

NYFAI

Interview: Rhonda Schaller interviewed by Dena Muller

Date: March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007

D.M. It's Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, we're at the home of Rhonda Schaller conducting an interview for the NYFAI Oral History Project. So when in did you first become involved in the New York Feminist Art Institute?

R.S. It was around 1980.

D.M. O.k., early.

R.S. It was very early.

D.M. Very early in the school's history?

R.S. Mhmm. They were still at Spring Street at 325 Spring and Audre Lorde was doing a poetry reading and I went to hear her speak about her cancer journals. And it was an amazing experience, amazing experience . . . one to be filled with women artists, writers, and poets which was very enlivening and to hear Audre Lorde who was one, and still probably is one of my greatest inspirations. And I left there having found a place that I thought I could start building community with. I had just graduated from college with an art degree the year before. I was feeling very isolated with both my art making and female community and needed something and was just delighted to come across this community of women who were interested in arts and letters as I was that I could join with in some fashion. So that's how it started.

D.M. How had you heard about it, how did you know the reading was happening?

R.S. You know, that I don't remember. It was probably an ad that I saw in the Village Voice, or Soho Weekly News, or the Women Artists News, you know whatever local paper or some such thing I'm sure, but that I don't remember.

D.M. Had you heard about the project or school before that?

R.S. No.

D.M. That was your first knowledge of it?

R.S. That was my first knowledge of it. I have always been an artist influenced by writers so that's what drew me initially and the audience is what brought me back. To go to a poetry reading and discussion and find artists that you could talk to and want to come back to, it was very cool. So that's how it started. Then I came to an open house and the open houses in those days were always in honor of a great female artist and I don't remember who the first one was . . . I remember Elaine

deKooning's very clearly, but I might have been helping out at that point. That I don't quite remember. The next thing I did was go to an open house and meet one of the most famous artists in the world. I met Alice Neel, I met Louise Bourgeois, I met Elaine deKooning, and it was totally transformative to have real live icons willing to talk to young artists. Then that started a very long relationship. I started as an audience member, I became a student, I became a teacher, I became a board member. I founded Ceres Gallery through NYFAI with Darla Bjork and Polly Lai and now run my own commercial art gallery as well as have a very successful art career of my own. So I credit the Feminist Art Institute for just about everything in terms of forming a philosophy and an agenda that I could take off from. You know in 1980 I was 22 years old, I'm 48 now. . . .so for a 22 year old artist who had graduated from college and really didn't know what she was doing, and by the time we started Ceres in '84 which was just 4 years later at 26, that was because of NYFAI, and because of Nancy, totally because of Nancy and Nancy's belief in women and women artists. It really gave me both the courage and the fortitude to be willing to be in the world as a professional and as someone who could create then opportunity for other artists which I've been doing now for years.

D.M. Amazing.

R.S. It really is. I tell ya, there were a lot of ups and downs of course, because all groups have a psychology. There's the leader, there's the scapegoat, there's the rebel . . . I'm sure you know that groups have a very interesting personality. So being a student at NYFAI who had a personality, being an instructor – I was on the faculty for a number of years – was a personality; being a board member was a personality. But the thread of it I think is at the core of feminism and I think that's what the Feminist Art Institute really created and taught and is a part of it's huge legacy is that feminism at its core is inclusive of divergent opinion and approach. As feminists we do not need to be single minded or like minded but we can be divergent and co-equal though we are opposite. I think that is huge.

D.M. You felt the school was open to different definitions of feminism in that way?

R.S. I did.

D.M. There wasn't an attempt to . . .

R.S. There was no coercion. I mean there was certainly a similarity amongst a lot of women, which happens, but there were also – as in all of human endeavor – there were groups that were “ I believe this” or “I believe that” . . . but there was no exclusion. I didn't find any punishment if you didn't

carry a certain line. Politically you didn't have to believe a certain way. Your art did not have to be defined a certain way.

D.M. . . . or look a certain way.

R.S. Or look a certain way, exactly. I found that just in the three artists that I remember meeting and talking with, Elaine deKooning, Alice Neel, Louise Bourgeois, they all talked so differently about their careers and what it was to be an artist . . . totally. And had very different lifestyles and career paths. But they all were basically, if you have a vision, stay true to it. And that was what the Feminist Art Institute –for me- at core, was about . . . Being willing to have a vision and staying with it.

D.M. So lets back up a little bit. There's a lot to unpack in that.

R.S. Sure.

D.M. You mentioned that you were just out of art school when you were first involved.

R.S. Right.

D.M. So were you sure at that time that you wanted to be a professional artist, was that clear, and you were looking for venues for that . . . or were you still questioning devoting yourself to art making?

R.S. I don't think I knew. I knew I needed to devote myself to art making because that's who I was. That wasn't a question. How I was going to do it, I didn't have a clue.

D.M. How was professional life would unfold . . .

R.S. That's right. Totally, totally up in the air. I came from a family that taught, always have a marketable skill but then do what you want. So I was fortunate that they supported my going to art school and being an artist as long as I could be a bookkeeper which I did for many years. I was a professional fundraiser for many years as a way to support my art making. Really the last, '98, that I made a living from selling my own work,; and I just opened the gallery that I'm running now this year.

D.M. What gallery is that?

R.S. It's The Rhonda Schaller Studio. It's actually in the same building as Ceres.

D.M. Nice.

R.S. Yeah it's wonderful. And we're selling art and it's wonderful. But coming out of art school I needed a community more that anything. I felt very isolated and felt very lost.

D.M. What do you think contributed to that in art school? You mentioned it both as a sense of connection about art making and also as a women's community.

R.S. Yeah, I think because I wasn't very well prepared. They didn't talk very well when I went to school, about what do you do next. I remember talking to my professors as a senior and asking what do I do next? They said I don't know. Basically continue to make your work, you'll figure it out. And that wasn't very helpful. I thought, well, do I get a loft? Is that what artists do? Do I get a gallery, is that what artists do? I didn't really know, and I didn't really have – outside of a small core of friends – an idea of what to do. So, coming to the Institute gave me both. It helped give me an environment in which to say "I'm lost", and a community of women to say "Oh, you make art?" "What do you do and how do you do it."

D.M. And the school did address those questions.

R.S. They did. Well they did because I started to take classes. I took Nancy's psychic art making class and her visual diaries class. It was the visual diaries class that was the first one and that was great because that was very psychologically oriented, very therapeutically oriented as well as artistic. So it was a bunch of women sitting around who were artists drawing and talking. So that stream of consciousness process in visual art making that she used to do was great. It helped me get clear on what I wanted to do which was make a gallery which was kind of how Ceres came about.

D.M. So you're saying through the visual diaries exercises, the clarity about also being involved in formulating a venue to show your work, that came through that class.

R.S. Yes.

D.M. That's amazing. Did you keep your diaries?

R.S. I kept only the ones from when I was pregnant. It's a process that I stayed with but the only ones I still have are from '85 that I did on my own.

D.M. Outside of class?

R.S. Yeah.

D.M. That's nice. So it's a methodology that came from that class that you carried through your life?

R.S. That's right.

D.M. And you still do them?

R.S. I still do them. But they're private. I don't show them of course. But that's true, that was certainly something I learned there. And the psychic art making class I did with Nancy outside of the Institute but came about because of the Institute, I became a psychic healer. I have a book that's

going to be published next year on psychic process and sacred sights. All that has fed my own personal artwork. I would source Nancy and the Institute for that as well.

D.M. What was your relationship with Feminism at the time that you went to that first reading? Had you been involved in Feminist activities before that?

R.S. I hadn't. I identified as a feminist I think as most – maybe that's a gross generalization- most young women (meaning under 70) did in that time.

D.M. One would hope.

R.S. One would hope, right.

D.M. There's a lot of question about that today about how identified different generations are.

R.S. Oh, I know. It's pretty bizarre in a certain way but it makes sense because labels come in and out of favor and identities change.

D.M. But you felt like your peer group was generally identified with Feminism it wasn't conflict with your peer group to identify as a Feminist.

R.S. Not at all. No, not at all. And bringing people into the Institute was easy. What they did which was really unique – it seemed to me at the time – was at each open house that they honored an artist, the students of The Institute could have an exhibition. It was an open opportunity to show. That at the time was quite unique. You could have one or two pieces hanging and have Louise Bourgeois walk around and see what you did as well as talk about what it was to be an artist. That was very unique and a lot of gals I went to art school with came into The Institute just so that they could show. And whether they stayed with it, I haven't stayed in touch with them, many of them. I'm not really sure how it impacted them but I remember thinking this was a really wonderful idea.

D.M. So you already identified as a Feminist. Were there aspects of feminist practice in the classroom or just the spirit of The Institute that were new to you, surprised you, or changed your Feminism in any way?

R.S. The permission to use untraditional materials was very much emphasized and I always took that to be a Feminist principle in art making. That I would say was probably the biggest support. When I was in art school I was geared and directed into more traditional avenues of sculpture. I did very representational work for a while in college and was talked to about the fact that none of the faces were smiling. All of my females were screaming. I was very into rage and the expression of rage as power in those days which was quite a Feminist idea. It was not encouraged in art school but it was totally encouraged at the institute. So, I would say that Feminist subject matter and materials . . .

There was more permission to explore. I felt rewarded for risk taking which I didn't find in traditional school.

D.M. So you had gone to a traditional art school, did you find that the relationship with the instructors was different? Was there Feminist practice and Feminist . . . ?

R.S. Well for one thing, most of the instructors were men in art school. There was one woman teacher I had and she was adjunct. She was probably one of the most influential I had because she was the one who said "What you're doing isn't really you. I can't wait to see who you really are." And I didn't get that from any of the instructors. I got a lot of flack for being viewed as a feminist. It was really interesting because I don't know whether I so much viewed or talked about myself as a Feminist, but because I was female and the work I was doing in art school was considered very . . . not dangerous, but it made people very uncomfortable. I did these screaming heads, I did torn female bodies, my senior thesis was penetration and violation. So that was a very feminist idea and it made . . . my instructors used to whisper if they wanted to say something nice because they were afraid their colleagues would hear them. It wasn't a very supportive atmosphere which of course was very different at the institute. It was very supportive for my work once I left art school. So the instructors were male and were very threatened by my work. They would ask if I was a model for the breasts in the drawings. Oh, it was dreadful!

D.M. Wow.

R.S. But this was in the 70s so it was at a different time.

D.M. And they put you through the traditional student critique process?

R.S. That's right. That's right. And the praise I would get was always a whisper – that I remember – they would come up and sort of whisper "I really like what you're doing, this is really brave, but don't tell anyone I told you that." And then in the front they would say "Well, you know, your presentation is sloppy or your lines are going across the page in a way that they should be more contained." It was always a very mixed message.

D.M. Interesting.

R.S. So the institute was a breath of fresh air and the permission to use anger as a subject matter was welcomed and understood. I think there is a sort of collective DNA essence of rage in modern women that needed to be expressed over the years and was part of feminist verbage and subject matter for a long time. I don't see it as much anymore because a lot of it has been exercised. But, the

idea of using emotion as a subject matter was a very feminist idea back in the 70s as well as material. And the institute in the early 80s was a prime place to explore that.

D.M. So you were actively pursuing a community of women expecting that there would be more freedom there for that expression.

R.S. That's right. And my expectations were well met.

D.M. And did I understand . . . I am trying to get back to something you said very early in your first remarks about feeling that you didn't have a community of women prior to that.

R.S. Not a large . . . I had friends but I didn't have a community. And I think the institute was en masse . . . you could walk into an open house or classroom and there were 20, 30, 50, 100 women that represented a community versus, you know, I had 2, 3, 4 women. We didn't meet as an artists group so it didn't feel like it was an artistic community, it was friends.

D.M. And you hadn't been in consciousness raising groups?

R.S. Not before that. After that.

D.M. You were young enough I thought maybe you were in school while they were . . .

R.S. While that was happening, right.

D.M. While they were in their Soho lofts.

R.S. Yeah, I came a little bit after that.

D.M. It's very interesting to hear this slight generational shift in experience.

R.S. It became a different thing. We would sit around over coffee and cigarettes – because we still smoked then or a lot of us did – and talk about art passionately but it was with one person, or two. It wasn't the consciousness raising era.

D.M. The formalized . . . using feminist process of moving around the circle and listening to everybody equally . . .

R.S. No, I found that at the institute. I didn't have that before.

D.M. And you found it valuable?

R.S. Very! Oh yeah, very, very. It was wonderful. And actually when my son turned two, that was in '92, I formed one and we have been meeting ever since. We meet up once a month.

D.M. That's nice.

R.S. It's wonderful.

D.M. And you formed it as a consciousness raising group?

R.S. Initially, yeah. It was women who just had children basically and we found each other in the playground going . . . “I need to be able to talk about art and politics as someone who has a child.

D.M. Someone whose not blinded by the cult of motherhood.

R.S. That’s right. Exactly.

D.M. I know exactly what you mean. We try to find each other on the playground.

R.S. On the playground, that’s right.

D.M. So interesting.

R.S. And as I said, we’ve been meeting ever since.

D.M. And still talking about feminism and art and . . . .

R.S. Feminism, art, politics, kids, partners, you know, the whole mix. But I would say everyone would identify as being a feminist. I recently curated a show, “Access: A Feminist Perspective.”

They were very supportive of the idea and got the word out so when 500 people come to the opening . . . it was wonderful.

D.M. Wow. Where was that show?

R.S. At my gallery.

D.M. I want to get on your mailing list. I don’t think I am yet.

R.S. Oh, sure.

D.M. I don’t know how to ask this question but in that group are you finding feminism a harder thing to talk about lately?

R.S. No.

D.M. Over the years how has the treatment . . . you know what I’m saying, because it feels with all the energy that’s focused on the issue of feminism right now with The Feminist Art Project and the Sackler Center opening last week, The WACK! show in L.A., The Agents of Change series, all of this sort of discussion about it. I’d be interested to hear what a group that’s meeting today . . .

R.S. You know, being feminist was always taken for granted. We would talk about how younger women . . . we didn’t quite understand what was going on with younger women not identifying as feminist or worse, feminism became a dirty word again and how did that happen. But in our group it just always was. The same thing when we started Ceres, I was very active with Ceres for the first 10 years and then basically went inactive but the word feminist was very active for a long time and then all of a sudden it was as if it wasn’t said anymore. But I didn’t find that in my personal life at all or even in my professional life. But when I curated the show recently, and put the word “feminist” in

the title on purpose – because, you know, it was amazing both the artists and the community that came out and said, “We’re so glad that you’re using the word ‘feminist.’ We don’t talk about feminism anymore” . . . to those who are going “I’m not coming to see this show because you’re using the word ‘feminist’ and feminism is old hat and a bunch of angry lesbians who don’t wear bras. And it was just . . .

D.M. Yay the media! They did such a good job of simplifying everything right? They’re so effective at that.

R.S. So, that was actually very interesting. But the outpouring of artists wanting to participate was huge, just huge. Again, because of the word “feminist.” It’s a fascinating loaded word but I would say in my group or in my life from my sister to my mother to my husband all would say they were feminists.

D.M. And your son?

R.S. My son, no. My son would say that he was a humanist.

D.M. Uhuh. It’s just the generational shift that we are experiencing.

R.S. That’s right. Exactly.

D.M. It’s interesting how often that’s coming up. I was just thinking about listening to the discussions on Saturday at the Brooklyn Museum - the curator’s talk on the “Global Feminisms” show – Judy Chicago and Elizabeth Sackler discussing the center, and that issue kept coming up again and again. How to define feminism for . . .

R.S. A new generation.

D.M. Re-orientation to trans-nationalism and inclusion about real conversations about race and sexuality . . . those conversations in a broader way . . . and people kept talking about humanism. It’s interesting, it seems like it’s a clearer framework to hang it on, a gendered lens that’s the gateway to humanism is what I kept hearing people say.

R.S. Yeah, and I’d say that that’s where he would stand if he would articulate it. It would be in that way.

D.M. Mmhmm. Good.

R.S. Yeah, I do too because it’s inclusive and the idea of having to have separate balls in the pot . . . it’s like a new – at least in my mind – a new shape is forming, a new energy system is forming. We were going from each little equal shape and then the melting pot and now it’s a very different movement I think, but it’s also inclusive versus exclusive trying to be included. It has a different

rhythm to it which is feminist at heart although it doesn't need to be gender identified. I purposefully like talking to men about feminism because when I was coming up, feminism needed to be gender oriented and I think the idea of the gender lens is not as important now as it was.

D.M. Right. I just have to say for the recording that while you were talking about that changing shape there's a screen saver right behind your head that's the universe and the planets orbiting. It was very interesting, an aesthetic moment there, but it can't be seen on the recording. O.k. So, back to some of the specifics of NYFAI. You mentioned that you were also involved administratively? You made a comment that it was the timing of when you started to help out.

R.S. Yes. Right.

D.M. So you worked in the office as well?

R.S. I just helped out. I didn't work in the office. But if Nancy needed help as an assistant . . .

D.M. And she did right?

R.S. And she did . . . I would help out. There was a paid administrator ( I can see her face but I can't remember her name) but I would help out and I helped financially. I lent the school money to make the move. It was easy because they needed it and I had it. It was the kind of place. They did good work and they were good people. My partner at the time, Polly and I, became very good friends with Nancy and Darla, so I started out helping where I could and then helped out financially because I could. As my work was growing and as my career was growing, I started teaching which was the biggest transition from letting me help hang a show here and there. I started to teach for Nancy at the institute. I was working in wax which was a whole encaustic movement. Actually I worked in encaustic and wax and assemblage which wasn't done that much at the time. So I was teaching that and drawing and then moved into being a board member.

D.M. What was the time frame of that?

R.S. I think that started probably around the time that we created Ceres. So from '80 to '83, I went from being a student to helping out in the office to teaching to joining the board. Also, I was getting older and more mature, more savvy . . . I was learning more skills and I could then give to the school and grow with them. Then we started Ceres which was right downstairs from the institute. That must have been '83, '84. Helping with policy and finances and direction. I was a professional fundraiser. That's how I was earning my living, so I had a lot of skills about strategy and articulating mission that I could bring to the table which was probably helpful at the time. I don't remember, I think it was, but I don't know.

D.M. How would you characterize the forming of Ceres as related to NYFAI? Were the participants in the original membership of Ceres all NYFAI students?

R.S. Well Darla was of course, NYFAI's patron. So it was Darla and myself and my partner Polly. It really came about because Polly and I were going to open up a tea room. We had just been to Burma and we thought, like NYFAI, we wanted to create a space after artists were working, they could come down and have a cup of tea. That was our idea. We had just moved NYFAI from Spring Street, we had helped Nancy and Darla do that, and we had this whole big ground floor for a loft. It was really Nancy turning to Darla, Polly and I saying "Well, why don't you make a gallery in the rest of the loft because we could use another women's gallery." And Darla said "Would you show?" And I said, "I would show." And Polly was a photographer . . . "Would you show?" So, it wouldn't have happened if Nancy hadn't come up with the idea that the community needed another gallery. Oh, o.k.

D.M. That Nancy.

R.S. Right. It was a great spark. Then Polly said "Do whatever you like . . . I'll help you but I can't really get too involved." Which was just fine because we would say "Do you want to do this?" And she'd say "Sure." That was easy. That was a nice thing. Then I basically looked through a ton of slides and I started picking artists. The students of NYFAI were invited in if they wanted to participate. A bunch came in and a bunch left. I was very philosophically oriented, the mission was everything, and so I wrote out Ceres' mission. I worked with the board of NYFAI to adopt that mission as a program of NYFAI. So none of it could have happened without NYFAI.

D.M. What was/is the mission?

R.S. The mission was to be a feminist organization devoted to contemporary women in the arts whether it's through letters, performance or exhibiting; to be a venue for risk-taking, but to be a non-profit. NYFAI was the umbrella organization so Ceres was a program of NYFAI. It was because of NYFAI's philosophy to begin with that Ceres was born. I created the mission of Ceres really because of my experiences at NYFAI. In terms of the original members, some NYFAI folks came in, a lot of them left, other NYFAI folks came in and then we opened it up to the community at large. How we did that, I don't really remember.

D.M. But they came?

R.S. But they came. And Helen was one of our original members. I don't really remember how it all shakes out at this point because Ceres went through so many revolutions of its own and evolutions of its own.

D.M. Was Ceres still at Franklin Street when the school closed . . . and stayed there as a functioning gallery?

R.S. No I think we moved to Soho by the time the school closed.

D.M. O.k. So the school stayed at Franklin Street on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

R.S. Right.

D.M. The ground floor was . . .

R.S. The ground floor . . . Darla had her office on the ground floor. Nancy had her office on the ground floor. I'm not quite sure . . .

D.M. Why Ceres moved exactly?

R.S. Well Ceres moved because Tribeca was failing and to be viable as an art organization it had to be in Soho. So that's why it moved . . . for no other reason.

D.M. And did the relationship with the institute change at that time? Did the physical move make the . . .

R.S. I don't think so because the gals involved in Ceres and the core group of Ceres were core NYFAI people so it was always a good relationship. It always worked. There was a representative of Ceres on the board of NYFAI. I think Sandra Branch was that person for awhile. There was never any conflict between the two. Ceres always did a NYFAI show for many years, a wonderful exhibition . . . NYFAI sponsored. It was open to NYFAI members, NYFAI students and they were beautiful [exhibitions]. I think it became hard for NYFAI in its closing because it was just a shame it had to.

D.M. Right.

R.S. Financially it wasn't viable anymore, I think is really what that was about.

D.M. Were you involved at the time it closed?

R.S. Yes.

D.M. You were still on the board at that time?

R.S. I think I was still on the board at that time. I had become so involved . . . Ceres became such a huge endeavor that I really left my involvement with NYFAI to run Ceres. I was always involved in some way but not like I had been . . . not full hearted because Ceres demanded too much.

D.M. What do you think was financially complicated about it, or what might have made it difficult to manage financially?

R.S. NYFAI?

D.M. Yeah.

R.S. I think students stopped coming and so there just weren't enough . . . And it's hard to run a school. It's very, very expensive. And, to have eight (I think, Nancy will know this better) people in a class just wasn't enough. It helped pay for the class but it didn't help pay for the operating expenses. And the fundraising for the school was very difficult because the backlash towards Feminism was quite clear. When NYFAI became the "Women's Center for Learning" to help mollify the word feminist in its name.

D.M. When did that happen? You might be the first person to talk about that.

R.S. Oh, really?

D.M. Yes. That's interesting. When did that happen?

R.S. Probably in its second era . . . I would say probably around 1990? But I could be way off.

D.M. So somewhere partway through a decision to . . .

R.S. Become "Women's Center for Learning"

D.M. To try to neutralize the name and accessibility to make it more open.

R.S. To make it more accessible because I think the New York Feminist Art Institute – it's sort of interesting because that's what drew me, the New York Feminist Art Institute – I said "Oh, that's brilliant." The Women's Center for Learning became the adjunct to the name I think . . . it could have been because NYFAI had been audited as an educational institution? . . . and needed to make the Women's Center for Learning because governmentally it needed to have more of an inclusive name to keep its non-profit status. I'm guessing here.

D.M. Thank you though, because that's the first articulation that we've had of that in the interviews we've been doing. That's interesting to hear even speculation about.

R.S. I'm not a big conspiracy person, but I think someone said NYFAI – when we were audited. It was a terrible time –

D.M. It was multiple years right?

R.S. Yeah. It went on 2 . . . 3 years or so and it was very expensive. Between the accountant's time – and I don't remember if we had a lawyer or not. We might have, but that might have been pro bono, I don't remember – but becoming the Women's Center for Learning was a definite way to try to

make the school more open . . . and fundable. You couldn't get funding for the "New York Feminist Art Institute" but you could perhaps get funding for the "Women's Center for Learning."

D.M. Isn't that interesting? It's an issue that doesn't go away. I think a lot of women's organizations are challenged with that question of how do we create programs that are fundable, how do we modify our structures or use semantics at least to get around the things that are hang-ups for the funders.

R.S. Right. So that's my take on it but again, it could just be personal. It makes me nervous that no one has mentioned it before.

D.M. No, we talked about the tax problems before and I knew that from long conversations with Nancy about it. I knew that that was her feeling is that it was the pressure that the institute was under by the IRS that she thought – the same thing you just said – was that it was a feminist backlash but I hadn't heard about the changing of the name of it as an adaptive strategy.

R.S. That's what I thought, I could be wrong. It's my speculation, of course. And it would make sense from a development point of view. Make it a wider focused name and therefore conservative foundations - who are conservative by nature, unless it's the Barbara Demming memorial fund – would perhaps come in with funds for it. But it just became too big and financially too problematic so Ceres, of course, took over the NYFAI mission of being an educational organization but it never really – because it's totally volunteer –

D.M. It didn't offer classes to the same extent?

R.S. No. We thought we could but that never happened. There's public programming but without anyone really spearheading it, it never really went anywhere.

D.M. And is there still a strong feeling in Ceres today of a connection to the NYFAI history? Would you say that members feel connected to that?

R.S. The early member do. There's been so many new members . . . We had a wonderful special event that Joan Arbeiter did to honor Nancy and Darla and myself and Polly and all the original Presidents of Ceres and the connection to NYFAI but I don't think it's well known how instrumental . . . Ceres wouldn't exist without NYFAI . . . plain and simple . . . both physically and philosophically, and I don't think the members are really aware of that. Most of the members are relatively new. So this history that you're doing and that Helen's legacy is making possible is wonderful because I don't think NYFAI is really remembered enough, or that the connection is understood. So no, I don't

think the members understand the connection to NYFAI. Some do . . . a lot of the inactive ones, the original ones. Ceres is now 22 years old.

D.M. Time goes on.

R.S. It does!

D.M. It's amazing, right? Well you've already said a lot about legacy and long-range impact. That is sort of the closing question . . . is to get people to think about what they feel is the impact in their personal lives or the impact on the art world or society at large.

R.S. Oh, huge.

D.M. Is there anything else that you wanted to say in closing?

R.S. Well, just that I hope that more women and men who were influenced from the Feminist Art Institute, or the whole idea of inclusion, can then pass that on in the works that they're doing currently. So whether it's remembered historically, or herstorically, or not, that the premises continue . . . and clearly what Rutgers does in its archiving and the Sackler wing happening at The Brooklyn Museum and new galleries, my own and other endeavors, A.I.R. and other museums world-wide - hopefully this idea of inclusion continues.

D.M. Right. Thank you so much.

R.S. Oh, sure.