

## Jerome Richfield, Track 4

*Tape 4a begins.*

JB: Alright, we're talking about the—my account of the Kienholz matter, [unintelligible].

JR: Yeah. When you start this saying, "Then there was the Kienholz case," I'm not sure of our context. So I don't know exactly what procedure. But, your next sentence starts, "By invitation," and there's a part of a campus arts festival, that is the whole point, there was no invitation. There—that is, there was an invitation to a gallery to submit work, but there was no selection of a piece by any member of our faculty. So, the art department made the monumental mistake of allowing an outsider, a gallery owner, who can only serve his own interest to the detriment of the university, to decide what pieces to send. Now this was not a lewd, lascivious pornographic piece at all, but if you leave it to a gallery person, in order to get publicity, he might have done that.

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JB: So you think he may well have been after publicity?

JR: Well, you know, it's irrelevant what his motivation was, it makes no difference, it's inappropriate for a person outside this campus to determine the contents of what happens on the campus.

JB: Well, we gave him a blank check.

JR: Yes.

JB: We said we—we want pieces by Kienholz.

JR: No—well, I don't even know that we said that. All I know is that the piece that was questioned was never selected by anybody on our faculty. Although it was objected to by at least one person on the art department. And that's how the issue came to the executive committee.

JB: Alright, well Sudlow's the person who was raising the—

JR: Yes.

JB: —complaints, good. Well let's—let's go ahead.

JR: Yeah. "Northridge, however, is not Pasadena. When complaints arose that the sculpture was obscene..." Now why did you make complaints plural? You don't know that it was plural. For all we know, Sudlow might have been the only one who complained about it.

JB: Alright.

JR: I'm not aware of anyone else complaining. Now, Sudlow was the division chairman at the time. And he was in a position to—to call a meeting of the art department, and so on. But, I don't know that there were multiple complaints and you may be in error when you say complaints arose. Now, "Paul Walker, Jerome Richfield and Malcom Silles wound up on a committee to make recommendations..." We didn't wind up on a committee, we were on an executive committee at the time. And it was after a senate meeting that Oviatt asked us to stay. And that's when he said that we were going to go over to the art building to look at a piece. I objected to our looking at it, that we were not—the executive committee was not an appropriate group to make any determinations of this kind, that it was up to the art department.

JB: But he asked the entire executive committee to go over and look.

JR: Yeah.

JB: Alright.

JR: Yeah. And even though I objected to looking, I did finally go because he said, Oh, come on, they're waiting for us over there to talk to us about it. Okay. When we got over there, I looked at the piece, I couldn't believe anyone thought it was obscene, but in any case, I certainly would not, and on—Paul and I talked about it extensively, he certainly would not have raised an objective like obscenity nor would he have banned it. I mean, we knew that's censorship of a kind that is very undesirable. I mean, Jesse Helms would not approve of me at all, you know. Yeah, Walker recalls that they couldn't see anything obscene about it, but the point is that when we talked with Velardi, I remember him—I don't remember whether Sudlow was there, actually, he might've been. That's when I put the question, that he should ask the art department to vote on the question. In other words, what I personally would accept, and what I was suggesting the committee accept, is that even though a gallery person picked the piece, if the art department would vote and agree that it had either aesthetic or educational significance, then I would not find it so objectionable that we had to raise an issue about it. Okay, but they wouldn't—he—Velardi presumably took that question back to the art department then reported to us later that they wouldn't act on it. That left us in a position where, what was being shown on campus was something no one on campus had determined. And I felt in principle that that was wrong. I wouldn't care whether it was a Michaelangelo sculpture, the Virgin Mary, or what it was. I just felt that that was quite inappropriate and ridiculous of the art department to give somebody else the power to make a decision. It's as if we invited some producer to pick a play, any play, and put it on on campus, that would be an idiotic thing to do, and I would object to that. Okay. I don't rem—I—I think there was another member of the executive committee and I can't remember who it was, but I know that the vote against the piece was, I think, four against, and one abstention, and only one of those votes against the piece was based on the piece itself, rather than on the fact that no member of our faculty had played a role in bringing it here. And that's what I explain to people who—who couldn't believe that Hirumi—and didn't believe that I would participate in a—in an act of

5:00

ensorship. You said, "...but though the art department faculty voted to keep the place on display..." The issue did divide them; they never voted to keep the piece on display, they didn't vote on the only question that was put to them by the executive committee. Who—where did you get the information that they voted to keep the piece on display?

JB: This comes, I believe, out of a Nordland article which I was drawing on for the information. But again, the information in that article, is not—Nordland isn't involved in it, and you were involved with it, and that's why it's important to get it from you.

JR: Well, it's possible if they did this, if they did, they did it after the executive committee acted, not before.

JB: Nah, the implication of that is that they did it before. So I—something wrong there.

JR: Yeah. That is just not true. Because if they did vote, I would've been perfectly satisfied. In fact, if they did vote, they would have been doing what I asked them to, so long as they voted on the issue, and if they voted to keep the piece, then presumably it's because they think it has a—esthetic or at least educational value, right?

*Richfield starts reading the Nordland article.*

JR: "...quoted as describing the issue is a case of propriety not obscenity. The chair of the Fine Arts division Johnny Soto recommended to the senate executive committee..." That's right. "...that the piece be pulled, the executive committee voted to eliminate it. But they did so, not because of the piece itself, that is not a majority of the people voting. Oviatt's the only one who considered the piece and based his vote on that, and no one else did.

JB: And the others who were probably numbered three by this count, vote the reason you vote. The thing of it imposes—

JR: Certainly Paul did, so at least two of us, and I don't know why I'm blanking. Silvas was playing his usual shrewd political game, he abstained. He never wanted to be in the middle of anything like that. And I never talked to him to ask him why he did that, what he meant. Maybe he was smart enough to know that, no matter, on what basis you were acting, it was gonna look as if you were censoring something you—he didn't want to be associated—well, that would have been smart. I mean, to this day, I run into jackasses like Rick Friedman? Is that his name? In business? And he says to me, Ehh, you censored a piece of art! Ehh, fuck you! I did not.

JB: You're still hearing that?

JR: Sure. I did from him, I don't know, two, three years ago. And you see, who did Seldes talk to? He didn't talk to any of us on the committee, as far as I know, so he writes an article, and at

issue here is not the good taste, or lack of it in Kienholz' work but the withdrawal by campus authorities. Of an invitation issued by the college art department, he's wrong!

JB: Insofar as an invitation is issued to the department—pardon me, is issued to the gallery, to provide us a blank—

10:00 JR: Well, but then that's ambiguous. The important point is that an invitation might have been done. I mean, we can invite, you know—Chicano Studies invites some gang leaders to come on campus, that doesn't mean they're invited to riot while they're there or to shoot anybody. So, I don't know the character of the invitation, I don't know if there's anything on paper, they might have been invited to show the art department what they'd like to have in the show. That's a possibility. But I can't believe that they just invited—come and put in whatever you want.

JB: Okay. Here is—here is, um—

JR: I wonder if—I don't even remember who the hell would be there, then, [unintelligible] I suppose.

JB: Here's what I have from *Nordland News*.

JR: I don't know who Nordland is, and I don't know what *Frontier* is, and I don't know who he talked to.

JB: *Frontier* no longer exists, he drew some of his material from *The Sundial*, clearly.

JR: Yeah, he didn't talk to any of us who dealt with the matter, unless he just dealt with Oviatt and let it go. Anyone who talked to Oviatt, and that's all, would surely have believed that the university authorities was censoring a work of art.

JB: Well here's what he says: "Two of the art department faculty were delegated the job of attaining a show for the gallery consistent with the theme of the festival, which was the arts of the mid-century. The faculty members, Ernest Velardi, and Connor Evords, set out to obtain works of the representatives of the following mid-century Persuasionists—persuasions, I'm sorry. Assemblage art, pop art material, painting, Bay Area figuration, American-type painting, and work reflecting the [unintelligible] of vanguard European painting. Ed Kienholz, Joe Goode, Dacca, Ono, Jack Cooper, Paul Warner, Richards Ruben, and Emerson Wilford, were the professional artists selected. Their galleries' representatives agreed to submit works, choices were left to the artists and gallery.

JR: Yeah.

JB: There it is.

JR: Okay. And that's—My point is, that's not appropriate.

JB: I have some rewriting to do. Because, as you were—as you were saying as we—before we went on tape, I had it just wrong.

JR: Yeah. Well, it's interesting. As I just made my last comment, you know, I brought the Ricky sculpture here. And, of course, we left it to three judges to determine which of the final pieces was to be selected to be the piece. In that sense, it was not a campus representative selecting the piece, but the three judges were experts, they were university—one was Peter Selz, curator of the art museum at Berkeley, another was—was it Tuckman? Or, Kenneth, somebody, who was the county museum art director, and I forget who the third judge was. But they were all art experts, and it was publicly announced that the piece was to be juried. That's a little different from letting gallery people who are earning their living decide what publicity they should get by having you as a campus for what they do.

JB: The description of the piece, as it now stands, is based upon two sources, one is Paul Walker's recollection of it, and the other is the L.A. Times' account—

JR: There's nothing wrong with the description, I have no comments—no, I—I didn't object to the description, it seemed to me, right.

JB: It had a Brillo pad for pubic hair, which I don't have.

JR: Consisted of a lower torso of a female mannequin with a plexiglass—a lower torso—it was from the neck down.

JB: Alright, it was. This was from the L.A. Times, it was from the neck down.

JR: It went, to the neck—from the neck to the crotch—

JB: Alright.

JR: That's why there was Brillo down at this end and no head, but in order for that to be a hole in the stomach to look at, to see the baby in there, it couldn't have just been the lower torso.

JB: It's the torso.

JR: It's a torso! Yeah. It's always connected to a crank that could be turned from without.

JB: Is there anything in there that remains that we haven't touched on that is wrong?

15:00 JR: No, but I have comments, so, I mean, you know, this is ambiguous, the invitation was not to the piece but to the gallery people to pick, and that was the point at which at least two of us explicitly acted. And we didn't wind up on a committee, it was the executive committee, you see, but that's correctly reported somewhere else. It's too bad all this came up, bunch of crap.

JB: Well, as long as it did, it's gotta be accounted for properly. You wanna do that, obviously.

JR: Yeah.

JB: Should we run on—make sure that—

JR: Gimme something wet, will ya?

JB: Yeah!

JR: That's—water, fine.

JB: Course I will. How bout, um—

*Pause in recording*

JB: Tell me if you're ready for a refill on that.

JR: Yeah.

JB: Let's take these in the order that—what did I think the order I sent them to you in. We start with Dumke, and your article, the "Statewide Academic Senate: The Sound and the Fury," in the book *The Invisible Giant*. This is a short paragraph. Apart from the question of whether I have this basically accurate, you mentioned that by a three to one margin, the faculty of the state colleges voted to back the senate in calling for his resignation. I seem to recall there were other occasions where the faculty voted to recall him, or who voted for his resignation, were there other such occasions? Or was there just this one?

JR: First of all, I don't think that the three to one number you got from me, I don't remember numbers, I don't deal with them, and I don't think I'm the source. I do know that it was Stafford who was chair just before me, and he was the one who conducted that referendum, and the referendum did have Stemp Gevis(??) step down. And it was ignored. I—I'm not confident that I recall whether there were any other such votes.

JB: I'm not confident that I do either, so let's just leave it. Incidentally, one of the things I wanted to mention about Kienholz is *Back Seat Dodge* which is on permanent exhibit, of course, at the LACMA now. One of the things that struck me as remarkable when I went into this is how many places he had exhibited, Museum of Modern Art, and The County Museum and various other good places, so he was not at all obscure.

JR: Oh my god, no. The trouble is: was he well known for sex, or for art? I mean what was it that made the people line up, that's—explicit sex, somehow is a curiosity, to hold in a museum is

more respectable, you don't have to feel dirty going to see a blue movie in a questionable theater.

JB: Seldes, the *Times* art critic, certainly has his arm out, hasn't he.

JR: I mean, I—I was never impressed with the aesthetic character of what Kienholz did. I thought it was clever, but I didn't see anything wrong with it. It was construction, and, I suppose, as a piece of construction it was pretty effective, I'm personally something of a formalist in the arts, I don't think the content makes too much difference.

JB: There's this—this piece on the choice of—the choice of James Cleary, and that's drawn on three sources. Conversations with you, with John Stanford, and with Cleary himself. Is there anything you see that's wrong with that, anything misstated?

20:00 JR: Yeah. First of all, we had to argue with Dumke for permission to go around the country. And I believe one of the ways in which we got it, cause his position was, You guys are usurping the prerogatives of the trustees. And we took the position, We wanted to do this traveling *not* to interview the candidates themselves. So, this statement, that we went around the country interviewing candidates for president, is misleading. We did see them, as a courtesy, to let them know we were there, but our objective and the basis upon which Dumke allowed us to make these visits was that we were going to talk to people about the candidate and not interview the candidate himself, we were leaving that to the trustees.

JB: So John's wrong here.

JR: Yeah.

JB: And that explains what happens in Wisconsin when you barely talked to Cleary.

JR: That's right. We talked to Cleary for twelve minutes apparently, and all that. And he was very busy, carrying out some orders he got from Harriman, and dealing with some kind of a bad show there. But we talked to representatives of the students, the faculty, and the administration, all of which gave Cleary a very high recommendation. And I think what it teaches us is that some people are marvelous number two men when they got a really good supervisor to tell them what to do, and how to do it, and Cleary was one of those. When he himself got the ultimate position, it turned out that he didn't have any of the qualities of educational leadership that a president should have. He was far more interested in his own PR, and as you can see, from the fact that he's letting part time faculty go, he's letting students stay on at the university for two and a half years or more longer than they should, he's cutting a zillion classes, he's ruining academic programs and doesn't give a goddamn, because he's got the foundation giving a half a million dollars for inter-collegiate athletics! And the fact that the faculty aren't walking up and down in the halls screaming their heads off is something I can't understand!

JB: And they aren't.

JR: They aren't! Hey, I even called Lela, and said, What's going on? Where's the noise? You're one of the people, I said to her, who is perfectly willing to make a confrontation. I think this is obnoxious a thing as I've heard about the university in my four hundred years there! "Well, we need facts and figures." No you don't, I said, Get on the senate and ask them! And I said, who are the faculty on the foundation executive committee? Well, it turns out, it's Ostroff from Math, he's no shrinking violet, and big-time, bigmouth, Schafer! I thought he was one of your big political activists in your department?

JB: Nothing happening.

JR: Well, I don't know. Not so fun! I mean, today's thursday, the senate meeting stamping on?

JB: Yep.

JR: And they're going to deal with the PC stuff. Well—maybe that's—you know, that's incredible that this PC business should've become a big agenda item for the so-called liberals. That's uh, unfit a liberal position as anything I've heard of!

JB: It's a huge red herring too. It gets us involved in all kinds of things that have nothing to do with such things that are going on. You hear about the "town hall meeting" the other day?

JR: No.

JB: Oh, talk about it over lunch.

JR: I haven't seen. I simply—I don't know whether this is a criticism, I guess it's to raise the question. "When the committee arrived, the university was content in spending three days talking with people about one particular candidate before actually meeting them and only spoke to them briefly." Right. Talking with people, or do you want to make that more specific, talking with students, faculty, and administration. That sort of explains that—why did we went.

JB: That's what you did.

JR: Yeah.

JB: Alright. We'll do it that way.

JR: Yeah.

JB: People could mean anything.

JR: Right.



JB: Could've talk to—with the janitors for three days.

JR: Right.

JB: You forwarded the names of three finalists.

JR: Yeah.

JB: Down came the trustees, did conduct the in-depth interviews.

JR: Yep. We liked Cleary, he made a good impression on us. Well, we got in the airplane, Paul Walker says to me, This guy seems too good to be true. And that was a commentary on how impressed we were, or unimpressed, with everyone else that we met.

JB: You—you've mentioned to me, when we talked before, that the way in which Cleary dealt or didn't deal with demonstrators, it was constant, was not a factor, and, your judgment on him.

25:00

JR: Not me. You're confusing me with some other fat guy.

JB: Hm?

JR: You're confusing me with some other fat guy. I didn't say that.

JB: Well, did it come up? Was it a factor?

JR: I think as far as I know, we had a rather positive feeling about the way he dealt with that particular demonstration that day. And when we talked about it very briefly, what he said sat okay.

JB: Alright, the demonstration that day when you were there?

JR: Yeah—

JB: Or, the dowel(??) mess, which had preceded—

JR: No, something while I was over there, I didn't even know what it was. But in a—in a, no committee meeting that I can remember, did anyone on the committee make this as a point positive or negative in relation to him. We didn't know that much about it.

JB: Later this—this argument developed among the left on campus that he'd called up the National Guard in Wisconsin but that was why he was brought here, that's the way that Mike Leap put it recently, three years ago when he came back for a reprise—

JR: Jesus Christ, I never heard that.

JB: Okay.

JR: I never heard it, I don't know it to be true, and we certainly never thought about it. And if in fact, he called up the National Guard, I don't think we would've touched him. Stafford, and Richfield, and Buck Halter? I mean, Hud Fleming's the only one that might've brought in the National Guard. Hud Fleming accused me of trickery on that committee, because, he said, We didn't mean it when we named Jim Livingstone, who was—had been a chair of the academic senate, who was a very impressive guy from Sacramento, and all I know is that Buck, all the staff, and I really thought the world of this guy, and we would've been divided. But he never held any big administrative positions, and the only leadership he ever had was as chair of the statewide senate, but we thought he was a good candidate, and Fleming couldn't believe that we meant it, and since he didn't believe it, it was not a short step for him to make up the idea that we put him there as a way of cutting down—knowing that he would never be taken in order to engineer our favorite candidate, or something devious that he would have done himself that we weren't—that we—

JB: \*laughs\*

JR: That's how you find out who the real assholes are, is you see what it is they accuse you of, it never crossed your mind. I've done that over and over.

JB: I wonder—I wonder—

JR: I know more about—about Shelley Harris than he knows about himself based on what he's accused me of!

JB: I wonder if any people have done it with me. What was it, Paul Newman who said, "A person who has no enemies has no character"?

JR: Yeah.

JB: This segment on the—on a university, that's simply a question of whether the facts are straight or not, as you recall them. They're pieced together, but is this essentially as you recall the case, particularly in paragraph one? Commissions were put such this wouldn't become a research university in any way, shape or form.

JR: I'm not aware of any objections to this at all, and I haven't made a mark on it.

JB: Good.

JR: As far as I know, it's probably—

JB: The statement on administrative reorganization is a mess. One reason that it's a mess is that everythin—

JR: Whoa, whoa, wait a second. We're not on the second paragraph, are we?

JB: No, no we're talking about a totally different page, now. Maybe stapled together on your list, could be, that one, here it is. Looking back on this, I wondered if you could make sense of it. For one thing, the whole thing is a footnote, actually, it's not just this circled matter but it goes way down here. And everything that is in italics is from Lydia's Master's thesis.

JR: Aw, shit.

JB: That's why I'm bringing it here.

JR: I read that thing one time and I thought, Oh my god. It no more than dips into this school, and it does nothing more than pull together things that she found in the minutes here or there, and to get a degree from the School of Education for that.

30:00

JB: Well, reviewing it and looking over it, is there anything, even in italics, that you see that's wrong or wrong-headed or which you'd correct—you're at the core of this thing. While you're looking, I'm going to change sides.

[END OF TRACK 4]