as real as the person. So Kathy became… almost like this was that painting kind of… being revisited and kind of re-brought up…. So… I had her pose; and so I was kind of like blending together… things from figure painting class—like posing somebody… in a certain way—things from my old—It was kind of like a kind of way of sort of bringing everything together…. If—I start to think that I'm getting confusing around here; so if you ask questions, you're—you know, if I'm making—not—making myself unclear….

SLIDE

Anyway, so… I was working now with a real model; but the real models became… --you know, and the girl in the background was another person who… worked in a local coffee shop in the East Village; and she looked a lot like the "Social Climber" sculpture… And I even tell these people—I walk up to them and I say, "You look just like my "Social Climber" sculpture…" And they go, "What?" (laughter) And then… they're kind of you know, interested a little bit, and like, "Well, what does that mean?" And then… they're sort of saying, "Well, are you going to paint me or what?" So… we (laughing)—we get this sort of whole thing going; and then I had Kathy and this girl kind of pose together… and sort of messing around with… painting ideas; but sort of bringing… these… ideas from older work in—like 'cause she's now… I guess still posing as the sort of flesh-pot kind of—I'm sorry… "Faucet" painting….

Question: (unintelligible) in your studio?

Speaker: No—I took them to a photo studio; 'cause I didn't know… how to—My studio was too small… I tried to figure out how to do it in my studio; but it was more expensive to do it in my studio 'cause I didn't have—I'm not a photographer and I don't have photo equipment… Now I do… and… I have a separate room… just for… models and props and stuff. But anyway…. Then… But simultaneously, as I said, I was not willing to give up any ground. I mean that was one of the things that when I was preparing this slide talk and I was kind of organizing the slides, like trying to figure out what order to put them in; and I kept them in the order that I actually sort

of more or less made them… or in the order that they kind of were relevant… Like this is a painting that's sort of based on a *Penthouse* image; but it's so far away from the *Penthouse* image… this… has been referred to as "The Purple Nipple," but it's called "Honeymoon…" But…in a way that they're all… influencing each other, all of these modes of… fiction… are influencing each other—the mode of fiction… of…-- depending upon where I'm starting. And they all sort of are circulating around each other. And in the end, like invention… --like this is a painting called… "Ham Ass…" (laughter) and… this didn't exist… but… (laughter) this was the "Food Eater…" but then I decided to make… something on her butt—like I gave her a pair of pants and I was messing around—It's a little painting. You can see it's on those sort of cheap thirty-nine cent… Fredericks canvas boards…. I adore those things…. It's a real mark-up on those things… after I work on them. (laughter) (laughs) And… It's like you start with thirty-nine cents…. But anyway, so we—So you're—I sort of did this thing on her ass; and I realized it looked like a ham. I didn't start—I didn't make it—try to make it that—a ham; but then I step back from the painting and I go, "My God, it looks like a *ham ass*!" And then, you know, I'm like *"Hey!"* You know… (laughter) So… "Ham Ass…" turned into "Good Evening, Ham Ass." (laughter) And… I'm a little embarrassed to do this, because this is the thing that everybody always—I say it every lecture—but this was actually… I think it's out of focus; can you focus it a little bit? Focus on the nipple till you get it—there it goes; okay. You guys don't know when I'm joking and when I'm not joking, do you? (laughter) (laughs) … But… there are these sunsets outside the window of my studio… that… when I was over on Washington Street…these wild—over New Jersey; you look over New Jersey, and the pollution causes these incredibly beautiful sunsets… And so… you know, I was kind of bringing all these things kind of together—the sunset out the window… I was painting them from life… I was overly excited about the sculptures… This is sort of… a fiction of the sculpture… And this "Ham Ass" that came from before—And… I was going to say that I had a lot of fun painting the sunset *on that "Ham Ass."* But… this painting… Somebody bought this painting; and the guy who bought it is a real publicity; so I won't get into that, but… he… Somebody followed him around the day he bought this; and they were like—"And he bought this painting by Lisa Yuskavage called "Good Evening, Hamas." (laughter) It was in the *New York Times*… 'cause if you—You know, it's sort of "Dial A Mattress;" leave the last "s" off, you know… (laughter) if you want Hamas…. I didn't realize "Ham Ass" and "Hamas" were words… that had anything in common; but… you know, a couple of people picked up on that; and I really wanted to write a kind of a… letter to the editor; like "I am *insulted* that you would…" (laughter) So anyway… (laughs) somewhere in my press it actually says, "Good Evening, Hamas." (laughter) And I'm thing, "God, people who read that must have thought, 'What the hell? What does *that* have to do with anything?'" So anyway, this is… a painting… I decided to kind of explore the inner world of Laura Ashley as a child. I mean, it doesn't make any sense, but I'm just—You know, there it is… And… I decided she was insane… (laughter) and… she was chained up… and so this is like her little… This is like the "Motherfucker" figure inside this… the "Ham Ass…" (laughter) Like… sort of like… if you look *close enough* inside the "Ham Ass," there's a "Motherfucker." (laughter) And… I have to say that… you know, I did it because I *could*… you know… 'cause… there's no *rules* here. You know, you just say, "Like okay… It's just going to keep getting sillier and more weird here." But it's like I've gotta make a painting and have it make sense… So I messed around with this a bit. The only thing I want to say it was like I was thinking of… you know in David Lynch movies… where like in "Eraserhead," where the camera goes—he's having a nervous breakdown because he's got and eraser-head baby… I think my Chihuahuas are like eraser-head

babies, (laughter)by the way, so it was like, you know, like *"the ugliest baby in the world."* So… the camera goes under the radiator… and it gets… and ope—He pans in to under the radiator; and it opens up into this whole world where there's a blonde woman… with a flip, which I realized kind of had influenced these paintings anyway… this really weird Marilyn Monroe fucked-up looking woman doing a little dance… like a really bad little dance… stepping on a rubber chicken… And it's like this totally insane moment in a David Lynch movie… And so now you'll have to go see "Eraserhead" now. But… anyway. So I was kind of like messing around with… how… if you kind of look inside…. So then I made this painting called "Big Little Laura;" and it's sort of like Laura Ashley as a child… in her insane asylum or something… this fabulous… padded room. And… it was like… the "Ham Ass" kind of moved into this other… thing… But this painting, and… some of these paintings… and some of the sculpture paintings were sort of all shown together, because I was kind of trying—kept trying to sort of… say… to the audience, like, I'm interested in all of these ways of sort of working with fiction…

SLIDE

And… anyway. This is called "Day." You know, it was funny; when I look at this painting I—One of the inspirations for this painting was… there's a monoprint by Degas… and I'm… you know… like big fan of those… monoprints; and there's ones where they're very black; and then there's some monoprints by Degas that are very light grey. And the most amazing thing happens in this one where there's a bather… a Degas bather… --and he is one of my favorite artists… and he's—the bather is standing in front of a window… and she's silhouetted… But what's amazing about the silhouette is that it's very pale grey; it's not black… And… I remember looking at that and thinking… You know, I mean in a sense I sort of think of these paintings in a way as like… I hate the word homage, 'cause I don't do homage… but… it's like… kind of working through the memory, or sort of doing a kind of a séance with my love of those images. But this idea of a yellow… the color yellow… being the dark color in the painting…. I was talking to… a girl here; and we were talking and I asked her, "Is yellow a dark or a light color?" And now she knows the answer…. Where are you? Where's—I forget your name; I'm sorry. (laughs) She's not here. Well, the answer was, "It depends…" because… I was trying to say that it's like—that yellow can be… dark if it's against something that's lighter; and in the Degas monoprints something very surprising happens with that extremely pale grey. So I sort of was thinking about… those monoprints when I was making this. A lot of people ask me what I was thinking with that figure down at the bottom… and besides sort of like working with the idea of a silhouette again… and sort of like that's the crazy servant person… running around, I don't know…. I guess I was sort of thinking of—I sort of always like in those… Rembrandt paintings, all the way in the background there's some servant that's sort of silhouetted or something; and… so this is the painting called "Night." The scale of these paintings is… I think maybe that's about the right size… the projection…. So… the reason why I put this one in here… I don't even remember when I did this one; but the reason why I put it in there is because in my most recent show I did a painting and—you—Joanne, you talked about the beaded underpants? The beaded underpants… This is the first place they ever existed; it was—I made up—This was a made-up painting… so that again the fiction is—completely starts with my brain, not with a sculpture or a model. And… I don't know—at this point I do not remember how she got those crazy panties… But… I never forgot the panties… or the socks, or… whatever, and… at some point later I started painting Kathy; and I put the panties on her… but she didn't *pose* in the panties; I sort of made them up… on her. So…

SLIDE

… in the show that I have now…-- you'll see the slide that Joanne was referring to—I actually had the panties actually come into the real world. I decided that, just like with the sculptures… that—it's like different levels of sort of bringing things into reality. Anyway, I'm going to blow through these. These are… I'm—I'm—These are Kathy, and… everything's kind of still going on.

SLIDE(S)

There's a series of paintings called "Northview" that I did, where I brought Kathy… --I found—When I did—I started doing some research about the *Penthouse* pictures… because I realized that I didn't really like anybody's—just anybody's—photographs in these *Penthouses*; I really liked this one guy name Ken Marcus. And… somebody said, "I bet you you could actually find Ken Marcus; and I bet you he lives in Southern California!" I was like, "Really?" So… I just decided just for the hell of it to send him a fan letter… and I've never sent a fan letter before; and I like sent a catalog and a fan letter…. And he actually wrote back to me; it was an—he sent me an e-mail; and we had a little bit of a correspondence… because I wanted to ask him how he—Like… I wanted to understand what it was about *his* photographs, 'cause I realized that it wasn't just… --It wasn't! I mean that's the things is like people think I like—you know, I'm like—you know I'm the *porno queen* or something; but it's like… I really sort of liked the aesthetics of this particular guy's photographs. I also like Bob Guccione's photographs too. And there's something about both of their photographs that sort of looks like they're looking at Vermeer… There's a lot of refraction and reflection… but also the settings… So when I talked to this guy, Ken Marcus, one of the things that he told me is that… they used to go to… people's mansions… and bring the girls to these mansions…. And I don't know why, but I thought it was sort of a—I knew… of a mansion…. I knew somebody who had a mansion… and it's this crazy mansion called Northview. And the place reminds me like if Laura Ashley… had a mansion… it would sort of look like this. So and I sort of (unintelligible) sort of like… fascinated with the idea of having… the articulation of all of these objects around. I'd never really painted… an environment… for the figures. And I became sort of interested in the idea that like—for me, going from… curtain to books to a head to a wall to a couch, without thinking… about them as separate things; but as sort of like a total painting… was… not something that I had attempted or done in a long time; so it was actually… a challenge for me. And I was interested in this house because… the house was… almost a female… --like everything in this house was—like there's no place in this house for men… Like—and you know, one of the things about the whole Laura Ashley thing is like I have—in—where I come from, when people get a little bit of money… --at least they did… you know twenty years ago—people get a little bit of money, they got a little bit ahead, they always bought Laura Ashley—like everything… Like their whole house would sort of… -- because Laura Ashley in this cul—in the culture I came from was like… a low class person's idea of high class… But in most… upper class homes, when you go to these homes… you know, they're mostly looking at like modernist stuff; they're not looking at Laura Ashley. (laughter) So… being an artist, you're sort of somewhere between… the class that you came from and the kind of people who buy work or… you know, museum world, and things like that. So you sort of have an… eye in—you can see a lot of different things that you don't normally see. And… I sort of realized that these environments were extremely… they were like female bodies in themselves. And… like the curtains were—like it was like painting another person…

or painting the books was like painting another person—the chair—and… so the whole series of paintings was like a show that I had in… 2001 or whatever—two years ago… in New York. And they're all called "Northview." And this is Kathy… and… it was—I don't know if it was a good thing to do; but I was sort of also interested in sort of bringing this girl from this… you know from this… lower middle class Philadelphia world into this kind of extremely rich overdone house… and sort of see what it did to her, the pictures, my response… to all of it. And I had—The girl in the background was just there to help me that day; and we had this dress that nobody fit in; and I put it on her… and it turned out that she now… She was in that painting as an accident; and then I asked her to continue to pose for me; because I realized that she was sort of like this amazing… character that had never—it was sort of an accident; and… this is the body of work I showed in London at the Royal Academy; and there were just these… You know I was kind of interested you know in *not* painting a nude… and… these images of her were sort of… developed—I… put her under a skylight… because I've always been interested in… Corot's large figure paintings, where they seem like they're in landscapes, but the landscape is completely fake; but the—clearly the light on the figure is from a skylight; in other words in a studio. So I was kind of… -- This environment is invented… and…

SLIDE

Anyway this… girl… became sort of a… way of sort looking into… not only a clothed figure, but actually—that's what I thought I was doing when I started; but mostly looking into… this… What I realized in retrospect was maybe the character of that brunette, who actually was not a… booby kind of sexy character, but was much more of a kind of feminine and gentle and graceful character… And so… I didn't want to give up any ground, though, so… I had to put something—I was interested in sort of keeping my… This is "Lupe and Lola." This was actually a portrait of the dogs. (laughter) I don't know if you know who's who… The—Lupe is on the right…. It is, actually… I mean… So it was like I found this old photograph of… It was obviously these two women that were forced to stand together, and… (laughs) I just decided that, you know, I would kind of put these expressions on their faces that—you know, like *the dogs playing*… I think I called it "Harpo," though, 'cause of Harpo Marx… always give people his leg… And so these… are sort of….

SLIDE

And this is a painting that's in the—that was—I keep saying "It's *in the show*;" it was—came down like last week. But…

[AUDIO BREAK]

… first few paintings; but also… and extension of the work that I had been doing with the sculptures. And I put the sculptures—I actually just took the sculptures and put them on the cabinet and sort of painted them in this… painting that's the… And it's sort of… This… (pause) These… costumes… and… I mean I had this—I built this room also, and had this girl and… there was this other I asked to pose…. –There's a blonde and a brunette; and they're… --The costumes were very specific and the settings are very specific, which is… -- I'm going to show you this; don't get shocked, okay? —This is the painting from Yale… from 1985/1986…. I really sucked. I mean that's the thing; you realize it's like… you know—there's… I mean

maybe there's hope for… you know. I don't know. This—I can't believe this painting looks so bad, but… (laughs)—Like I can't believe I left that face like that. But anyway… they graduated me with this painting. So. This… painting was always somehow… a very strong memory for me. I didn't realize when I—When I look at it now I realize that, you know, I kind of really was very muffled—My voice was very muffled; and I was very muffled… but that there was something about the subject in these paintings that I always wanted to kind of return to, which… you know… I did kind of manage to in that painting just prior to this…. Anyway. So it was a way of sort of like again like these… this… painting that Joanne was referring to… This is actually a woman I knew who was five months pregnant, and… she has this extremely long neck; and I realized that… I don't have the slides of them here, but there are these paintings… -- Well actually that girl on her knees, or whatever; she looked a little pregnant. There was a bunch of paintings I had made where people had these distended stomachs…. I thought of them as distended stomachs, not as pregnant; but… she…-- This woman didn't look pregnant; she actually looked distended. That was that moment in her pregnancy… And I—She was kind enough to let me represent her, (laughs) and… I didn't plan on having her lay down. I mean I had sort of all these other plans for… this painting; but there was just something about… about it; I just said, "You know, you gotta lay down." And… the panties that she's wearing that I had… made were really based on the idea of sort of… like if you… go into the past of my paintings and bring… forward an image into a sculpture and then bring a sculpture forward into a real person from my history… and then take that person back into fiction; then… I can sort of take… objects from older work and sort of give them a lot of meaning and bring them forward. So… these are—These now exist. I don't have them… You know, you can try them on, if you want… They don't—you know… if you come down to New York. A lot of people want to try them on… see what they look like. Everybody looks great in them. (laughter) There's something about those panties… Anyway. So… this painting… We'll have to talk about this more. I'm kind of… (laughs) It's sort of like one of the best things that I heard somebody say to me about what they thought this painting was about was… it's sort of like the character is coming of the "Blonde, Brunette, Redhead," and sort of taking care of each other… And… the reason why I made this painting was that I sort of…. There's a Corot—There is a Corot painting of… a maid… putting pearls in the hair of a woman—a nude—in the landscape; and I've always been completely fascinated by that painting. It's like a really weird subject… that, you know, like it was sort of taking this idea of sort of serving, and kind of… you know, there *is* the painting "Night," where there was this figure in the background sort of running around; and I decided to bring her forward; so there was a lot of that kind of bringing something forward… into… a kind of a different… world.

SLIDE

Oops! I don't know what happened…. This is *not me*; so I should have called this painting "Not Me;" but this is a painting that I call "Baby," because I was sitting in a café, and I saw this girl… And I said to Matvey—I said, "Oh, my God! She looks… I *know* if I painted her people would think I was painting myself;" because she was—I mean she's twenty, so she looks very young… and… But I realized that… you know, if we were put in a room full of people and wearing the same outfit, and one of us walked in and the other walked out, that the people who didn't know us… would not make the assumption that it was a different person…. And she was really fabulous—and totally insane; and I asked—I walked up to her in a café and just said, "You know, I think you look so great…" And she was like ("freaking-out" type vocalization:

"Whaaaat"), you know, like (laughing) freaking out, (laughter) and I was like… you know… "Here's my gallery's website. I really am not a pervert; and…" You know, 'cause when you're a woman and you ask a woman to pose… it's a little bit weirder than if a guy asked the woman to pose; because then people think there's really something—real monkey business-- going on when there's, you know, like some—a *woman* asking a woman to pose; there's—it's much less traditional. So… after some discussion… I even had to explain to her that… --And I had to be conscious of this—that… in some ways I was interested in sort of painting these kind of more vulnerable "Bad Baby" paintings again… but I wanted to let her know that I was—*I* was aware, and the people would be believing that she was me. So I said, "When people say *awful* things about those paintings, don't take it personally. They mean it about *me*." (laughs) (laughter) – 'Cause, you know, people will say… like when the paintings of Kathy, people kept—I found this fascinating, like… people who were writers who called themselves feminists kept talking about the *bimbos*, the stupid bimbos in my paintings… And I'm like, "Hey! That's a real person, and you're going to hurt her feelings, you jerk!" You know, I was like—You know I was trying to hide that kind of press from Kathy, 'cause… you know, I don't think Kathy's a bimbo; and… I think—I really hate the word…. So… I kept saying, "Like, *I'm* not calling them bimbos! You know, like why are *you* calling them bimbos?" You know, but—anyway—So what I said, "You know, if they call you some (laughs) kind of weird names… they mean me." But anyway… So… this is a painting that I intentionally made to sort of go next to… the next… painting…

SLIDE

…which is… the—luckily for you the last painting I'm going to show here. We're going to wrap up now; and… this painting is another "Baby" painting; and these were the same exact size canvases—the last one and this one—as the "Bad Baby" paintings, with the same kind of cropping… And… all you can really say about these paintings is… I really like them… and… I think they're very vulnerable paintings…. And I made them in one night. All the paintings of this girl I made in one sitting; and I'm not sure why. The were just *pssht!* Done. The other thing is that they were paintings that were based on—A lot of the paintings in the show were based on a violet… yellow thing; I sort of went back to… painting with complimentary colors, and sort of working with much more kind of less bright colors, and sort of setting that up. Could you go back to last slide, though? I just wanted to look at that again.

SLIDE

This one obviously is not a real person; but is the girl—somebody did pose for the body… but her face was so sweet, and then I got—like the war was going on; and I was so sick of everybody kind of—I was sick of American bashing… but I was also sick of Americans…. I was sick of everything… and the guy who painted the Smiley face died; and I don't know why, but like I like the color yellow… and I just decided to like, you know, like "have a nice *fucking day*," you know, (laughter)sort of like—you know, like (laughs)—I was like… "This is my *war* painting." And… it's funny, 'cause I think every artist… you know… in the world made a war painting. And it just—You know, it's like I'm saying, "*That* was the painting I made during the war." And it's like, "*This* is the painting I made during the war." It was sort of like… you know, my… you know "Have a nice day," you know; and… (laughter) Anyway. So… These—this painting and the next painting it's like one of the things that I—you know, they were right next to each

other on the wall…in the show, looking at each other. And the both have this sort of like black-eyed Suzie; and it's sort of like the… painting of the Smiley face… is… almost like 99% bright yellow… with a very small amount of grayish violet; and this painting is like 99% grayish violet with this very tiny amount of yellow… so that those kind of things are sort of… You know… that's the way I do it; that's what I think about; and… that's where I get my ideas, so… that's it. –So far, that's it. (Applause)

Comment: Now we (unintelligible). Do you have any questions?

Speaker: Don't be shy….

Question: Hi. I have a question. I'm curious about an expression you used a couple of times… "not wanting to give up any ground"…and whether that has anything to do with the obvious… continuity throughout your whole… body of work.
Speaker: Well, it has to do with like… I don't—It's amazing how quickly… like… There were a lot of paintings I didn't show… that were like… I would try to prove to myself I could still make stuff up… because now I'm a junky for the model… And I'm like—I don't want to not know how to make shit up. But it's very hard, because generalizations now… don't feel right, although… I just want to be clear that… every painting is essentially based on looking at the painting. You know, in the end I spend 90% of my time just looking at the painting. You know… but when I say "not giving up ground," I mean… I want to be able to maintain it all; I want to be able to do it all. I mean… So… like, you know, going back to graduate school work… and finding a way to kind of draw that forward… Like I don't want to—I mean I really feel like—And I didn't—When I moved on from my graduate school work, believe me I did not think I was going back. And… I'm never… I never want to go back to those awful back paintings; but, you know… fat backs—You know… (laughter) maybe I'll do a "Fat Back" series; I don't know. But… it's… just a kind of thing that like… I just want to be able to… I see this big graph in my head… of… like—it's almost like diagramming of sentences… and… it's like… you're diagramming… like fictions—I'm diagramming fictions; and I sort of keep on pulling… them. I've never written it down, but I keep seeing it. I don't want to write it down; because I'm afraid it's not going to look that interesting when I write it down. It's going to look stupid. But it's like… I can't— It's like there's this one kind of fiction, another kind of fiction, another kind of fiction… And the thing that I'm learning recently is that… when I move forward from something… up until recently I never thought I was going to go back. I thought I was going forward… And…--only because… my work has taught me differently, I realize now that I will *never* give up ground, and I will always go back and pull things forward; because… I think what I realize is that… even when I was a very young… student, my work had a lot of meaning. It was not… silly, you know. It was real. It was real to me. The ideas were like… I basically hit on everything I'd ever be interested in when I was young… and I just had to always figure out a way to keep to doing and keep figuring it out. And that's why only recently—like I go—You know I used to be a little bit of a… you know… kind of like… "Oh, Gee," you know… I mean, I don't know; it's like this thing like… I never really sort of—I used to think I didn't want to get really, really, really old or something, you know—like my grandmother died when she was in her Nineties; and I said, "Well that's kind of awful. I don't want to be like…*lingering* forever." Now I kind of want to live a really long time, because I feel like I *have to* kind of… You know, like I don't know how long it's going to take to kind of get, you know, to do all this stuff. I sort

of have this weird thing, like paintings…. Like I realized when I did this show that I just did, I thought like, "You know… I know what people are going to think. They're going to think like, 'Oh, she's really given up… *the edge.*'" (laughs) You know? "The *edge* is gone. Yuskavage is now… you know gone soft. She's putting clothes on 'em… You know, she's *caving in* to the pressure or whatever;" and it's just sort of like—And I think—because that again is like this sort of… It's like a kind of a… I don't know; it's thinking outside of painting, you know, like whereas like for me… it's like I'm kind of continually trying to figure out ways to *make* paintings. And… you know like… you know I—Like when I did that figure of—the *Penthouse* figure sort of leaning up against the sculpture, I think that… you know, that's the kind of thing like where you start to kind of… make extremely… What's the word for it? … *synthetic* decisions. You know… How do you describe synthetic like—sort of running out of my ability to explain something. How do describe synthetic, Matvey? Well, how do I mean—Help me out here… (laughter) because I think this is an important point… like how this is—this is a very synthetic process….

Matvey: Tell us the opposite of it.

Speaker: Organic? Thank you. No it's a—(laughs) That didn't help. (laughter) (laughs) It… It's just like that you know, it's like you're marr—I don't know, maybe he was— You know, but the point is it's like you—You're pushing things together, and you're forcing things together. You know, it's like… That's… You know, that's how it's *not* organic; it's like the… things are kind of being shoved up against each other… modes of representation. I think, you know, the word *mode*… the *mode of representation*… because I'm sort of like a little junior student on… modes of rendering in the Renaissance… and I've sort of described them to students here and there, and… when I was a student I never heard about it. I mean basically, you know… Chuck Close always says that students should sue for malpractice these days, because… (laughter) (laughs) you know, you get out of school and you're like, "Whaaat? I never heard of that!" You know. And it's true. It's like we're all dealing with so many different… It's hard to know what the hell you learned. But… So you get out of school, you sort of read a lot of books and you find what you're interested in. And… there are like these modes of representation in the Renaissance that are like very clear… the sfumato, you know… and chiaroscuro… unioni (phonetic) and conjantismo (phonetic). And for you Italians out there, I don't know if I'm saying that wrong; but anyway… so it's this… you know… They were very, very specific things; and people kind of did not—You know, like big changes were made in art history by making a little change to one of those kind of modes. And in a way it's like… as a painter I'm sort of really interested in knowing… like when you shift something… and you push things together that don't necessarily belong together, you have to know that you're sort of entering a slightly new territory…. You know, the idea of "painting is dead" is sort of like…. (pause) I'm not calling on people. She's bringing the microphone around, so she's going to….

Question: Okay. Hi, Lisa. I'm wondering… You talked about your paintings in grad school and shortly after—the "Back" paintings—Did you say "manipulating your audience?" or…

Speaker: I can't hear you too well—

Question: Did your—The paintings you did in grad school and the "Fat Back" paintings… You said that was (flaw in recording)… that you "manipulated your audience?" Is that what you said? Or you—

Speaker: Manipulated. Yeah.

Question: Yeah… manipulated your audience. Do you feel like… the… you know the full frontal… paintings took—were ways of taking something back from the audience… or manipulating in a different way? Can you talk about that?

Speaker: Sure. Yeah. Yeah, well it did. I mean there were… you know… people got really mad at me…. You know…. I mean….

Question: Did you enjoy that?

Speaker: I enjoyed being paid attention to. I mean… you have no idea how hard it is for anybody to give a shit about your work…. You know it's like you're—you're like—You know, it's like… you know, I *invite* you to go out there… and… *scream* in your studio…. It's—I enjoyed the interaction, you know… I enjoyed having… And I'm not talking about selling… and showing… and… you know, all of that. I'm not talking about *career*. I'm talking about like *other artists*… looking… and it's like… --And having a conversation with you and saying, you know, "I hate your work!" You know, it's better than *nothing*… because I experienced nothing… and that was an incredibly important experience… and I didn't like it. I mean… I learned that I want— I make art to talk to people and to have a dialogue with people; and… you know… when I was getting what I wanted, which was *nothing*, (laughs) you know… I realized that was sort of being… false to myself. I wanted to have a conversation; I wanted to be engaged… with other artists, mostly. And… what's amazing to me about work is that… you know, you—I mean there are people in the world who… are strangers… like all you guys… and because you make work…--because I make work—you now know me and we know each other… Like work…does that for you. It's like you put it out there it has a life… and we talk to each other. We don't have to agree… You don't have to like it. Actually… I think it's very important—I mean one of the important—I mean one of the important things for me is like when I used to go around to galleries… when I was very young… one of the things—I used to… desperately want to like things… but I rarely did. And… one of the things I used to say to myself is like, "Well, what are you going to do to make it better? What do you want to see… in the world?" And I say that to students; 'cause students will say, "Like everything *sucks*! I haven't seen a good show for years…" And I'm like—I get a little bit agitated, 'cause I've—"Oh, I had a show two years ago…" You know, (laughter) "like that was… I'm *really* insulted!" You know it's like… "What're you talking about?" But it's the kind of thing where like I find it… I get—I really do—it grates—My bile goes up because I'm—and I kind of pull back and I say, "What are *you doing* to make *it* better?" 'Cause I am quite sure that most artists are just mumbling and muffling and shuffling… and not… coming out with it. Like just… get out! You know… and be clear and strong… and say it. And let people be mad and disagree with you. (pause) There was somebody over here.

Question: I have… two comments…-- one comment and one question. The first comment is I hope you live… a long… time…

Speaker: I can't hear you.

Comment: The first comment is that I hope you live a long time also.

Speaker: Oh, thank you.

Question: Yeah. And then… the… question is… Do you paint primarily in oils?

Speaker: Yes.

Comment: Okay. Thanks.

Speaker: I do everything… because I don't want to give up any ground… (laughs) I still do watercolors; I like printmaking… I like pastels. I do… You know it's like… I *primarily* work in oils; and that was your question; but… the minor mediums as they call them—printmaking, drawing with a pencil… but also like—you know as I said—watercolor and...pastel… and… you know… as… I only made those one set of… I don't like calling them sculptures; it seems wrong to sculpture to call those—like chachkas—I made those chachkas, and… (laughter) But all that stuff really teaches me how to make oil paint… *behave* differently at times, like… 'cause sometimes oil paint is shiny, and sometimes it's dull and matte; and sometimes it can get very fat; and sometimes it can stay very thin… And oil paint… Oil painters I think really… you know can…-- I'm assuming you paint in… oil… -- can get a little lost in the fatty plastic-y part of oil paint… and… rather than the pigment side of it. And that's what those other materials really have given me…. 'Cause like with watercolor… You can't get thick with watercolor; it's a disaster; so it sort of really shows you how to get intensity without thickness; and then you can bring that back to your other work.

Question: Did you ever get a comment; and if you didn't get that comment—

Speaker: I can't hear you; I'm sorry—

Question: Okay. Did you ever get a comment when you were doing the *Penthouse*-inspired work… that it was the photographer's vision, not yours that you were in fact reproducing. How did you react; and if you didn't get that comment yet, how *would* you react?

Speaker: Well I thought that more than… I never got the comment, but *I* thought about it… a lot… like… you know… which is probably why I didn't stick with it, you know, 'cause it was an interesting thing to play with. I mean I think I'd made about five paintings in that way; and I'll tell you, that is the thing that has stuck with me the most. You know, like "that's the *Penthouse painter*," and I'm like "Whoa… That obviously made an impression." But I felt like I kind of had to go there and do that; but… Did I think it was the photographer's vision? I would say yes and no… Somebody signed my book at my last show "Bob Guccione;" and I wasn't sure if it was a joke or if Bob Guccione came in and I was waiting for the lawsuit; but… (laughter) the

last show… didn't have anything to do with that; they were all—I mean I really stepped out of it. So I guess the answer is… I was always concerned about that, you know… I was always concerned about—because—But the thing is is that the images *really* were—I think I'd *win* in a lawsuit, because… they'd say, you know, "Well, look, judge… That nipple is… " you know, whatever—you know. (laughter) They were—They were—The paintings were so… you know… re-interpreted. And maybe I made them worse. I mean you know it's like… I mean they're… the… There's other questions you could ask about the *Penthouse* things; but I'm not going to lead you guys to that. (laughs) I was *going* there; but I'm not going there. Go ahead. I mean—somebody—You have to get a mike… This is very professional. (laughter)
Question: Yes, I was just wondering if you could explain… your idea of manipulation… Like malipiting [sic]—I can't say the word—manipulating the audience?

Speaker: Well… the word *manipulation* is a little manipulative, maybe, also… 'cause it seems to have caught your attention, 'cause she asked about it too…

Question: Yeah, well do you feel that you're still doing that? Or…

Speaker: I hope so.

Comment: Okay.

Speaker: I mean—

Comment: -- But not so much as—

Speaker: Well, like here's a painting. Look at me. Look over here. Look up here. Look closer. Get away. Isn't that manipulation? I always taught students not to be afraid of the idea of manipulation—Like manipulating is a good thing, when it comes to art, meaning… you can't control the final… I mean… There's the other side of it, which is a kind of a transference… People bring to things what they're *going* to bring to things…. You can't control that. I certainly can't control anybody at what they do. I mean this is my favorite way that I can't manipulate an audience, right? People walk into the gallery; they see my show is up and the go—(pause: Gesture? Facial expression?)—like… "I'm outta here!" (laughs) You know… "I can't stand that work." And it's like *I've seen that*. It's like… isn't *that* manipulating them? I like manipulated them right out of the gallery! (laughter) You know it's like… they hate your work, they're out. You know, and it's like… I do that at galleries; you know I go, "Uck, I can't stand that; I'm out." So in a sense it's like when I say manipulation I mean… you have an effect on people. You… You know it's like… Are you one of the participants? Yeah. (laughter) I know I'm making this… the way—I'm *manipulating* all of you about the word participant, 'cause I think it's funny. (laughter) Do *you* feel, in your work… you get people—and I don't mean your friends, 'cause your friend's going to be nice to you and stuff. It's like I mean like strangers—you know, if you have stuff out there… Does it change people at all? Does it—I mean have you ever like *had an experience* where people—you watch people look at your work and you feel them kind of having an experience. I mean, do you—have you ever had that experience? I mean—or do you feel like you're—I mean 'cause I'm just wondering… maybe I feel like… as a visiting artist… not a teacher… that I'm interested in… maybe getting into with you guys why that is such a

powerful question… the issue of manipulation…. 'Cause I really do believe that the word itself is so loaded, that maybe that's what you're reacting to… Is—There's no more microphone for him, so he's… (laughs)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well, I'm just wondering is like… Do you find it offensive—would you *not* want that to happen in your work?

Comment: Well I think that happens in all of artists' work; it's always in a form of manipulation. I'm just curious about how you felt about using that word in your early work (unintelligible) and how you felt that you were manipulating the audience and some… I mean how do you know what that—(unintelligible)

Speaker: Well, when I said the first time—The first time I used the word I was talking about… when I was at Yale… and I was in a great deal of emotional distress….

Comment: That's what I mean… (laughter)

Speaker: And I wanted to be left alone. I really did. I wanted them to understand. I couldn't—These were like big old scary men…

Comment: Right…

Speaker: …with hair coming out of their ears… (laughter) and I was scared. And I wanted them to understand that I was fragile; and that they were hurting my feelings… that it was not easy for me. And I didn't—you couldn't say to them… "I'm hurt…" (silly voice) (laughter) You know… So I decided to make a *painting* that… Well, I didn't decide to make a painting; I realized after I made that painting that I realized that you *could* make paintings that would let people know… how you may want to have them react.

Comment: Right.

Speaker: It was an accident in a sense. It's like I made a painting that directly showed an emotional state of distress… like… of complete fragility, like I had completely caved in. I felt like I was breathing glass; I was a bag of broken glass… and they knew it. And they left…me… alone… And *that* was manipulating them I realized. (laughs) (laughter) Like *I had recovered*, you know, my(laughs)—I was no longer depressed. I realized… "Hey," you know… "I *like* painting again." You know, it was like… because I went—I got to go on; and people stopped trying to hurt—*bug* me. You know, I realized like people were trying to—Like that's the whole thing with Yale back then; it was like… We're going to break you. We're going to break you. We're going to break you. I was like, "Okay… I'm *broken*!" You know… (laughter) So how do you show that without having a—I mean, I wasn't the kind of student to have a fight with them, you know, 'cause I was taught to be polite to my elders, you know… and I didn't want to fight with them, so I just needed to show it. And… So but I think the word *manipulation* is a little, as I said, manipulative, because it's such a… -- And I know that when I used to teach

undergraduates, they used to get all *agitated* when I used to say, "You need to manipulate people with your paintings," because… you know, I was also just trying to get them to kind of get… worked up, you know. So again I'm manipulating them… So it's just sort of like the… --But I do think that even if you're making—like Hans Hofmann paintings… push-pull… you know… You kind of start believing—You know he told—Everybody started saying "push-pull," you know, so it's like… It's… It's all part of that. I don't think you should be afraid of it, is in essence what I'm saying—is like you-- I want an artwork to sort of take me… strongly, even if it's a gentle piece, even if it's someone like Richard Tuttle. Richard Tuttle's work is *extremely* manipulative, because it makes you go *all the way over* to it; I mean in his last show… the lights were out… and he only had the daylight; and it was very grey and rainy during that whole show… I don't know if anybody saw it…. It was like… you had to really change… I mean, you had to come to *his* work. You know this… seems like extremely fragile work… and it's extremely—I mean it's extremely powerful… and strong work in the response it forces you to have….

Question: Lisa, I have a question about your audience…and not so much about manipulating them, (Speaker laughs) but about your thought process while you're painting, and… you sort of mentioned when you were painting at Yale that you were really… You were thinking about these men with the hair coming out of their years…

Speaker: (laughs)—It's going to get back to them…

Question: But… I mean now when you're working, do you have a really clear idea of your audience… of who these—who is going to be looking at this painting?

Speaker: No. I mean… I paint for Matvey; and he's really smart; so… I try to paint for smart people that I know…

Comment: Yeah…

Speaker: You know, and… I paint for a lot of people who are in my world that are brilliant. I mean I would sort of like say that… you know I can't possibly think about… you know… I was telling some students—*participants*, I'm sorry—that I was… Whenever I'm feeling like I think about… the people out there… you know… I…often have to stop working; and that I become very… compartmentalized when I work. Like I *don't* work when I'm… not feeling well… on any level… Like you know there's a lot of people here trying to work through the heat… and I'm like, "Ah, give it up!" (laughter) You know, "Don't work when it's hot!" (laughter) "That's what they invented siestas for. You know, paint at night!" You know, it's like I learned to change my life so that the best parts of me… the parts of me that are… You know, like if the best part of me is wild… though some of you might disagree… You know, it's like if the best part of me is wild and spontaneous, or… a certain kind of thinking… I think, is when I do my best work—or whatever—I've had to figure out what it takes to get me in that frame of mind. And believe me, when I think about my audience, sometimes—you know, it's like often you think about… you know… negative things… 'cause that comes around… and… I just have to put the brushes down and walk away. Sometimes I walk away and… you know decided I'm just going to… you know—take a walk; and sometimes I just walk away altogether… and come back to it;

because… in a—It's funny. I got to a certain point where I realized I like my work enough… that I didn't want to *just work*, you know, and be dutiful. Dutiful is a very bad thing for me. Do you understand the meaning of that word? You know, like… "Please bless me, Father, for I have sinned; I have been a *very bad girl*." You know it's like that's kind of like… You know I don't function well out of that kind of restriction—You know, *Santa Claus* is watching you, and God is watching you, and all your dead relatives are watching you and… (laughter) you know, so it's like that's… kind of the world I come from. Everybody's sort of like you know, like you're being watched, and… you know and—So I have to completely (laughing) forget about all that stuff. You know like my audience is… you know, they—that Philip Guston quote where he sort of says he worked… *He worked until… everyone had left his studio… and even he left his studio.* I haven't been able to figure out how to that… to work until everybody leaves my studio. I sort of have to go in there in a very particular frame of mind… and be willing to—I mean somebody asked me if I work every day… And I said "far fucking from it;" because… there is so much stuff that kind of… upsets… a person… and it's like you've got to—You know some people will say, you know, work through it. But there's different ways to work through it. Sometimes reading is a way of working; and it's better than messing up… you know… your nice canvas, you know… -- or doing a drawing at home, or something like that, so… Now I forget what you asked me. I'm sorry. I've like lost my…. Anyway… Somebody's got the microphone…

Comment: I have.

Speaker: Oh. I'm sorry.

Question: I'm overwhelmed by your ability to paint. It is—

Speaker: I'm sorry—

Question: I'm overwhelmed by your ability to paint. It is incredibly strong…

Speaker: But? I hear a "but." (laughter)

Question: No… Someone once said to me that everything before the but is bullshit; but that's not what I'm saying here at all. (Speaker laughs) (Questioner laughs) Your painting is… clothed in the prurient. Have you ever considered or been drawn toward letting your painting go naked; and… deal with the strength of the painting without attaching it to all of these other forms that draw in so many other associations?

Speaker: (pause)… I'm having a complicated reaction to your question… (laughter) because… on one hand I want to say the last group of work I think is about grace… and I would think that you believe… that grace is not prurient and… is what you're saying. And… I… would say that… I'm completely disinterested in any kind of… I really—I want to judge the paintings; I don't really want to judge… I mean I go back to what I absolutely need to do to make my work; and I—you know, I have a very old friend who… really hates what I do now. He really liked my student work; and he really hates what I do now; and he makes fun of it incessantly. And… you know… I'm this close to—you know… getting pissed off at him after ten years of him (laughing) making fun of me. And… I hold back, because he's a—you know—a nice man.

But… one thing I say to him over and over again, and it doesn't seem to make an impression on him is like, "You don't understand I'm doing this to survive. I'm doing what I have to do to survive." If I… I'm not making decisions out of… the need to like sell… in that sense. You know I'm not…—It's not that kind of survival. I'm saying… it's like what is… you know, what I need to have present. And… in fact… you're right in part, that prurience is… a… an addiction… to… get to something extreme in me. But I do think that the last group of work was an exploration of something different. And… that's why in a sense I'm saying I have a complicated reaction, 'cause I was wondering if you noticed that… But… I also don't want to give in… to… people such as yourself and my friend Michael who… kind of want that from me. You know it's like I—I just—You know it's like I don't want to be a pleaser. It's complicated to… You know, 'cause it's not about anybody else; it's about me. It's really all about me. You know, it's—and… And every artist, of whatever kind, it should be all about them… And you know, it's like a take it or leave it. I mean I really learned it's a take it or leave it proposition; and… you know, I really do my work for me. And… you know I learned a lot about—as you were calling it—prurience from Philip Guston; and… you know, like his… I mean…. You know, it's so moving… that he incriminates himself over and over again. And I really am not interested in… *not* incriminating myself. I'm—I want to go into my studio thinking I'm the worst… not the best… you know? And like build myself up from there. You know like I… I *know* that need to go into the studio and think you know like… "I'm such good person," and "I do good work," and… you know, the world just doesn't get it, you know, and it's like…--Or… you go into the studio and you say you know like it's… like "this is all wrong… and I'm going to make… I'm going to start from the gutter and I'm going to try to raise it up." I don't know how many of my paintings you've see in person; but… I believe that when you see them in person… I think that… the presence of the actual picture… and, after all I don't make photographs; I make paintings… so you have to see the actual picture… is full of love… in the extreme. And I think that is a battle with that stuff…that… I think you're disapproving of. And I think… No, but it's like… you know, there's a little bit; but it's like… (laughs) But it's like that kind of thing is… a battle; and the need… the *need* for it is a battle. You know, it's like… it's not—It's something that I question. You know, does it—You know, like I often wonder like—you know it's like…"And how did I get to this whole like titty… "like—of course, I made a series of paintings called "Tit Heaven," and… you know, it's like I'm like "How did *that happen*?" (laughter) You know it's like…. You know, I brought it on… but I'm just saying that the… I think I'm demonstrating a struggle… in a sense, demonstrating a struggle… between… various drives in myself. And… you know, like I said, when I started my painting life, I started with… I know like there's such a thing—Do you remember the show… that the Museum of Modern Art had called "High/Low?"[sic] They had a show…-- I first moved to New York it was pretty much up right then; and it's an amazing—It was an amazing show; and I think it had a big effect on a lot of people. And… it showed how—the effect of low culture on high art. And… I mean, you know, I don't want to say I have "cred" because I'm from the wrong side of the tracks; but… I guess that's what I'm saying. It's (laughing) like, you know—It's like I have that—I am an expert in low… culture, you know, the plastic slipcovers and the whole nine yards. And when I went to Yale I realized it was sort of… that painting was on some level… like I had left behind my family. And they're… They would be upset, but they're bad taste. They'll never hear this! (laughs) (laughter) They would be very upset; so if you *do* meet them, don't tell them. But it's like… this kind of sense of *taste* is… like when I trained as a painter at… you know, the *Ivy League*, you know, it's like, you know, *where was I*, after all…. You know, it's like… I had

left her behind; I'd become "Muffy," you know… (laughter) And it's like… I suddenly became (following in mock haughty tone) a painter of the *highest order*. You know, and it's like, you know, I was trying to please… the William Baileys of the world, you know… (resume normal accent) And… you know, it's like… I just was like, at a certain point I said, "Cut it the fuck out! You're… you know… white trash… you know… low-life motherfucker…" You know. And I started talking to myself like that in my studio… and I started—I actually felt like—I started making *original work* when I started to… you know… have that (laughing) dialogue with… things that actually… --You know it was funny, 'cause the girl, Kathy, that I painted… one time she came to a slide talk I gave; it was before I painted her… and she… --I was at Tyler School of Art, so she came in from her house in Philadelphia, and she said, "I can't *believe* what you're getting away with." She said, "You're —" She goes, "They're writing the shit down!" (laughter) She said, "This is art… like… garbage… And they're writing it down!" And she said, "I can't believe you!" She calls me "Yus." She goes, "Yus, I can't believe you're fucking getting away this. You making a living on this?" She just was like completely blown away; she thought I was like—"You know, well, you know, you had to go the Ivy League to get away this." (laughter) So. Anyway. That's the… As… That's sort of like a very long—you know it's like the struggle… really is also with my past… and my education… and, you know, if you're going to *do it*, you know, do it. I learned to paint…well; and I *like* to paint well, whatever that means. You know, I like a *well-made* painting, as I say—keep saying—"whatever *that* means…" because, you know, I like fine linen… and beautifully made stretchers… and I like that whole… ambience; but it's like I also like the… disastrous side of it too, you know. But… Anyway… Trailing…

Question: Is this working? Yeah. You said about your interest in working with…

Speaker: I can't hear you.

Question: … in the different ways… you are interested in working with fiction… And I was wondering… what kind of fiction do you think that way of… like kind of Old Master way of seeing, and…

Speaker: --The Old Master way of seeing?

Question: --Way of seeing… way of working paint… with light… and all that… what kind of fiction that brings to a work, if any, if you… if that's a—

Speaker: I'm not certain I understand your question. –The fiction of how… of what I get out of old paintings?

Question: It's more like—I mean, you mentioned chiaroscuro… and… I mean all that sort of like… devices of… seeing, that kind of… you know, embedded in all practices… And… I wonder how much that's part of the—

Speaker: Well, when you… paint with chiaroscuro… it puts—I mean, chiaroscuro is a dramatic form of lighting, as opposed to sfumato, which is a very *gentle* way of lighting; so that… you know, you can… Obviously you don't have to paint drama if you're using chiaroscuro… but

that's what Caravaggio used it for… to that effect. Like… you know like… you know… type of thing… so that that particular kind of lighting… and meaning, you know… using… you know, going in—you know, it's called… *coloring down*, you know, so that you're going into dark or into… neutrals in the shadows… as opposed to coloring up…. You know, like my earlier paintings it was very… Disney-esque… in the sense that the kind of modeling that I used early on was… You know, I'd go into the brightest color in the shadow, so that like a very vivid color would exist in the shadow, that shadows were places of extreme illumination. And… you know, in… Michelangelo… in the Sistine ceiling… you know, like that's sort of that debate about like… are those paintings over-cleaned, or are they truly that… bright? And what he was actually sort of trying to say… I sort of… get a lot of ideas out of that, and sort of also—you know the tradition of congiantismo (phonetic) is the translation of the word… which is what he did, coloring into color—you know, the shadows go into other colors… is really sort of about representing… the supernatural; and… something that you and I talked about earlier was… (mock whisper) we talked about (resume normal voice)… at dinner… was how art-making… is… --and maybe this is a nicer way to talk about this manipulation that I'm talking about—is a psychic art; because it doesn't—It sends messages, it transmits messages, to the viewer… And that when you look at a painting and have a feeling… you know, five hundred years after it was made… what is that but a sort of a psychic… experience from the painter to you. And… you're letting this come through; and so engaging… And the way that they do it is by manipulating light and shadow and color and all that stuff; so that using these types of… tools… are what affects people… later. You know… that *technique*—You know… I tend to bristle… at… being called a good technician, even though I like technique, and expect myself to be a good technician, I'm not really *that* good a technician in the end. I mean I'm not like… trained… I mean, I'm sure there's people that are way better than me; but… technique is not interesting in itself; it's got to be put to a use. I mean… I'm sure that everybody knows that, but… it's sort of… I think that, you know, like I—When I think of my paintings… and if I would like to believe that one of my paintings is good… what I think of is not that I painted it really nice… and I used like really nice… technique—And I'm using that word to be silly about it; but it's like… what I think about is… a way in which a painting… is a kind of a construction, and a sort of a—you know… the way… meaning is layered… and continues to unfold. I mean, I hope that—I hope that paint—that—that one could look at one of my paintings for a long time and see a lot of different things over a period of time—you know, to keep—that it would be something that you could revisit… You know, I enjoy going and revisiting the same paintings over and over again at the Met; and seeing, you know, if I see something new… So it's just that kind of thing… I keep on doing these things where I have no idea what I'm talking about any more, so… we (laughs) (laughter)
Comment: Thank you.

Speaker: Thanks. We have to edit this for the future… students—participants. Like she tried…

Question: I have… well, a small comment… I was kind of glad that you mentioned Caravaggio, because I was actually thinking… after the remark of the gentleman over there… that…

Speaker: Are the… Are you Italian?

Comment: Yes.

Speaker: The girl from Rome?

Comment: Yes. I'm the *last* one.

Speaker: You're the last one?

Comment: Yeah. (laughs) The last participant.

Speaker: The *last participant!*

Comment: Yes.

Speaker: Sounds like a (laughter) *porno movie*! Okay… go ahead.

Question: Because I was thing that, at the time, Caravaggio… --Caravaggio's subjects were considered… vulgar… or obscene… And nowadays they look sublime to us…. So— you have hope, I mean…

Speaker: I have hope. There's hope for me. (laughter) You know, not-- You know one other thing I discovered in Italy? The people whose—who have the most hope are the people whose paintings *last*; because… the people (laughs) whose paintings look really bad—you know, you go around to all the small towns… We drove around Italy in the car… and you drive in and out of all these little towns; and some of the paintings look *terrible*—you know, like they're *black* practically; they're filthy; they just got cracked and they're destroyed…. And then there's certain people… whose technique—This is where technique comes in handy—were so good—Their paintings still look good… and tada! Those are the people whose paintings we see, you know… and Michelangelo, or… you know, and… Caravaggio… obviously are some of these people. I mean, people probably took care of them; but then again they sort of made them to last. So that's the hope. You've got to make your work to last.

Comment: Yeah… sure… But I wanted to ask you… because in the beginning you said that you wanted to… Well, you reconsidered painting as a medium… and you almost wanted to quit painting… or… switch to other medium—media. And… so what made you decide to…

Speaker: To stick with it?

Comment: …stick with painting and go on with it?

Speaker: (laughs) Well, I decided to give it this one more try, you know, that idea that he came up with that's sort of… It—I—I was blaming it—I was blaming it on—I mean, the thing I was just talking about, this idea of like… I felt that perhaps I had too much *reverence* for painting; you know, like… this… little… you know… plucky working-class girl—and like then there's *painting*… you know. And I'm like, you know, like *painting*... And I couldn't really do it well, because I was too worshipful of it, you know. And… you know, there's the thing about—I mean, you know, I don't want to get into this too much, but… you know I will; but you know it's

like the—you know… "in my day" girls weren't taken that seriously as artists in school. You know, it's like *even* you know in the Eighties… it's like—And I hope it's—I mean… I think it's different now since there's so many—I think things have changed a lot, but… I remember people were sort of like telling me… You know, I just felt that there was this kind of… larger art history; and that… you know, there's the baton… and it's being passed…. And I'm sort of like… "Hey, what about me? You know, can I--?" And sort of like running along…

Comment: But this was also often the position of many feminist theorists, who claim that women were not part of a tradition—I mean, not all of them, but some of them… But it's not only… something like male/female, but—

Speaker: But I think that it's sort of like you don't… like maybe that no—Like on one hand it's like I think that the first thing was I had to stop *worshipping*… the… this … thing… I had to bring—I thought—You know, *I* can't come up to it… obviously. You know, like that's what I kept trying to do; I kept trying—"*Maybe I can be better…"* You know like that was—that's sort of one of things like, you know, like… *"If I just try harder…I'll be better."* You know… (laughs) it's a very female thing, you know; I'll just *try harder*. You know… I'll just *do* better, and I'll get up earlier… (laughter) and I'll be *more dutiful*, you know… and I'll get to my studio before anybody… and I'll put in extra hours and… You know, and it's like "I'll just keep on trying…" And it just made me worse and worse and worse. And that's a real dynamic… with one's art making, you know. It's like that… by going about it a certain way… I was kind of deteriorating as an artist. And it's… I couldn't figure out what it was… and so… I *did* have this kind of ass—I mean did have that… awareness that… as a woman in the world… I was telling people to go fuck themselves constantly… "You know… go fuck yourself!" You know, whatever… And I just realized like…(aside) -- Is that okay… that that's on tape? Yeah, okay. (laughter) It's not *TV*, I know; it's like… Is that okay? (laughter) You know it's just like the… you know—you just sort of—you know I was just was kind of like saying, you know, like "Whatever…" to anybody. And like people would say, you know, "Get *outta* this party!" or whatever. We did get dis-invited to a party-- Matvey reminded me—the event—There was an event where we got called up and said, "We… You'd better not come to this party. There's a lot of people that don't like you." And…(laughter) now my paintings are thing that kind of… sometimes don't get invited to the party, you know; it's like… you know…. It's that kind of thing where I decided to sort of… like—that perhaps there was one more hope, which was that there was something in me that was not completely… passive—That I was not a passive person, but that my work was acting awfully… limp… and passive…. And I thought… you know, perhaps there's a way to kind of change that… a little; and… you know, the… aggressive qualities, I guess, in the work were real—And that's why I kept saying it was sort of like an attempt to survive… because… I felt that like I kept on fading… And sort of I just kind of wanted to find a way to kind of *do something* that made sense…. So. (pause)

Comment: Any more questions?

Speaker: We're going to have a bonfire… (laughter) (laughs) You can throw me in the bonfire. (laughter) That'll be the… "Murder of the Visiting Artist." (laughter)

Comment: Thank you *very* much, Lisa.

Speaker: Thank you. (Applause)

END OF RECORDING