

## **COLA20 Salon Conversation #4 Session 1**

Moderated By: Cheri Gaulke and Terry Wolverton  
With Kaucyila Brooke, Marsian de Lellis, Phyllis Green, Jessica Rath,  
Coleen Sterritt and Denise Uyehara

00:00:06

TERRY WOLVERTON: Good afternoon. I'm happy that all of you are here. My name is Terry Wolverton, and we're celebrating 20 years of the COLA Fellowships, and I'm excited to sit with each of you to talk about feminism and LGBTQ intersectionality, if I may use that word. We wanted to just begin by asking each of you to give us your name, your art medium, and how long you've lived in LA or your history with LA. So, Denise, may I start with you?

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DENISE UYEHARA: Sure. My name is Denise Uyehara, and I'm a performance artist and a writer. I work in solo and now ensemble forms. And I came to LA in the late '80s. I now live in Tucson, Arizona.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: Hi. My name is Phyllis Green. I came here in 1979 to go to graduate school at UCLA, and I stayed a lot longer than I thought I would. And I consider that my career, professional career, started in 1981, when I graduated from UCLA, and I've been here, with the exception of one year and I went back to Vancouver, British Columbia, where I came from, I've been here ever since. First in downtown, then in Mar Vista, and then a little more in downtown, and now in Santa Monica. I'm a sculptor, I'm an object maker, but along the way I have also done animation, video, and I'm just starting to dabble in performance.

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JESSICA RATH: I'm Jessica Rath, and I came out here for grad school as well in '94 and have stayed in Silver Lake, or the area of Silver Lake, for 25 years, I guess. And I work... I'm a sculptor predominantly, or that's the way I think, and then I work in a lot of different mediums, film and drawing and printmaking, as well as performance and sound.

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CHERI GAULKE: I'm Cheri Gaulke, and I moved to LA in 1975 to be involved with the Woman's Building and the feminist art movement, a proud resident of Silver Lake, and my medium is performance art for many years, but also installation, public art, video, and now writing as well.

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TERRY WOLVERTON: You've already met me. I moved to Los Angeles in 1976 from Detroit because of the Woman's Building, and feminism and queer identity had everything to do with my getting to Los Angeles. I needed a place where I could bring those identities together with my artwork, and was so happy to find the Woman's Building and the LGBT community as well. And I am primarily a writer. I've had a long history in performance, and then I've dabbled in lots of other things.

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MARSIAN DE LELLIS: Hi. I'm Marsian De Lellis. I'm a visual and performance artist and writer who uses puppets and dolls often. I've been here for 10 years, or maybe more, since 2006. I was the COLA fellow last year and I got introduced to the COLA Fellowship because I was helping my mentor, Janie Geiser, with her 2006 exhibit, and then I moved here to come to grad school. I've lived in Boston, Providence, New York, and Chicago.

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COLEEN STERRITT: My name is Coleen Sterritt, and I moved to Los Angeles in 1977. Originally from Chicago, a year spent in San Francisco before I got here, but I moved here to go to graduate school at Otis and, like Phyllis, ended up staying a lot longer than I intended to. So I've been here for 40 years, and I guess I consider myself definitely a Los Angeles artist because of that. And I'm a sculptor. I also do drawings. And I got my COLA fellowship in 2007.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: Hi. I'm Kaucylia Brooke, and I moved here in 1992 to take a position at CalArts in Valencia. And first I lived in Mount Washington, and then I moved to Silver Lake, and I got kind of stuck in Silver Lake because I couldn't afford to buy and I was renting for many, many years in Silver Lake, hating all of the gentrification that was happening around me. And then I was able to move to Tujunga, so now I'm a mountain woman, which I'm just so happy about because it's much more me than urban living in many ways. I'm originally from Oregon and was a country lesbian.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: Lived out in the country, was not career-oriented at all, and then kind of came to art later, and then sort of like made my way to CalArts in '92 after being in Tucson, where I went to grad school, and then San Diego, where I was teaching, and also teaching in Chicago, and then I ended up at CalArts. So yeah, I've ended up staying in a place that I never imagined, being an Oregonian, that I would live, and now I'm thrilled to be near the mountains. I work with photography and video and text and image.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: I also write, and I guess that's... and a little drawing here and there.

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CHERI GAULKE: All right. You all gravitated towards this particular panel because the, the question was artists who embed feminist or LGBTQ ideas in your work. So, our first question that we'd like everybody to answer is what is it about your work that reflects feminist and/or queer identities in its forms or content?

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PHYLLIS GREEN: I'm, I'm a maker of things. I... my education at UCLA centered on ceramics, and I... ceramics was one of the media that's considered woman... women's work, and one that's had second class status in the modernist pantheon, and so I was challenged by that to take it up more. And I was discouraged from making little things in graduate school. My work got bigger and bigger, until the mid-'90s, when I did the body of work for which I was awarded the COLA grant, and I decided that I was going to make small, playful work loaded with decoration and ornament, which I thought was antithetical to the modernist strategy, and I feel like I really found myself there and that was a work that I loved.

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COLEEN STERRITT: Well, I can honestly tell you that I'm here not for really either one of those categories, in a sense. I looked at all of the salon conversation topics and there really wasn't one that particularly fit me, and I really wasn't going to do this. A friend was in town over the weekend and we were... we came to the opening... excuse me, we came to the opening, and we were talking about these long conversations, and I said, "Well, there are... there aren't any. I don't know what I... what I would pick and why I would come to any of them." Well, she said, "You're a sculptor," and I thought, "Well, yes, that's true."

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COLEEN STERRITT: I started making sculpture in 1976. Like I said, I went to graduate school at Otis, beginning in '77, and the sculpture world that I grew up in was a very heavily male-dominated world, and to be taken seriously in that world was very difficult, and I think it has been. Making sculpture has been a very hard road for women to navigate. And, as we've seen recently in the Revolution in the Making at Hauser & Wirth, all of the women who were in a sense left out of the dialog because they were women and they were making work with partip... particular kinds of materials.

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COLEEN STERRITT: But anyway, I chose to be here because of that, because I felt that it was important to find a way to talk about what I have done and what has been meaningful to me about being in Los Angeles. And when I got here in '77, like I said, I'm originally from Chicago and then spent a year in San Francisco, what I was amazed about Los Angeles, and I still am, as I traverse the city, is its great expansiveness and openness, that in a way allowed for a lot of freedom and there did not feel like there was this heavy historical burden and context that I had come from.

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COLEEN STERRITT: So, being here as a sculptor felt easier, and I think that that had a lot to do with just the city itself and the expansiveness, the openness that gave an air to why many artists have, have come to LA.

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DENISE UYEHARA: So, I was really fortunate, after I graduated from UC Irvine, I stumbled upon Highways Performance Space, and ended up living next door to the space, literally. My, my wall was the... shared with... the other side was the green room of the space. So, the walls were so thin that I either had to go to the performance, I... or I felt

like I was in it anyway because it was just so loud. And I remember, one of the first pieces that came through was Ron Athey's body piercing piece and the whole troop, and I had... I was just... it just blew my mind. And I continued to stay there for... I, I think it was over... definitely over 10 years, probably more, like 15, but... and it was an entire beehive.

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DENISE UYEHARA: The 18<sup>th</sup> Street Arts Center, which was the larger [INAUDIBLE], and then Highways Performance Space, was a huge synergy of queer performance, people of color, working class poor, the Los, Los Angeles Poverty Department was there. My... so... and, and feminism, and it was founded by Tim Miller and Linda Burnham, and the NEA 4 came through, and, and I... that was my education, basically. So, a, a... as I was creating solo work and coming out as queer and bi, I also was with an ensemble called The Sacred Naked Nature Girls, and we performed and toured, performed in the nude. By the end of our, our series, we were clothed, but we... our work... we were a culturally-diverse group, so it's Akilah Oliver; Bella Hui, who's from Taiwan; Laura Meyers; Danielle Brazell; and myself.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And we were from different class backgrounds, which was important, I think, to, to mention, and different... dif... different backgrounds culturally, ethnically and, from that, we created work that was very much about... A... Akilah was very interested in creating work about spa... spaces of imagination. She called it, quoting Belle Hui's, "Fields", fields of desire, pornography, appropriation, and we, we would create these laboratory spaces where we would perform together, and I, I learned so much from that, looking back on it, and basically that was the norm was women's space and queer space was, was the, the... my education, basically, in, in that space.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And being from Orange County, where it was a completely different scene and being one of... you know, an Asian-American from Orange County, I, I learned... just that, that became my, my family and community for many, many years.

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CHERI GAULKE: I... in the summer of 1974, I was exposed to performance art, I learned performance art, and I was in the Midwest, in Minneapolis, a school where, you know, nobody had even really heard of the art form at that point, and I heard that in Los Angeles, at the Woman's Building, at the Feminist Studio Workshop that they were... not only Suzanne Lacy was teaching performance art, but they were having performance art... feminist performance art conferences, and I, I just was so excited, and so that's why I moved to LA. And, like what you were saying, Phyllis, and what you were saying, Coleen, I was attracted to that medium because it was a medium that had not really been defined by men. It was wide open. And there was something about it that, as a woman, it felt comfortable because it had persona and costume and, you know, lots of, of those things that felt comfortable.

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CHERI GAULKE: So, that was a very exciting time, and, and the Woman's Building was this... and, and the city of LA was this very rich environment for, for performance art, and I feel that... like you were saying as well, that there's a kind of openness here, and that what we were allowed to do with the Woman's Building is... there weren't the pressures that I felt New York artists felt of the, the marketplace. You know, there's always just this intense like gallery scene there. We were able to just kind of be more expansive in our thinking and be more inventive, and so what I think is very feminist about a lot of the work we did is a lot of it was collaborative at a time when, you know, the solo male artist

working in a studio was, was what the art... definition of what an artist was, and we began... we were women.

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CHERI GAULKE: We were working with other women. We were inventing this new art form. We were interacting with communities. We were incorporating social and political critique into our work and thinking about how work... art could have a function in society and make change in society through... the question includes form and content, so there was the, the, the form stuff of performance and collaboration, but then the content too was about violence against women, or, you know, we did work about incest and, and sexual abuse, and lesbianism, and just so many topics that were really initially kind of taboo, almost, in the art world, in a way where the female voice was expressing ideas about those things.

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CHERI GAULKE: You know, you might have seen those images of sexuality or sexual abuse, but not women speaking out about it, so yeah.

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COLEEN STERRITT: I wanted to add a couple of things just about my experience coming here, and also to clarify, I mean, I am a feminist. I... my work does not address feminist perspectives, you know, specifically. The work comes... my work comes out of process, materiality and abstraction. But my background, I went to... my undergraduate school was at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, and it was considered a, a foundry school. Sculpture was very much focused on casting and foundry, foundry work. I was the first woman who was the shop assistant, which was a major big deal. That was in the mid-'70s.

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COLEEN STERRITT: I never had a female instructor until I got to Otis, and Betye Saar was my mentor at Otis, my graduate school mentor, and that was... that in itself was an amazing experience to come from the, the experience in, in, in Illinois, in this foundry school which was extremely macho, extremely of course male dominated. Again, to be taken seriously within that world is very difficult. But arriving in LA, coming to Otis and having that completely different experience of having a woman as a mentor was really extraordinary, and to say that to my young students now who just, I think, can't imagine not having a woman as a teacher.

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COLEEN STERRITT: Anyway, I was also very fortunate that... and, and thinking... you talking about the Woman's Building, I moved to downtown LA right after grad... when I was in graduate school, so I was part of a group of artists that were really, you know, like Phyllis, you know, brand new to that area of downtown. There was really nobody there at the time. The Woman's Building was, you know, out in kind of the boondocks, and I was fortunately included in a show there, which I'm thrilled that that's on my resume from 1981. And I think the freedom of being downtown, it was at the time that LACE started, like I had a space downtown for a brief period of time, but there was this amazing amount of experimental work going on that was supported, and it was through the Woman's Building, LACE, and the... and all the cooperation that seem to happen in those artist-run spaces.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: One thing that I'd like to add about Los Angeles is that, in addition to being attracted to this place because of the Woman's Building, I guess I, I sort of... when I, I, I grew up with the feminist art movement of the early '90s... excuse me, early '70s. The early '90s was the second one. The early '70s, and so I was... and I was... I decided to be

pe... pursue studies in art because of the feminist art movement. I... it seemed like, "Well, that was something to be an artist about." And when I came here, there were a lot of... I mean, there were a lot of things that seemed really kind of straight, things that I wasn't interested in, but there was also a lot of hybrid forms here.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: Like I've never seen... I remember seeing Wallace Berman and Betye Saar, that work. I've never seen work like that. And also, there was a, a great availability of materials here because of all the manufacturing, and where I lived with... in Canada, it was just not that way at all. It was hard to get things. And I, I laugh now, saying that I really do most of my shopping on the Internet, but in those days you had to like... you could drive around Los Angeles pretty easily, and you could drive to various places and get materials or get things plated. You know, downtown was very much accessible that way, and so that made Los Angeles interesting also.

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JESSICA RATH: I, I come from a... my mother was the '70s generation, and I grew up in graduate school with my mother when she left my father and went back for sculpture and printmaking. So, I was... I kind of steered away from art, and then had come back to it and ended up in Chicago. And then, both my parents had kind of left the art world and decided that they wanted to become mountain people and run a farm and, and really had a great disdain for commercial work, and I had grown up on that disdain for capitalism and for any kind of commercialization of art as anything other than a collective experience.

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JESSICA RATH: So, I was trying to find a way to make work on my own and have a practice that didn't necessarily involve the collective but could still have a feminist

perspective, and most of my mentors in Chicago were male and I was learning sculpture there. Some of them were not, but the people who helped me get out here, well, they were a combination of people, both male and female. But what I found over the years here in LA was that I didn't have to necessarily identify myself as LGBT or necessarily feminist in order to be independent. And to assume that I could have a solo career here and that I could do that with a spouse or without, or with a partner or without, or with a child or without, and that I could go anywhere I wanted to within the city and start to... start relationships with fabricators or with people who were giving the materials.

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JESSICA RATH: And there was a... and acceptance in the LA area that I could just walk in and form a relationship over and over and over again, and that then became something where I started to feel like I could do that with scientists, and so I've been working with a lot of female scientists about their research and making work about their research, which their perspectives, at least the women that I'm working with directly, are very different than some of their male counterparts. And it was... it's, it's... there's an organic... I feel like I've been able to continue to evolve in the city, that I don't... there isn't an ideation of myself and who I should become, that I'm ever evolving, and, as I evolve, the city can accommodate me, both in terms of supplies and fabricators and things like that, but also conceptually accommodate me.

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JESSICA RATH: Like I can branch out and incorporate new materials, and there's always room for me to expand. There's an acceptance that I can go in to performance and talk about a feminist strike from the '30s, which I did for the MTA, or I could pull back and move into science, or... that I didn't have to be identified in one way, that the idea... that my identity wasn't fixed. And then I was also kind of raised here by Millie Wilson, who was my mentor, and there was also an idea that I didn't necessarily have to identify as LGBT and

the work didn't have to be particularly feminist in its content in terms of particular issues, but that that relationship could grow and that that all of... all of what both of our works were doing could talk to each other, in a way.

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JESSICA RATH: It was... once again, it wasn't fixed, and I felt like I could become an artist and have the feminist intent without a fixed identity, and the city continues to amaze me and how many different kinds of people that I meet all the time here and how welcoming it is in terms of how I evolve.

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MARSIAN DE LELLIS: I wouldn't say that my work is directly LGBTQ, but it's definitely queer. I have a lot of strong female protagonists that are often complicated. My last piece was about object sexuality, so it's not like directly LGBTQ, but it is pretty queer to be in love with the building, so there's that. I definitely work in an area that involves craft that has a feminist tradition, but also people like Mike Kelley that I'm inspired by, that lives in LA.

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MARSIAN DE LELLIS: And I guess a lot of us were schooled in Chicago, I was as well, in the '90s, and the, the education was really heavy on critical theory and feminism and dominated by... [INAUDIBLE] a field dominated by women more than men and LGBTQ people. And there is a lot of pornography going on at the time, and school's encouraging it and producing it too, so that was interesting. We had Ron Athey come out there to visit, so I knew a little bit about the LA scene.

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MARSIAN DE LELLIS: And I remember... oh, as I kid, I definitely was inspired by Rachel Rosenthal. Like I read an article in OMNI Magazine about her work and how she was an interdisciplinary performance artist and could traverse different mediums, and that really got me going on a path of performance art, and so I was lucky to have had an opportunity to work with her here while she was here. And, what else? Oh, definitely the puppet community here in LA is more dominated by women than any other puppet community in all of the other cities that I've lived in – Chicago, New York, Providence.

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MARSIAN DE LELLIS: So that's another really cool feature about LA.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: I probably started making art because I wasn't... I would go to the feminist bookstore in my town, which was called Mother Kali's, and... in Eugene, Oregon, and there were no images of lesbians that I liked. The... I didn't like the artwork. I didn't... they would be these kind of goofy... but they, they kind of look like SOUNDS LIKE: Nagle drawings, you know, those... remember those Nagle drawings that used to be in the... with the hair and the... you know? So there would be a kind of butch/femme, and the femme... the butch would be kind of a soft butch but with like hair like that, and, and so... and it, it was always very kind of cleaned up.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: It was a little too... it wasn't perverted enough for me also, and it didn't seem like the women that I was so excited about, who I was around, so I started taking photography classes so that I could represent these different ideas about what it meant to be a dyke or what it meant to be a feminist, or... and I... so portraiture really was the beginning part, and photography, because I felt like I could sh... fill in a gap. And

maybe that's the whole reason for me to make art at all anyway is because I don't see what I want to see, so I make it so I can look at it.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: And my work is not always about queer issues or always about lesbian issues, but then the works that are about queer and lesbian issues informed the works that are not directly on that topic, I would have to say. They, they, they provided discourse for the other work. So, the project that I did for COLA in 2005 is an ongoing project about the history of lesbian bars, so that's a sort of documentary, kind of vernacular architecture kind of project that spans four cities so far. So, so COLA really gave me the chance to have funding to do the research, and also for materials, but also the time to actually go around and find the sites and hire assistants to help me find and document the lo... locations.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: And another ongoing project that I've been doing since '92, when I moved here, is called Tit for Twat, which is about Madam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and sort of this origin story. So it became a whole investigation of what is nature, what is... what is natural? Because obviously nature and natural has everything to do with gender and sexuality in the way... the way it fits into enlightenment period natural history, right? So, so my two characters are very curious about what an original is and why that's important, and what's nature.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: So this kind of fuels all their curiosity, and basically I'm curious, so... and that's... was Eve's big sin was curiosity, so that becomes the desire in this narrative is, is curiosity, just wanting to know, just... and mistakenly understanding things, which I think is an important way of putting, putting a history together is to read against the grain

of history. So it's... in another, another project I might be photographing Griffith Park after a fire and as the landscape regenerates, so the... there's no Madam and Eve in that.

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KAUCYLIA BROOKE: There's no lesbian bar. There's no... presumably there's no subjectivity in that, but I can't really make an image without referencing this kind of position of who's the viewer and who's the maker and what context it is that this is coming out of, so I think it... I think it's all about understanding the context that work comes out of for me. I think that was the question, right?

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TERRY WOLVERTON: Yeah. Great. Thank you. You know, as many of you have said, there is an issue of content, making work with feminist and lesbian content, and I certainly have done that. There are processes, as like collaborative processes, that seemed to... or, for me at least, have risen out of feminism. I'm also pretty interested in the idea of "queer" as a verb. How do you go in and disrupt a situation? How do you denormalize the thinking around an issue?

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TERRY WOLVERTON: And the other thing that really comes directly from the Woman's Building is the idea that, as artists, we're not in competition with each other, that we will all gain a lot more if we are supportive of one another and share opportunities, and it's been a big mission in my work since the Woman's Building to provide opportunities to women, to LGBTQ artists and, and to artists of color and to really create a more robust environment for all of us to work in.

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TERRY WOLVERTON: And I'm going to pitch another question that may or may not be our last question, which is how do you feel your work has contributed to a public dialog, and what is the influence you hope that you have had or that you hope to have?

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PHYLLIS GREEN: This is a... I think I'm... my thoughts here are a response to the question you just made, and also to the point you were making about mentoring. I... one of the things that I think is really interesting and important about Los Angeles is the predominance of all the schools here, and when I moved here, it was apparent to me that people kind of clustered around their... the school that they had gone to and I, I know obviously there were a lot of people who came here to be involved with the Woman's Building and clustered around the Woman's Building, but I think that sort of sets up... and I've been teaching for a really long time also.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: I've been teaching at colleges and universities since 1989. I t... I mean, before that I had some teaching jobs, but from 1989 until 2015 I was teaching part time and so I have had the opportunity to mentor a lot of women and it really expands my perspective. I have a, a young woman who helps me as my studio assistant a couple of days a week. She was introduced to me by Jessica. She graduated from CalArts about three years ago and, you know, my experience as a student is so different from hers, but to some extent the same.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: This morning, I picked up off the floor a slide that I had clipped to a... an aging piece of paper of a piece I did in 1980 and she picked it up and said, "1980!" I don't even know if she was born then. But, you know, she was... she still has the same... you

know, her... she was visiting her parents. Her parents want her to come home because she finished school and she's not ready to go home, so she's struggling and I told her that I, I used to have milestones. Okay, if I'm not doing this and this by the time I'm 35, I'll consider moving. And then, well, if I'm not in this position when I'm 40, I'll consider moving. And then, well, 45, and here I am, so many years later.

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PHYLLIS GREEN: So it's... there's a sense of you... part... being part of a continuum here, I think.

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COLEEN STERRITT: I would just... I'm going to jump right in on that, your response, because I have a very similar experience. Again, I've been teaching since 1984 and I've had the great privilege to have taught at some of the big schools here. I was at the Claremont Graduate School for about 12 years. I taught at Otis and USC, and the... I'm currently the Program Head of Sculpture at Long Beach City College, and the joke is always Coleen's taught everybody in Los Angeles. So, to just kind of reiterate what Phyllis has said, I think that's the great thing about the environment here in terms of the schools is that there is this continuum.

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COLEEN STERRITT: There are people that are teaching in our department that were my students, and that kind of experience, you don't really get very often. Also, I would add that in thinking about women making sculpture and thinking about that... the show that was at Hauser & Wirth last year, the amazing inventive work that has been produced by women sculptors has really influenced, I believe, a number... a couple of generations of younger artists to be interested in materiality, object making, just that... a maker mentality, and I think that is a result of women sculptors.

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COLEEN STERRITT: And Los Angeles has become like a sculpture city in many, many ways, more so than, than other places, and I feel like I have been a, a part... a strong part of that. So that's been very re... rewarding.

00:38:12

DENISE UYEHARA: Something that you said, Terry, about queering and queering the dialog, I, I think, for me, I wasn't planning on it, but it turned out that I ended up curating a weekend at Highways Performance Space called Not About Me. It was queer artists and people of color, artists of color creating work not about themselves, and it was... mostly that was the tagline just to get people to come, but it turned out to be this interesting dialog about how... can... does our identity stop at just our own personal story? I was riding a wave of a lot of them in the... in the late 9... in the late '80s and early '90s of the, the autobiographical form, the solo form, because it was easily tourable.

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DENISE UYEHARA: It was post-1992 uprising. There was a need for that kind of work in the wo... in women's movement, but also in the... in... for people of color and for queer identified people, but the identities became very much like this is... I mean, this is my essentialized story. So what happened in that, I, I wasn't in the evening, but I wanted to ha... see what other people came up with. I just kind of put that out there as a challenge. And it was a really, really amazing work that wasn't specifically about personal story, but became... sometimes it's about someone else's story, but it just became about other things. And I think the idea of queering that dialog and, and the way that we look at the world was... became very important, and became important in my work.

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DENISE UYEHARA: And when I received the COLA for... in 2006, it seems so long ago now, was it... I had to challenge myself to, okay, so am I able to do that in my own work? So my work, it went from... instead of doing... pitching a solo piece, I said I want to do this piece about Okinawa, I'm Okinawan on my father side, and about colonization, about the US' occupation there on those islands, and, and Japan's occupation. And it... you know, it's funny because it really... in some ways, it is framed by who you are, of course, but I, I started thinking about what are the women's positions? There's high priestesses in Okinawa in, in, in this work, and what is the, the... what, what do we do with all of the destruction that the United States has caused and Japan has caused on these islands because of the Battle of Okinawa?

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DENISE UYEHARA: And so it really took me to a different level in my own work where I had to think politically differently, and I felt like am I losing who I am and my own identity? And then I realized, no, this is just part of that evolution, and I felt like there was a, a very big shift during that time of, of artists, many artists that supported that idea of like we can do work beyond our own personal story, and that was... and I love that you... and I realize, I have seen your work and I'm like, "That is awesome," and it's just like it's still... it's, it's a way of queering the work without being literal, I guess is the word, and then I think that's where we've kind, kind of come as a community, and that's been really interesting for me.

00:41:20

PHYLLIS GREEN: What I think about being a woman and being a sculptor is that you are in a position to do a lot of experimentation because you're not... you're less likely to be commer... you know, fit in commercially, and I think, for me anyway, that my feeling like, okay, I'm still... I'm still going to... I'm looking for something else. I'm looking for something else, and not being... not being responsible for putting together some kind of

gallery exhibition every year, every two years allows one to experiment and allows one to fail in a way that is, is enlightening, and it allows you to look at things in a new way all the time.

00:42:15

PHYLLIS GREEN: So, you know, most of us have had to teach. Women I know in sculpture, you've had to teach. You have to do something else because it's really hard to survive in LA now, making art. But I think it, it also is a gift in terms of doing new things and challenging yourself.

00:42:39

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: I wanted to talk about teaching a little bit, because that's one of the primary public engagements that I have, and I actually love teaching, so probably I thought more about that as a goal than, than the other things that we want for... want in our careers. So I've been happy in this matrix of people that I've met through, through my teaching career, both other colleagues, as... who have become friends, as well as students, and former students have become friends, and it's sort of amazing how you have to keep up in that profes... profession, you know? You have to keep up, and if you kind of fall behind and, and then, you know, it... you're exposed suddenly for, for not being up to date.

00:43:34

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: And so, I, I like the game of that. I enjoy that, you know, and I enjoy being open to the new ideas that, that come from students, but also that come from my colleagues who are in the field. Sometimes I find that my students, I have... I'm sort of having to pry their minds open a little to get them to open up as well to ideas that they weren't... didn't think they'd like at the start, right? So, I don't know. That is very public

and in, in the... in the guise that I was thinking about the Woman's Building, right, and the Woman's Building was like an art project, but it was also an educational project.

00:44:19

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: And it's always so amazing to me to read about the women who came from across the country to learn that they were going to learn how to put up walls, dry wall, paint, that that's what they were going to be doing, right? And the first... I think the first time... one of the very first time I showed in LA was in an exhibition at the Woman's Building called Image and Text. That was in 1987, and I was living in Tucson at the time and I was just thrilled to be showing there because I had been doing feminist radio for years and I'd always been reporting on what was going on in communities across the country as a part of the news... the news section.

00:45:07

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: So it was sort of like being my history wasn't the same as that, so it was exciting to become a part of that history, even if it was just a show in the gallery, right? And, and eventually, when the Woman's Building closed as an active art space, it's continued as a studio rental, so the first studio that I got in LA was at the Woman's Building, and just outside my studio door, there was still the text on the wall from the Chicago Woman's Building that have been painted on the wall. And so, when I would be in my studio and feeling isolated or frustrated, I would just go sort of in this little makeshift hallway and read that text over and over again, and think that it must have been put up for some installation.

00:46:00

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: Maybe you remember painting it in the wall, you know? So, the echoes of that history and that architectural history again were always chilling for me. And then a group of students at CalArts were working in the archives at CalArts, and they

discovered things from the original Woman's Feminist Art Program and they didn't even know that that had existed at CalArts, because CalArts, for some reason, doesn't wear it on its sleeve, like there's no banner on its website. It is not in its brochure material, even to this day, right? So these students organized an exhibition called The F-Word.

00:46:47

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: No, an exhibition and a conference, and as they were organizing, they were trying to figure out how to do what feminists did in the '70s, so they wanted to do consciousness raising and they wanted to meet the women who had been at the Woman's Building. You probably met them at that time, and they were making various kinds of faux pas, that they'd kind of come to me and they'd say, "Well, these women don't... weren't... they don't like us. They don't want to talk to us," and I was like, "Well, you know, there's a reason." So there... that whole process was really wonderful for me, just to sort of see it un... unfold, and we had one meeting in my studio at the Woman's Building, which was for this F-Word symposium.

00:47:39

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: I really liked what they did with that F-Word symposium. They actually broke it down into focus groups and, and it was less of the people on the [INAUDIBLE] kind of like talking to the rest of us. Then a number of years later, another group of grad students organized themselves again around the WACK! Show, and this was a much more professionalized kind of event. And, yeah, that was interesting to see how, how their career ambitions sort of got manifested in a different way within that context. So I guess that's some of the public thoughts I have about it.

00:48:21

CHERI GAULKE: What I wanted to add to this question about public dialog is that I think one of the things we innovated at the Woman's Building is this idea of including other

voices in our work and, and seeing your own art as a vehicle for gathering the voices of others. And when I did my COLA... and we were the same year, 2005, one of the artist books that I did was called Marriage Matters, and it included series portraits of gay and lesbian couples and families reflecting on marriage, and of course this is at a time when none of us thought we would ever have the right to marry, and so series portraits and then statements from these people. So I think that is typical of that era, and f... you know, I think the public dialog happens in... through our art.

00:49:10

CHERI GAULKE: It happens through ourselves as organizers. I think of in the '80s, when we organized a giant... in a parking garage in downtown LA, a giant antinuclear festival, and artists of all media came together to reflect on what was going on at that time. Or I think of, you know, I worked with teens in East LA to do the LA River Project and reflect on the river in the '80s. Even for me, which I consider a feminist artwork, is the Filipino World War II Veterans Memorial that I did, and to give voice to these Filipino World War II veterans that to me it's not about a women's issue, but it's a feminist work because it's inclusive of voices. And then just one other point I want to make about that is this idea of creating public dialog by taking artwork out into the streets and not being precious and seeing that art al... always has to be in galleries and museums, but that we have printing presses where we could print postcards and posters and we could plaster them, you know, in the streets, or we could do performance art in public settings and surprise people and create dialog between audiences.

00:50:17

CHERI GAULKE: So those are just a few things I want to contribute to that last question.

00:50:21

MARSIAN DE LELLIS: I'm definitely interested in queer as a verb, and even just being queer about your own queerness, that you don't necessarily have to make work that's about your personal identity box, that you're allowed to have opinions on the Kardashians or North Korea or the Middle East. And I'm definitely... I hope... I'm inspired by this John Waters quote that is... he, he said something about his work being for minorities who feel rejected by their own minorities, and I hope that's maybe an audience I can cultivate, too. And, oh, the piece I did for COLA last year, where I made 13... oh, 1,200 Raggedy Ann dolls that were distressed.

00:51:13

MARSIAN DE LELLIS: It became very process-oriented, and it wasn't like the plan, but it became like a community thing where all of my friends came over and helped sew and distressed and bury and run over the dolls. So I guess there's some feminist tradition in that, too. Anyone else?

00:51:42

JESSICA RATH: I was going to mention that, in line with the teaching, that... I'm now teaching sculpture at Art Center after a long haul, that I'm also enjoying the fact that the way the curriculum develops here in the city has an allowance for a lot of different types of practices. So, I teach writing, I teach research, and I teach professional practices, but I also teach sculpture, that there's an acceptance that I could cross a lot of different mediums and I could bring research into... excuse me, into sculpture performance, and that that's expected, and, and that we can do it in a number of different ways. And also, that the city... I've met women from all over and LGBT people from all over the world that I don't know that I would have found in a different city.

00:52:38

JESSICA RATH: And I... so, right when I think I know who I am or what kind of a feminist I am, then I get someone else's experience that is so vastly different based on the political climate of where they've come from or what's really important to the issues of their people from wherever they are. And most... a lot of my students are from... I would say, I think 60% at Art Center are from... are foreign nationals at this point, so I'm understanding the world in a way that is really quite phenomenal now, with people from all over the world and a lot of LGBT and feminists' perspectives that are just... that are new to me and are challenging me, and through classes that I can develop alongside them, that it's accepted that our curriculum would develop and not be fixed once again, where I feel like when I've applied to jobs elsewhere in the country there's a kind of fixing of what... how... a way that we should teach things, and that we are very organic in the way that we develop curriculum because we have so many different types of people.

00:53:42

JESSICA RATH: And that's the kind of city that it is, that we would develop the curriculum alongside the students to fit their needs, and that we would... that, in a way, that becomes a collective and that becomes a, a conversation that I think is really important to the city, too.

00:53:57

MARSIAN DE LELLIS: I just wanted to add that in the current political climate, there's been a lot of fabulous street art that's very carnivalesque, and it seems inspired by ACT UP, and I was so proud of our city that our Women's March had maybe 750,000, which is the most, I think, of all the women's marches. And meanwhile, other parts of the country think we're all getting our asses bleached and we're all stuck in our cars and being... like getting lip implants and stuff. So, I was really proud of our city for that, too.

00:54:34

TERRY WOLVERTON: I think the... one of the things that I would say about the public is that within feminism, we thought about community in a... in a different way. We thought about the idea that, that any, any individual and every individual has creativity within and that they, they have stories to tell, they have expressions to make, and encouraging that. And I'm also really interested in, in the changing relationship between what used to be artists and audience and how there was... you know, the artist was the expert and the audience was the recipient of that expertise, and, and how that's dissolving and how it's much more of a dialog among equals, among creative equals.

00:55:40

TERRY WOLVERTON: And I think Los Angeles has been... even your example of the street art is kind of an example of that. Yes, plenty of people have credentials, but you don't have to have credentials to be creative.

00:55:56

CHERI GAULKE: So let's all do a, a quick final round, and if you could reflect upon maybe some way in which COLA, your COLA grant helped you, had an impact on your life. Something that's very COLA and LA based is the question. We want to really ground this in, in, in that.

00:56:20

DENISE UYEHARA: [INAUDIBLE].

00:56:25

TERRY WOLVERTON: And short.

00:56:26

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: Oh, we're starting with me?

00:56:29

FEMALE: [INAUDIBLE] short, Kaucylia.

00:56:31

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: Short Kaucylia? Is that possible? The COLA grant was fabulous for me. I don't exhibit in Los Angeles as much as I do other places, so any... to work on a project that had to do with LA and also allowed me to explore LA while I was searching out these lesbian bar locations and interviewing people about their experience in these bars was also giving me a chance to construct my own LA history, and then it was amazing. I did this big map drawing afterwards, and I... and people were able to help me correct it, tell me, "No, no."

00:57:17

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: "That place was more like this. You know, you should change that," and it was a chalk drawing so I could erase it and change it. And in terms of thinking about being in Los Angeles and making art in Los Angeles, it... the possibilities for difference and for different kinds of practices, I find very inspiring. I think I'm often inspired by friends and colleagues who are artists here and by just how different everybody's work is from each other, I guess, and that's something that might not be possible in the same way if we were in New York, which seems to have a much more kind of stylistic idea about what, what you can practice and what will be allowable in a certain way.

00:58:07

KAUCYLIA BROOKE: So... and I am too much of an anarchist to submit to that, so I'm better on the West Coast.

00:58:18

COLEEN STERRITT: So I got my COLA in 2006 and... no, 2007, and I don't know if it... if it was a particularly, you know, special moment of, of what happened afterwards, but I think, as I look back at... I mean, I'm not... as a sculptor, I make pretty large sculptures. I don't sell a lot of my work. My support has come from grants and fellowships, and it seems that it happened at the right time. I've, I've luckily gotten a, a grant or a fellowship maybe every 9, 10 years or so.

00:59:12

COLEEN STERRITT: They've... and they've happened when I needed it. I needed that kind of pat on the back. I needed this, you know, encouragement to go forward with my practice and from my peers, essentially, and that's been great, and, and COLA really fulfilled that in the same way. It, it helped me continue with what I was doing and what I have continued to do.

00:59:41

MARSIAN DE LELLIS: I got my COLA fellowship in 2016, and that was personally a chance for me to exhibit in a space to make actual objects as opposed to my performance work that's more ephemeral and lasts for a short period of time and, and intangible. And it also helped me figure out who my community is, because it wasn't just people from the puppet community that were helping me make dolls. It was people from my Silver Lake yoga studio that I've been going to for 10 years, where everyone knows everyone's business and neighbors, and so it was also an opportunity for me to connect with my local community.

01:00:31

TERRY WOLVERTON: I got my COLA grant in 2006 to work on a book of essays about how our social problems are really spiritual problems, and I used the money to go to India and I never would have been able to make that trip without that funding.

01:00:52

CHERI GAULKE: Yeah. I got mine in 2005, and I did three artist books that were based on previously created videos, performances, installations, and I think, you know, this actually idea just popped into my head just now that I think that it was very affirming for me as a writer, you know, and I, I just... I, I, I wrote some new work as well for that, and just to kind of affirm me as a writer, and that's something that I'm doing a lot more now. I'm in a group called QueerWise that... LGBTQ people over 50 and writing and performing, and yeah, it's pretty great when I make... connect those dots.

01:01:36

JESSICA RATH: I got my COLA in 2014, and I think that, that time and knowing that the show was happening and, and also that support from your colleagues, in a way, was, was really important. It also kind of allowed me to experiment and bring several different mediums, including film and some texts, that I hadn't done before, and music and to collaborate with a composer, which now I do regularly. So, in order to sort of combine some of the science and then these different mediums and play a bit, too, which was really important that I have some more nuance in my work, and that, that came out of that work, so.

01:02:21

PHYLLIS GREEN: I got my COLA grant in 1997, which was the first year that COLA grants were given, and it... we didn't have to make a proposal. It just sort of came out of

nowhere, and I can really rem... and it was so long ago that we got the notification by mail. So I can remember getting the envelope that told me I, I had won this amount of money, and it was very... I think the city, it was new to the city and new to me, but I had sort of focused my attention for a number of years on public art and I had a number of public art projects kind of, you know, on the backburner, which is what happens to public art projects a lot at the time. And then I got the COLA grant, and it sort of reaffirmed and redirected me toward my studio practice.

01:03:12

PHYLLIS GREEN: So I used the money to make a series of, of small object like pieces, and I think it encouraged me to spend more time in the studio when I had gotten tired of being in the studio all by myself and I wanted to do public art. And I think that's been my career, and Los Angeles enables one to do that, to go sort of back and forth between different forms.

01:03:38

DENISE UYEHARA: I received the COLA in 2006 and I think what it helped me do was move away from the idea of the creator-spectator bi... bipolar model, became more about what we create together, was I created performance installation and have since then gone on to create more work like that. And also about the idea of positioning... repositioning the United States and I think my own identity as the center and making it more about that pluralistic conversation, that is the art. I mean, I'm currently working... just finished the project called Shooting Columbus with indigenous and non-indigenous artists. I really feel that... I mean, then next I'll be working with James Luna.

01:04:25

DENISE UYEHARA: And looking at identity in a very different way and creating spaces for things that we don't have names for, of, of different ways of identifying and looking at the

world, and I... and I do feel that the COLA was that, that change, that moment of change for me.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]