

NYFAI-

Interview: Elke Solomon interviewed by Flavia Rando

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F.R. Well, the first thing, Elke, is . . . I guess I would ask, what role did NYFAI I have in your development as an artist? Just in terms of where were you when you began teaching?

E.S. I just had left the Whitney Museum where I was curator of prints and drawings.

Well it wasn't just, when did NYFAI start . . . 1974, 5, later?

F.R. Later.

E.S. Well, I'd already been teaching. I mean I started teaching in 1969 at various places. I think in art classes there always generally more women than there are men. The ratio was always 98% women and 100% male teachers and 100% women students. So teaching women was not particularly an issue for me.

F.R. Well there must have been something that drew you in.

E.S. Well Nancy drew me in. Nancy, for whom I have an inordinate respect. She hadn't been with Darla yet, that's where she met Darla. Nancy and I knew each other through consciousness raising . . .

F.R. The famous group

E.S. (laughter) Yes, . the famous group. Nancy and I were the only two labor kids. I was red diaper and she wasn't but we were both labor. So that's why we were drawn to one another. And, the difference of NYFAI had to do with permission, as did the women's movement in making art. It had to do with permission. One of the best examples is that after I left the museum . . . I had always been making art, but I had always had a job, a full-time every day job, or teaching or something . . . I would watch a movie at 1:30 and then the soaps and it used to embarrass me terribly that I always had this light on but I was always engaged in the soaps. When the phone would ring, I would turn it down. But, after women's group and after NYFAI what I learned was that my studio life was just fine. I had this idea that studio life was something else. I don't know what I thought it was, but it wasn't what I was doing. Notwithstanding I was having a wonderful time because I'd always been professionally in the world, an art historian and a curator. I'd always been a curator since the time I'd left graduate school. What it gave

me was just to be in my studio calmly. And, I think that's really what I wanted from NYFAI was to be in and to talk to women after I discovered they could be in their studio any way they wanted to be. The issue was to show up. because you never know what's going to happen. So, reading in the studio is fine, looking at pictures, doing whatever, sleeping. . . whatever you need to do in that studio you do it, and you make connections.

F.R. What did you teach exactly?

E.S. I taught drawing. And what was interesting about that for me was it wasn't a standard drawing class. It was really one of my most inventive drawing classes . . . the presence of drawing in our lives, how ubiquitous drawing is from the lines in the street to the drawing on the floor. It's not all linear and it goes with painting, And you do it together if you paint. But it also has to do with performance, I was doing performances then.

F.R. Right, I saw that, I was so stunned.

E.S. I did performance for a long time. I did performance from 1976 to about 1986. And I traveled with my little performances.

F.R. Were you a word artist or. . . ?

E.S. Yes, words. They were all words because what I used to say is: I'm saying things here that I don't say in my two-dimensional work and it's always political. And they were always political but they were very funny. It was my outlet for my stupid sense of humor.

F.R. Do you have any recordings or tapes of you?

E.S. I have verbal residue. You know I have nothing left. The only thing I have is a laugh track that went with one of the performances. I had it made professionally. And it was one of the really big performances. One of the really important performances I traveled with, or part of which I traveled with was a piece called the "Tuna Fish Tales." It was a piece on anti-semitism, I worked a lot on anti-semitism. It was divided into Jewish stereotypes, and for each Jewish stereotype, there were about 10 jokes. As I got further and further west, people laughed less and less. I mean New York is very Yid oriented. So that was the best of the performances, but I did ad-hoc stuff and I did stuff with something called "Visiting Artist Collective" with Theodora Skipiteris and Jeff Way, Reeit Morton. We did it in schools, Jeff and I did a couple of pieces outside.

Anyway, that's what the drawing class became about, that drawing has to do with a kind of frontal as well as peripheral perception in the world. And it took it away from eye-hand, although there were exercises with eye-hand, but it was also a continuation of a kind of intellectual inquiry into drawing, which has always concerned me. I mean here I am back at making big drawings again. I think I taught there for two or three years. One woman did a performance. There was an exercise whereby the students had to make something go from one part of the room to the other part of the room without touching it. So for example, Harriet Rothhauser, who is now a very good friend, made a drawing machine, and it was like a little push-mobile with a wire and a little pencil attached to it in such a way so that when it was pushed . . . she had to stay on one side of the room it went to the other. . . when it was pushed, the pencil was adjusted so it went like this when it moved, kind of on a string. [Elke Solomon mimics movement of push-mobile]. And then there were people who did things that hung across the room and the pushed it. So the room became an environmental drawing.

F.R. Fabulous

E.S. That was one of the exercises. One of the other things had to do with perception. It was somatic. The end of a drawing should really be as far as you could see. Standing this way with your eyes more or less frontally so that you never lost a sense of your body . . . how far can I reach vertically and horizontally? There was a point at NYFAI in which, and I'm sure you know this, there was a power struggle between Mimi and Nancy. It turned out to be very ugly, and I think that it was deleterious to everybody, particularly Nancy. But I think it was deleterious to the school as well.

F.R. In what way?

E.S. Nancy took on the whole thing. And I think the idea of the school was so ambitious that some things were focused on over other things just because of the sheer physical and intellectual ability of people to do things. Mimi is a very . . . I mean we're all difficult rather self-engaged people, I think Mimi was very disappointed after Woman House, she was truly interested in NYFAI, she wanted to make a go of it. But I think her vision was really more based on Woman House, the Fresno program.

F.R. In what way?

E.S. I'm not clear. I'll get to it circuitously. I think Nancy's sense was in some way more far-reaching, in some ways more traditional. I think that Nancy saw the school as a kind of catch-all for women's needs and it wasn't necessarily all educational. I say this because Nancy and I certainly differ intellectually. I'm much less spiritually engaged than Nancy. So I think that that has always been a major issue for me; that I just couldn't buy some of the programs. Like some of the programs that Linda Marks is engaged in. I don't think it's useful. I think that what it does is continue to some degree this issue of victimization. And I hate that. I'm not saying this correctly or clearly.

F.R. I still don't know what you're pointing toward here.

E.S. I would like to get beyond that 10% of the brain that we use and I would want everybody that I come in contact with particularly in a pedagogical position to do that as well. Which means that there's always a situation where one has to ask "what if?" And I think that sometimes, the "what if?" didn't happen. The "what if?" was a way of somehow ameliorating the status quo.

F.R. Ya. Ya.

E.S. I want to be able to do whatever I want to be able to do. And I want particularly my young women students to do that. And that is always what I have advocated. I have taught for 36 years.

F.R. So you're teaching now?

E.S. Oh, yeah, I've been teaching at Parsons for 28 years. I've been teaching almost continuously since 1969. I mean Art History, Theory . . . but really I've been teaching Studio since the late 70s. Even when I was in the museum I was teaching, but then I was teaching really straight Art History. The students now are very different than the students were in NYFAI. The students in NYFAI are self selecting. They were all self selecting and they were after something that was very special and selective and . . . special is such a bad word, it's like information. . . . that they knew they could begin to see a political superstructure and do something about it. And I think that was true. They were very aware and wanted to become more and more aware of superstructure and how it permeated their lives beyond mentioning. Some of the students were older, some were quite young but were political. Some were using it as a segue to get into the art world. Art world schmart world, but we were all feminist in the art world. And we all kind of

knew each other. . . I mean Joan Snyder was there, Louise Fishman was there and Nancy was there. We were all connected to Feminism in the art world and we were all active else-where. So for example Harriet Rothauser, who had two children and at that point was in a terrible marriage, knew that she wanted to be with women and focus on her work because she knew that she couldn't in another environment. Then she had another child and then she finally broke up with this jerk and she has just recently come out.

F.R. Really

E.S. Yes, just recently in the last month or two.

F.R. Well good for her.

E.S. It's unbelievably beautiful. She is totally transformed. This is the happiest in the thirty years I've known. You want to weep. . . weep.

E.S. I'm focusing on Harriet because she is my very good friend. But there are other people like Susan, she was young and energetic, and she worked with Nancy for awhile and she was in and out, she was greatly talented with no discipline. Discipline I think is a real issue with women.

F.R. I mean even to get to the point where discipline is relevant is a real issue.

E.S. Yes, I think so. And I think that's why "women's work" looks like discipline. You know like knitting, or . . . these very time engaged obsessive activities because you're spending time and I mean that just as it sounds "Spending time" and it looks like you're busy and you think you're busy but really you're not thinking. But it's a way of satisfying yourself to think that you're disciplined in doing this thing. And that's not in all cases.

F.R. Well there's a difference between obsessive and an obsessive aesthetic or an obsessive quality in discipline. Or being disciplined by one is almost disciplined by . . . if one does any kind of sewing or knitting for "practical reasons", one is disciplined by that rather than having discipline.

E.S. Absolutely. So I think they were there to learn how to become disciplined. And I don't even mean necessarily in facture, I mean how you think about stuff. And most of my assignments were about thinking. But that's what it is, it's your head, your heart and your hands. Somehow some things always seem to precede other things. It's the getting it together that is really So I think people were at NYFAI to really learn discipline.

And I think that we were there to be with each other. There are women there I would never know. I mean why would I know them. I would never have known Harriet. I mean she was a Long Island housewife, albeit with degrees in Art History and Photography.

F.R. How did she find her way there do you know?

E.S. I don't know. You'll ask her.

F.R. O.k.

E.S. She's wonderful, and other women who were doing other kinds of projects. One woman became a truck driver. It was a big deal. It was amazing that she had the strength to become one of those super mac truck drivers. She went to school and we were all behind her. I think also it was another way of having a consciousness raising group. It became a very safe atmosphere, and a very permissive atmosphere, notwithstanding what a bitch I was. I don't like frou-frou. I don't believe in non-critical stuff, and I don't believe in people saying "it's beautiful". Well that means like, I don't know what. . . or that's interesting. What's interesting to you is not interesting to me. The issue of feminist language is really important. I think it's a very difficult issue. I think it's still an issue and I can't really address it but it's not bad to be rational. I'm an abstract painter. I was an abstract painter forever until just recently, and that the new work is abstraction as far as I'm concerned, because it's stuff on stuff and that's that. But all of those years of active feminism I was never included in a feminist show because abstraction was seen as male. And I have never and I have always been angry beyond words about that because it's yet another dogmatic way of thinking or not thinking about something. And not applying the "what if" to a situation. What I believe in rather than what I don't believe in . . . what I believe in is being able to come to grips with what it is that you're making and to be responsible for it and that's that. It's just to take responsibility. Not that it's beautiful, or that it's interesting or that I like pink. I mean that's when the feminist vocabulary was being established and I'm seeing it again now in my present students who are seniors. It's as if they are reinventing the wheel again. And these young women some of whom say well you've already done the work for us, we don't need to do anything, we don't need to think about it, and others who are political in a whole sense of being political and they're remarkable young women. It's a very old backlash but . . .

F.R. Oh definitely no question about it.

E.S. It's alive and well.

F.R. It is, it is.

E.S. And I mean with all this business with boobies sticking out and high heels and . . . there is this one young woman who comes to class . . . how do you say . . . decollate. . . and she bends over like . . . hello . . . it's not appropriate. What is appropriate. I mean you could say men go naked, so women should go naked. That was the old way of dealing with it.

F.R. But I think that young women are very torn, caught. They're trying desperately to be everything in order to feel valuable, and they don't realize that that is exactly what we were trying to work against.

E.S. Exactly.

F.R. You don't have to be those things.

E.S. So interesting. I mean during all of these years. I think that there is a slight swing back. I think young women are beginning to really talk about feminism again, maybe not with that vocabulary, with our vocabulary, but with another vocabulary, their own. But it is certainly feminist. Some are certainly aware. One woman got married a couple weeks ago and she makes really brilliant work. It's not a but. . . you know, that she got married.

F.R. You somehow feel that she is giving up on something?

E.S. No, no, no . . . I don't actually. There are other questions about NYFAI . . .

F.R. I find this very interesting. Let me go back to. . . you said you had been a curator at the Whitney so what led to that transition? From Whitney to NYFAI, that's quite a leap.

E.S. Not if you're a feminist.

F.R. No, I know *that's what I'd say.* (laughter).

E.S. I mean I left the Whitney because I couldn't really make my work. And the work was becoming much much more important to me. I was working, I was always working. I was mostly drawing. Marcia Tucker was a colleague, so we did Red Stockings together in the beginning. But NYFAI was already a couple of years after I left the Whitney, Nancy asked me, and I would do anything for Nancy. So, that was that. But in-between was Heresies. Heresies started in 1976, So I was on the original collective of Heresies because they were all my friends. So it was just obvious.

F.R. How did you become involved in feminist activism? Was it just the minute it was there you were there?

E.S. Yes. Well, . . . I say yes automatically, but the first time I . . . Betty Friedan, good old Betty. . . when I was still in graduate school and I was married to somebody else. . . my former husband was a philosopher and there was a woman named Nancy Donovan and she had just read Betty, I think this was 1965. She had just read Betty Friedan, and we're sitting in the back seat of a car together and she said something and I said, "Well that has nothing to do with me". And five minutes later I said, "oh my god, it does!" (laughter) It was like boing! My first response was so defensive. I really remember being terrifically defensive. And she became a police officer, so she was doing graduate work in philosophy in Ann Arbor. And she was enrolled in a police course in Ann Arbor. She was sitting to my left and I'm sitting next to her and Bob was sitting here. And she said something and I said "Nothing to do with me" [in a stark tone]. And I'm trying to think . . . it had something to do with laundry or something like that, nothing to do with me . . . cooking, nothing to do with me. I'm a liberated person, I'm doing whatever I want. Horse doo doo. You know it was 1965. And then I went to Princeton to a study collection. And it was still all men I think and it just became more and more clear to me. There were other places in-between, but in-between, I met more and more women, and more and more women started to talk more and more about issues. So by the time I got to New York, it was something. Although I think that my consciousness wasn't raised as well as it could have been by then but I was ready, really ready.

F.R. But it seems that you also had . . . many women would not have been able to put themselves forward and become a curator at the Whitney at that time.

E.S. It was also a very different time. I had a specialty, I wasn't stupid, I was in the right place at the right time.

F.R. No, it doesn't.

E.S. And what made me go there, who knows. I think I was making the rounds. I did the Jewish Museum . . . I did the rounds. And they just happened to need me. I mean my specialty was in canabula. My thesis was on Sebastian Brandt's "Ship of Fools." I was a quick learner. And then people weren't paying attention to American prints or drawings. They were and they weren't. I mean you go to the Met and Kolta Ives would pull out

something. But the print market really got very active 1969/70 and that's when I went to the Whitney. But they had no idea what they had. So I did what I had to do. But it was there that I learned that you could tell what was going on in the economy relative to auction prices particularly in the print world. So I learned a lot and the best part about it was I looked at a lot of stuff. That was the best part of the job that I got to see so much art. And I learned everything by looking. It was so thrilling, Flavia. It was thrilling. And I got to meet contemporary artists, but I got to really look at old stuff. That's great. That's great. And I had a really wonderful mentor at Michigan, a really old world French mentor in the museum. It was another moment. There weren't all these administration courses, there weren't conservation management courses, there was at almost nothing to teach. We're from the dark ages relative to the kind of market economy that schools have become. There were no museum programs. I just think that it was different and that's how I got to the Whitney.

F.R. And did you find that at the Whitney your gender was an issue?

E.S. No, not initially but you know why, because Marcia was there and we were allied. She's very tough and I learned a lot from her. She's amazing, she was an amazing woman, although it had it's really bad news moments, not-with-standing the Tampax on the steps, that was all I think part of the moment. And that demonstration moment, I think has gotten co-opted. I think that those kinds of demonstrations are co-opted so that they don't mean anything. I thought it was anti-Semitism. It was alive and well. When I was there, it was the last of the old guard museum people. It was Jack Bauer, Lloyd Goodrich, Margaret, she was the registrar, wow was she an anti-Semite. It was all there and you didn't have to scratch the surface very hard. And both Marcia and I are very Semitic.

F.R. But you were hired.

E.S. But I was hired. Well, I knew something. I mean I think that they were very good people. Jack Bauer was a very good man. They needed somebody who knew something about prints and printmaking and I did. And I had a good degree and . . .

F.R. Let me just throw in another . . .

E.S. Yeah, yeah.

F.R. You had mentioned Mimi's participation in NYFAI . . what did she . . ?

E.S. You know I still, to tell you the truth, it's a mystery to me.

F.R. I'm still very unclear on it after having conducted quite a few interviews and read quite a bit.

E.S. It's just quite a mystery to me. I think that she and Nancy argued all the time. That they put together a structure for a school, not-with-standing how they might have disagreed in arenas of participation but I just see them arguing all the time. I think Mimi had certain kinds of experiences that were very helpful to Nancy, like simple experiences, like how you get a mailing list together, and how you do fundraising, and how you write a grant, and how you do an invitation. They're all very worldly things, not to say that Nancy doesn't know how to do that, Nancy certainly is right out there doing it. But I think that Miriam had already done it. I'm not sure that Nancy had already done it except for exhibitions but this was different. Mimi did it already for an institution. Grant writing is different for an institution than it is for a personal artist. I think that's what Mimi did. What it basically is, is about development. It's development issues, and I think that's what she brought to NYFAI. And whatever you call it, I think, in the end, it is a knowledge of how one gets financial backing. And a structure for making schedules and how you offer something . . . it's all very development. It's like infrastructure stuff. I think that she provided an example of infrastructure to bounce off of. I don't think it was ultimately what was used in its totality but I think very much Mimi was engaged in infrastructure.

F.R. Did she ever actually teach there?

E.S. I think she gave seminars. She was tough as nails. She was tough love.

F.R. With just the students or with everyone?

E.S. Whatever it was, she's a piece of work. I have this sense of her . . . I have this kind of memory of her in a circle with everybody sitting on the floor but I don't remember whether that had to do with NYFAI, or whether that had to do with some other event. And I don't remember whether she taught or not. And I think actually I wasn't in the first round of teachers.

F.R. So you taught there for two years did you say?

E.S. Yeah.

F.R. And what . . . ?

E.S. I did drawing both times. What's the question?

F.R. The question was you didn't continue to teach there then?

E.S. No. (laughter) Subtle. No, I didn't continue to teach there. I was one of those people who had a zillion jobs. I think I probably just couldn't take another one. And I don't remember whether I taught once or twice a week. I think that's probably what it was. Today it's Tuesday, I'm at Columbia.

F.R. I see.

E.S. I think that was it. I mean I just used to go in and teach and leave. I didn't have much to do with anything else.

F.R. Well, that was the next question I was going to ask you.

E.S. I just went in, the way I always, pretty much what an adjunct always does. So I went in and I taught. I saw Nancy, kiss, kiss, I taught my class and I left.

F.R. So you didn't sort of hang out.

E.S. I didn't hang out.

F.R. And you didn't make art there.

E.S. Make work there? Not at all.

F.R. Yes, except in terms of your teaching.

E.S. No. I never make work where I teach.

F.R. Well, see I really wasn't sure exactly because many people who taught there also sort of used it as a studio . . .

E.S. No, no no no. I had a studio that was 8' x 16' then. So I had a place. That's a good question. There used to be events and I always went to events. You know shows, also I must say, the quality of the work there was not stellar. And I think that some people used it, back to another question, used it for therapy.

F.R. And that bothered you.

E.S. Yeah. Yeah.

F.R. Well, you know, I taught Art History, and I taught Feminist Art History a lot, and how do you really, especially with young students, I mean 17, 18, 19 year olds, how do you sort of wean them away from the therapy aspect.

E.S. You ask a different kind of question. That's all, you just ask a different question. I used to teach (these are great classes, I think I taught them for four years), I needed to

teach during the summer at Parsons, I did the summer program with teenagers. They were either graduating, or had been graduated from High School, or were going to be seniors. These kids were so wonderful and they started out with that vocabulary, with a kind of therapeutic vocabulary, some of them. And then others are very clear about what they thought art was and what questions to ask. And most of that was eye-hand. And then others are just off and running. There was one woman whom I've known since then and she's showing in galleries, she's all around. I get such pleasure from that. She is just a wonderful young woman. I guess the answer is you just ask different questions. And you present different kinds of problems. Well, it's not problem solving, problem solving is about design.

F.R. And a different exploration.

E.S. Yeah, and I mean within the context, and within the conventions of how one teaches visual arts, you ask around those questions. I worked full-time for Jewish Board of Family and Children Services in the nineties and I did events and fundraising. And everybody knew I was an artist, and I had two shows while I was there. So, it was a very supportive and wonderful atmosphere. I had to deal with these people who were the donors. And it's a really good agency. . . non-denominational, and across the board, a really good social service agency. There was a point at which the psychology department wanted an exhibition and they knew that I was connected to the art world and so I asked a favor of a gallery owner, and they said yes. Every single one of those drawings was in pencil. I had a lot of trouble with it. I had a lot of trouble showing this work in an art gallery because it was used for therapeutic reasons. Particularly since clearly the art therapist did not give these children crayons.

F.R. I know. I've never quite understood the concept of art therapy exactly. I mean I could see if someone were already an artist.

E.S. I have a lot of trouble with it. But one could say, it's just the language you attach to it and the context . . . everything is contextual and contingent, so you apply another vocabulary and its art. I can't do that so easily. But it has to do with intention . . .

F.R. And I have a question about applying another vocabulary and making it therapy. I mean that's just a bigger question to me.

E.S. That's right. I wouldn't disagree.

F.R. Did your experience at NYFAI, whether teaching or at the events that you . . . and I think you performed there as well.

E.S. That could be.

F.R. Well I saw a flyer with your name on it with a performance.

E.S. Then I did. I don't remember which one I'd do.

F.R. What contribution did NYFAI have?

E.S. I think that it was an important contribution, for all the right reasons, it provided a place, and I think that place is so important. And it provided a community. And I think that those two things are the most supportive thing from which people can develop. In a safe atmosphere, in an open atmosphere, in a supportive atmosphere, and it was all of those things. And it was a remarkable endeavor. It was just a remarkable endeavor. There was such dedication in making that thing that you have to pay attention to it. It was a real place.

F.R. Would you have liked to see it continue or develop in some way?

E.S. Yeah I would have. I would have liked it to be more sophisticated. I would have liked there to be enough money for a real place. They had a real place, but the issue of money is a really big one to keep things going. Yes, I would have liked to have seen it go on. I would have liked it to be tougher. But, I want to be clear, it's not . . . at that point I thought that the feminist visual vocabulary was thrilling to a degree. When it became stereotyped it was boring and it was cheap and it was dishonest.

F.R. But was it any more or less than any art movement or do you find it to be more distasteful in this case?

E.S. Trick question.

F.R. Well it just occurred to me because I've often thought that about various moments in other movements and you just say oh please, not again.

E.S. Yeah exactly. Well, or sometimes you go someplace and you say I've seen this already and you don't want see it again. That's probably right. That's why you can't make a Madonna today that's meaningful.

F.R. Well you can try. Some have recently.

E.S. Yeah, some have. But there's a another whole issue. They're audiences and I think to some degree the Feminist Art Institute addressed a single audience. It was an audience

of women. And it was particularly a lesbian audience. And that's fine by me. That's fine.

F.R. You're the first person who's said that actually. And in fact the word lesbian has hardly ever come up in these interviews.

E.S. Why?

F.R. I don't know. So now I'm asking you. Do you think it was a lesbian community?

E.S. No. I never walked straight woman. I mean I'm straight.

F.R. Yes, I know. But you said that so you must have meant something.

E.S. Well, I said that because I think it's true. I think that it wasn't necessarily a lesbian community but certainly it was safe for lesbians to be there. It's the same way it was safe for me to be there to try stuff out and to be with other women. My best friends, of course, are women. I don't have too many male friends. But, I think when I say community, it's a woman's community. And I think that . . .

F.R. Do you mean like a separatist. . . is that what you mean, that it was separatist?

E.S. No. I don't think it was separatist. I don't think that at all. I mean men came to events, I think. And were supportive and loving and they bought stuff.

F.R. But you think it had a single audience, that's where we started.

E.S. I think it had a major single audience. No, that's wrong. I'm saying something else. This is what I'm saying. I'm saying, what it might have produced . . . not necessarily while it was happening, but I think while it was happening . . . was for a lesbian community or for a woman's community. Because I don't see any lesbians buying my work, but I see a lot of lesbians buying work that's not dissimilar to mine. And that might have to do with . . . this particular woman is not as good a friend as another particular woman. But I think that it is a separate community. I mean you're in a separate community than I am. That's not to say that we don't overlap. And I feel easily overlapped in your community and I don't know whether you feel easily overlapped in my community. But I feel very easy with my women friends.

F.R. I think what I was picking up on was . . . were there sexual politics, lesbian, straight, at that time or . . . ?

E.S. Certainly not in my classes. And there were certainly lesbians in my class. I mean it was mixed. But there certainly weren't lesbian politics, not at all actually. I mean my memory could be really faulty.

F.R. This is something that I'm interested. And how would you say for example you worked in Heresies and there you had a women's community that was straight and gay.

E.S. I think there were really lesbian politics in Heresies. Not completely but it was there. There was a blush of it. It was early. This is an example. It was unfashionable to have children then and Nancy talks about this a lot. And I totally understand what she's saying. Women with children were left out or the issues around women with children were not addressed. I became the first person in the Heresies Collective, or people I knew, to become pregnant. And I was 36. So after that other women became pregnant and they would call me . . . we were all older, older pregnant women . . . to find out about this and that. And some women said to me, while it was going on, because I was working on an issue, it was issue 7 which is about labor . . . "You're so brave to become pregnant". . . .Because it's the product of a sexual relationship with a man.

F.R. Yeah, I remember all that very well.

E.S. And my art was "male" at that point. That's what people were saying.

F.R. Why were they saying that?

E.S. Because I made abstract art.

F.R. Right. Just as simple as that.

E.S. Just as simple as that.

F.R. Just the one to one correlation.

E.S. It was really bad. It was really bad. The last time I had an interview with somebody around this issue I cried because I was so angry. And I can't let it go. And I should by now, I mean it's thirty years later.

F.R. No, but things really . . .

E.S. They really hang on.

F.R. They hang on and they sort of haunt one.

E.S. Yeah.

F.R. Because it's heard enough but than you have that to overcome every day you go into the studio.

E.S. Yeah, exactly. But I made what I needed to make. And that was what I needed to make. And that's what I was thinking about. And that's what I still think about except it looks a little different it's the same issues for me.

F.R. Well, when it becomes only one way . . . when I teach Women's Studies and they say but don't feminists do x,y, and z, whatever fantastic idea they have in their mind that day, and I say no feminism offered a choice.

E.S. That's right. But there it was. The pregnancy example and the abstract example. But I would like to see NYFAI. Another iteration of it. But that's not to say I would want Linda Marks' curriculum. I think that that curriculum is very important.

F.R. It had its place.

E.S. That's right. And I think that Nancy's curriculum had its place. But I think that we can have both of those curriculums. I see three kinds of simultaneous curriculums.

F.R. O.k.and they are . . .?

E.S. I would like feminist art history. This is what I think about students today. Not only do they have no idea about feminist art history, forget that, they have no idea about any art history, any history . . . about Japanese art history, about Chinese art history, Korea, World art history, no idea. And therefore their visual vocabulary is undeveloped. And if you're already an older person, that is, that you're graduating from graduate school, and you don't know what Meso-American means it seems to me, you shouldn't be an artist because most artists are curious people. That's what an art education is about. It's about fulfilling your curiosity.

F.R. Yeah, I think for many young people, an art education is about getting back to that therapeutic line, saying something about themselves, that they have no other way to say.

E.S. How I feel! [said with passion]. I don't care.

F.R. (laughter)

E.S. I always say that. I say, I don't care if you have your period right now. That doesn't mean anything to me. I have this thing in front of me. What does it mean? How does it mean? What are you telling me? What is it you want to tell me? That you have your period? Well, that nice. Are you regular? It doesn't tell me if you're regular. I don't give a shit. But apropos of curriculum. I would like to have feminist art history integrated like world history etc. I would like a little relational studies, literature, politics,

etc. And I would like things not to be morally neutral. That is there are things that are good and bad. That's it . . . or actions that are good and bad. I would like a curriculum that has to do with what Nancy's engaged in which has to do with spiritual practice. And I would like Linda's curriculum which has to do with more practical practice, to be in the world. How are you in the world? And how did you experience it, and how can you make it better . . . or how can you navigate it? I haven't gotten anything from the Crystal Quilt in a long time.

F.R. No, I think it's . . .

E.S. Finito. She held on for a long time.

F.R. Yeah she did.

E.S. She has a new partner, yeah?

F.R. No, same partner.

E.S. Same partner. Oh good. I don't know, why did I think that.

F.R. They moved.

E.S. Oh, where did they move?

F.R. To Brooklyn.

E.S. They're still in Brooklyn.

F.R. They used to be in downtown, here in town, and now they're in Brooklyn. Thank you very much.

E.S. Thank you. Actually it's made me think about some things that I should think about some more. Interesting Flavia, this is an interesting project.

F.R. Yes it is.