

**Transcript of a presentation given by Richard Kuhlenschmidt at CalArts for
“Living the Archive”, a class co-taught by Fiona Connor and Thomas
Lawson, February 4, 2019.**

(NOTE: the first two pages of this transcript are missing.)

Richard K: It was the first space that you would come to. We would fill the hallway all the way down with people, just for the opening. We never had the fire department come in to give us a number that we could fit in there, but it was pretty cramped.

Erin: It was the 80s, right?

Richard K: It was the 80s.

The next artist that we showed was Los Angeles artist Paul Tzanetopoulos. What he did was build this structure in the gallery. It couldn't fit into the gallery doors, so he built the structure in the gallery, and the idea was that visitors would come into the gallery, go into this kind of chamber which had mirrors all around it, and somehow they were supposed to experience a hologram. I never could get it to work for me. It was a fun show to do.

This is a really interesting artist (referring to an image). It was Jane Reynolds, who was a student of Michael Asher's at Irvine. She basically refused to let us see any of the installation work or anything that she was putting into the gallery, and we said, "Fine, that's fine," because Tom trusted her. So we let her do her thing and ...

Anyway, she went around L.A. and filled the gallery with trash that she had found all over the different places in LA, and she titled it, sometimes after the location of the street where it came from. So we experienced this and I was ready to go and do the show, but Jancar was just furious, he decided that he wanted to cancel the show. So we canceled the entire show, which brought a lot of bad blood from a lot of people.

Then we did a show of thrift shop paintings, which was years before Jim Shaw did his thrift shop painting show, which was kind of fun. We used to go around to thrift shops a lot looking for old Eames chairs that people had thrown away. And every time we would see these paintings we were going, "Wow, this is so bizarre. Who actually painted this painting?" And so we started buying these paintings, and eventually we had enough to fill the gallery.

The next show is with an LA artist David Amico. And David Amico is, to me, a very important exhibition. He was a downtown L.A. painter, and he lived in a building on Broadway. In the same building on Broadway, there was an artist space called LACE. I don't know if you guys know LACE, the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions.

At any rate, there was a show at LACE by Peter Fend, and it was a group of artists from New York. And here you see the business card: Coleen Fitzgibbon, Jenny Holzer, Peter Nadin, Richard Prince, and Robin Winters. And this show

was at LACE early in 1980, so it was right before the gallery had opened. David (Amico) along with these artists, Louise Lawler was part of the entourage. She did a piece at the Aero Theater in Santa Monica, A Movie Without the Picture. And here they are (referring to an image). David suggested that, "You know, are looking for artists, you ought to go back to New York and meet Louise and see if she would be willing to do a show."

And then if you can tell (referring to an image) there's Robin Winters, Richard Prince, Jenny Holzer, Coleen Fitzgibbon, Peter Fend, and Peter Nadin. This kind of represented the sea change for me for the gallery because what happened was, I went back, and I stayed at Louise's loft on the Hudson.

During that week that I stayed there, she introduced me to everybody. She introduced me to Richard Prince, Sherry Levine, Jim Welling, Matt Mullican, Allan McCollum, Tom Lawson, Jim Casebere. It was just an amazing experience. I'll never forget it. It kind of changed my life and the way I was looking at the gallery at the time. It just kind of happened. It wasn't planned that way.

Steph Smith: What was the context of these interactions? Were they happening in art spaces or...

Richard K: No, she (Louise) would just call up, be like, "Hey Jim, I would like you to meet Richard. He'd love to come over and make a studio visit." So basically she set up studio visits for me. A number of them at the time were showing with Metro Pictures. So there was kind of that connection there, and I made acquaintances with Helene Winer and Janelle Reiring. The artists were pretty independent at that time, and they were kind of young. So not real seasoned in the art world. Not selling a lot, let's put it that way.

Tom L: Metro Pictures had just opened.

Richard K: Yeah, they had just opened, and they were really excited to have their artist showing on the West Coast. So it was kind of a nice situation with them.

Marta Fontolan: You mentioned that when you then went to New York and met all of these people, meeting them somehow really changed the idea that you had of the gallery.

Richard K: Yeah. Well it gave me a focus. I mean, after we showed Tom's Irvine connections, it was kind of like, "Well, what are we going to show now?" And so artists would come up to us and propose shows, whether we liked them or not. But there was no real direction of what we were going to do. So, this for me made a real focus of the direction that I wanted to take the gallery. This group of artists would basically be considered The Pictures Generation of Artists, and so, that was what I was focusing on. Especially since my background is in photography. It was really appealing to me to see this work. I really didn't understand painting as well as I understood photography, so it was one of those things where it came naturally to me.

Fiona Conner: I just want to ask quickly, how did you produce your exhibition? The flyers?

Richard K: Oh, they were done on a typewriter. Basically, this to make the block of text line up at the end, so it was kind of tricky to do some of these by typing, you know, the names, and you'd be in the middle of a name so you'd have to bring it over to the other side. So, yeah all of these were done on a typewriter and then we would take them to a local print shop and have them printed on chrome coat and then we'd mail them off. You know, stick the labels and the stamps on it, take them to the Post Office.

We had had the gallery open for two years and Tom kind of decided that we had done the best job we could and that he wanted to close the gallery. His daughter was born and I think he had a lot of responsibilities with his daughter. He was still living in Orange County, so he wanted to close the gallery and he insisted that I close the gallery also. Well, I was single at the time and I didn't have anything else to do; so, I decided well you know, I'll close this gallery but then I may open up another gallery, and that's what I did.

This was our final show. And these were all of the artists that we had shown over the two years that we had the gallery open (referring to an image of a price list).

Tom L: You made no money?

Richard K: No we were working construction all the way through, yeah. It wasn't until later that ... This is actually, probably hard to read but this is the price list of that last show. You could get a Richard Prince for five hundred bucks. This Louise Lawler is really interesting, it's twenty-two hundred dollars. Louise Lawler positioned her piece in between David Amico and Richard Prince because she was friends with both of them. So, if you bought Louise's piece for \$2200 you were actually buying Richard's and David Amico's piece also; so it was kind of like an, 'and'. So it was Richard Prince 'and' David Amico.

Fiona Conner: And her piece was just an 'and', right?

Richard K: Yeah, right.

Now the last one down below, this is when I started to show CalArts Students and one of the first CalArts students I showed was Christopher Williams. He had a really, really interesting piece; and this is what the audio is for the next bit. His piece was basically a recording, he made a recording for our answering machine announcing the final show. He hired an actor to do the voice for the recording and that was his piece.

Audio Recording: *This is the Jancar Kuhlenschmidt Gallery. We will be presenting a group show June fourth, to June twenty-sixth. This will be our final exhibition; we are open Friday Saturday twelve to five. If you have a message, please leave it after the tone.*

Richard K: That was it, it was a pretty cool piece.

Okay, so what happened was we closed the gallery and there actually became a large storage space called a trunk room. When people would stay at the hotel, they would store their trunks, their traveling trunks in the basement there. That

became available so the management let me take over the space and convert it into a gallery. So that's what I did. You see now (referring to an image), here's the old gallery, up here. The kitchen, that department stayed the same but then I took over this space and these had two galleries, gallery storage and a gallery office and of course I built it.

Again, it took several months actually to build. So, in the meantime, I had just started working with Jim Isermann, who was also a CalArts student. I was really familiar with his work, and I knew of this hotel, or motel, down in Anaheim, near Disneyland called the 'Inn of Tomorrow'; and I thought his work would look perfect in that environment so I contacted the management of the 'Inn of Tomorrow' and asked if we could rent two rooms, and we wanted to do this installation and we would move their furniture out and Jim would put his in for two nights; and they said fine, as long as they were renting the room they didn't really care. It was a two night show in Anaheim and then, by the time it was finished, we brought some of the work back to what was my gallery at the time which was still under construction. This was the original postcard from the hotel or motel. So if you and I were at the motel and you wanted to send a postcard to somebody they'd give you this postcard. We imprinted the information on the card.

Kirsti Werdal: I just have a question about the motel show. Was this something people were doing at the time, or were there other alternative spaces other than you functioning in one? There was this store, a decade or so earlier in New York and things, was this unusual? I'm just curious about the culture at the time.

Richard K: I think it was unusual for LA, probably that was happening a lot in New York alternative spaces. As I remember, Richard Prince did that Spiritual America show.

Tom L: And the Offices Project had a space on lower Broadway for a while that did odd little things that were kind of, really hard to figure out what they were doing kind of things, it was really interesting.

Richard K: Yeah, there was a lot of resistance to what I was doing from the LA art scene. The LA art world especially because the collectors weren't familiar with this kind of work at all. The LA artists that I wasn't showing were kind of resentful that I was showing New York artists. "Why's he showing New York art there's so many good artists out here"?

Tom L: One of the weird things about this project, Richard and I were talking about at lunch time, is how random things spark memories that you had kind of forgotten about; and you just did that there. Because it was a very volatile moment in the art world for some reason, but there was a real hunger for information and it seemed to me that I came out here almost every year and it was from eighty-one maybe through eighty-five or something to take part in various panel discussions, and conversations on collectors items. They were always fearsome; I mean, there was always someone in the audience who just wanted to tell me and the other people from New York that we were just ignorant assholes, and we should go back to where we came from. It was shockingly violent. Because that kind of thing wasn't familiar as part of the New York experience, it was very much like what it was like here.

Richard K: Yeah, you were outsiders coming in.

Tom L: Yeah, and there were people like Howard Singerman, who would be this sort of great interlocutory who would kind of introduce the visitors and try and explain to the locals why it was important.

Richard K: I have to tell you, this one time Tom (Lawson) did a panel discussion that was like, 'LA Art versus New York Art'. Tom was on the panel and the other panelist was a guy that played in the TV show Route 66. He had moved out here and he became an artist and so it was a discussion between Tom and this guy, George Maharis, or something like that. And wow, that was crazy.

Kirsti Werdal: I guess I asked that because I'm just curious, if you're getting all this backlash, and you're not super welcomed, what drove you? Was it your community? Or was it that you were stubborn?

Richard K: I think it was the community. And to tell you the truth there were artists from New York that I always found this real community from. Then I really became hooked into CalArts because a lot of the people I was showing were working up here, teaching up here. Later on I was showing students and graduates from CalArts. So I had a community there, it just wasn't as vocal as the traditional LA art scene.

Romi Maletz: Did people come up to Anaheim to see this show?

Richard K: Yeah, it was actually fun, some collectors came; they didn't buy anything, but they came.

The next show I did was of paintings by Robin Winters. Here's Robin Winters in his studio at CalArts. (referring to an image)

Then another event that was pretty critical in my life happened, this guy, around the same time, showed up at my gallery and he was a critic and a writer and he wrote for magazines like Real Life Magazine. I don't know if you've ever heard of them.

Anyway, he had just moved out to LA because he had heard that there was a lot of interesting things going on here, so he basically became, not a partner, but he was some sort of inspiration. When I ran things by him he would tell me whether "this is good" or "this is not good". So, he became very important to the gallery going forward, and even more so later on. His name was Joe Bishop by the way.

The next three shows were Sherrie Levine, after Walker Evans. Richard Prince portraits, and this guy named Tom Lawson did a painting show.

Anyway, two years later, 1985, I still wasn't selling a lot of art, and I'd sell pieces occasionally but not enough to pay the bills. So, I had to make a decision whether I was going to keep the gallery or not. I actually got a call at that time from Metro Pictures in New York and they wanted to hire me as a director of the gallery. And so I said sure sounds good. So, I basically closed up the gallery, or got ready to close up the gallery, and went back to New York and sat around with them and talked about, you know, what the job was entailing. So many of my

friends were actually showing there, it was sort of natural for me. Anyway, after I met with them the next evening, Sherrie Levine threw a party for me at her loft. And I think you were probably there (referring to Tom Lawson) because she invited a lot of the artists that you know that I was familiar with. It was a great time. It was really welcoming to have that kind of support in New York. But then the next day I got a call from one of the owners of Metro Pictures. They started yelling at me because I had stepped over the protocol that they wanted because there were a couple artists that were very important, they really made most of their money from these artists, and they were included in the party. So, I didn't even know or think about it and they wanted to tell these artists that I was going to be the director before it was made public. So next day on the flight home I had second thoughts about going through New York and opening and working for Metro Pictures. Once I got back I reached out to this woman I knew who was always interested in backing me at the new gallery and so I call her up and said "hey, I'm ready to go".

So, 1985 I moved to a space on Melrose and Almont which is really kind of the center of the art district. At the time Daniel Weinberg was there, Asher/Faure Gallery, Rosamund Felsen, they were all in that area so it really raised the visibility of the artists and of me as a gallerist to the art community and as a whole. By that time people were getting used to the kind of art I was showing, and it wasn't as threatening anymore, so you know how a lot of other dealers try to steal artists away from me, which they did successfully in a couple cases.

But it was a really nice space, an open space where I could do a lot of shows that I wanted to do. The first show is Allan McCollum's Surrogates, which were plaster paintings and there were hundreds of them. They would line the entire gallery wall all over. You couldn't see anything except these (paintings) and of course, each one of them was plaster and each had to be hung in the right position with the right measurements. Allan is kind of an OCD guy, so he was very very determined that it had to be perfect when we hung the surrogates. So clearly it took several days to hang the show.

Matt Mullican did an installation for me and this was probably the first time that I really made significant sale because Matt Mullican's father, Lee, was an artist here in L.A. and a lot of the local collector's knew the name Mullican. So, one of the collectors Robert Rowan from Pasadena came to see the show and he bought out practically everything in the. It was amazing.

Steph Smith: How did your experience curating change from small space to this one?

Richard K: My experience curating, well I have a lot more flexibility. I mean I have the ability to do shows that I could have never done before. Just because, first of all, the gallery had kind of a low ceilings and probably wasn't much higher than this. The new gallery had these open lofts, you know, so I could do these huge installations. And I was still focused on the same art that we were showing at the time.

Steph Smith: So, you gave them flexibility too?

Richard K: Yeah, oh yeah, absolutely. I did a show of Richard Prince's portraits. Louise Lawler did a huge installation for the gallery and then some other CalArts graduates that I showed were Larry Johnson, Douglas Hubler, who was of course a teacher here. And then to come back to Joe Bishop, Joe had died recently of AID'S and so it was kind of tragic and it was the first person that I personally knew that had died of AID's. This was in the early 80s. Mid 80s.

And he impacted a lot of people and so I worked with his partner Larry Johnson and curator, Howard Singerman, to put together this exhibition and the funds from this exhibition would go to APLA (Aids Project Los Angeles). The artists were amazing, they would just ship the art out, here's a list of the artists (referring to an image). Some of the artists were local like Baldessari and Mitchel Syrop, but most of the artists were from New York, who had a close relationship with Joe. It was a 100% donation on both the artists and the gallery's side. We didn't make anything on sales from the show, all the money would go directly to APLA.

Tom L: I see a name there, I'll try saying it, Joel Wachs. He was an important local supporter, right?

Richard K: Early supporter, yeah. Joel now runs the Warhol Foundation in New York but at the time he was a city councilman here in L.A. He was actually one of the galleries first supporters. He used to come by a lot, he lived in a little tiny house, well not tiny but it was a standard bungalow in North Hollywood. And he didn't have a lot of space and he didn't have a lot of money because he was as a councilman. But he would buy a lot of little things, so his house was just filled with little pieces.

Like if Allan McCollum would sell one of those little surrogates individually, then Joel would buy it. So, it was really amazing. But he was one of the earlier people that was very supportive. Duke Comegys, that Tom was referring to, used to have soirees in his house in the Hollywood Hills. And all these artists, you know, the cool people in the art world, would come over and he would have wine and hors d'oeuvres. He would have a speaker. So that was kind of my core group of supporters there.

Marta Fontolan: How did the idea come about to do a benefit for the APLA after he had passed? Was it you, Larry..

Richard K: Well, we kind of just all got together and discussed what we could do. You know, we really wanted to give a tribute to Joe because of all he had done. So, it just came out of that conversation.

Anyway, a couple years went by. You can see in that one handout I passed out all the artists I showed during the periods that I'm not really touching on.

The scene of the art world was kind of moving and shooting down to Santa Monica and so at the time I was ready to move out into another space. I moved the gallery down to Santa Monica and one of the first shows that I did was a show about Barbara Bloom and Barbara was very particular about her exhibitions. The gallery was still under construction and we hadn't put up all the walls yet. So, Barbara wanted to do this show, but she had her own very special

floor plan for her exhibition. So instead of completing the gallery, we built the floor plan for Barbara exactly how she wanted her exhibition.

And then after her show was over, we tore it all down and rebuilt the gallery and that was this (referring to an image).

Erin Kapor: When did you realize that you were doing something important? You have all these photos from the original gallery that look like you took them, you were archiving.... Was it just a natural instinct that you knew you had to document?

Richard K: Yeah, I wish I could've documented more. This is kind of the leftovers that I have and I've searched the internet for most of these images. Most of this stuff is at the Smithsonian archives. I don't have access to that now unless I went back there. There's a lot more stuff, a lot of, you know, all the artists slides and the installation shots. I threw it all back there. I don't know how it happens, I just throw things into the box and move onto the next one.

Again the space was really huge, it was bigger than my space on Melrose, so this gave me...

It was on 17th street in Santa Monica, right around the corner from Fred Hoffman's gallery. This was Matt Mullican's Bath Stone (referring to image), this was created for a sculpture exhibition in Bath, England and we basically transported all these limestone blocks back to LA for the show. I don't know the exact dimensions but, it kind of filled the whole space. You could barely walk around it. One thing I want to mention is, do you see the green, blueish green light coming from the back room? When we built the gallery, we actually built an annex gallery in the back and we made it to the exact same dimensions as my original gallery on Wilshire and even lit it with the fluorescent lights. So, that was pretty cool.

Steph Smith: I'm curious who visited each of these three gallery spaces and also who is buying?

Richard K: Okay, well, like I mentioned, the one on Melrose was basically starting to get traditional collectors into the gallery to buy their work, so they would buy Richard Prince's work, buy Sherri's work. Jim Isermann had a following at that time, so they were kind of traditional. Jim Isermann, your everyday collector. He wasn't really getting the high end guys in yet, like, the Douglas Kramer's or the Eli Broad. That didn't happen until this gallery opened, where I was kind of again, part of the art scene. And of course, you make connections over the years, I became friends with these curators. The Barbara Bloom show, the entire installation, was bought by Peter Norton. I mean, those were the kind of collectors I was finally getting at that time on 17th Street.

Steph Smith: Who was the audience?

Richard K: think we were just sitting, that first move to Melrose, I mean, it was something about the geographical proximity, there really was an excess of galleries there.

Tom L: And so, an audience could go on Saturday afternoon...

Richard K: And that's what they would do. Yeah, whereas the space on Wilshire, you really had to want to go there, because you didn't just happen to drop by. It was a restrictive location. And there was nothing around it.

Then a show of Nayland Blake's. John Knight did a show called Federal Style. You can see the scale of the gallery, it was big enough that I could do these huge installations. It was really pretty incredible in the amount of publicity I got and the collectors that would come by.

However, a couple events happened in my life and in the general art world that made me pause and think. We were slowly in a recession; it was a really bad recession and on top of this the artwork world really crashed. The art market crashed. So, nobody was wanting work, except in little, tiny things.

I have a son. I had this new responsibility that I had to really think about; "okay, do I want to stick out the recession and the art market crash or do I want to get a real job?" I really took that opportunity to close the gallery. Although, I didn't close it completely. I still was involved in a couple other shows, exhibitions.

I was kind of interested in doing more projects that weren't dependent on having a gallery space. One of my ideas was to open a project space in Las Vegas. Las Vegas was still kind of decadent at that time. Artists were really attracted to it and I thought it would be cool to have this exhibition space there. Jack Pierson wanted to do a show there, Richard Prince actually wanted to do a show there, but one thing or another happened and I never got around to it. I did visit Las Vegas again with Jack Pierson and we went to a sign grave yard. All the casinos that closed, all of the stores and movie theaters, they tear the signs down and this place called Yesco has a huge graveyard of all of these signs lying around. I went there with Jack and we picked out letters for his next piece, hauled them back to LA and did the show at Bergamot Station in 1995. We actually had somebody restore all of the neon in the lights in order to get it working.

Andrew: At this time, Richard Prince was based in New York right...So, were you formally representing Richard Prince in the west?

Richard K: No, see at the time, I was actually on Melrose. Both Richard and Sherrie had left my gallery and moved over to Dan Weinberg, so I really was not representing either of them at the time. Richard was interested in doing a project in the space is because he thought it was a cool idea to do something in Vegas and since it was in Las Vegas it wouldn't be competing with Dan Weinberg.

Andrew Koo: Was it normal for artists at this time to have two galleries representing then from the west and the east?

Richard K: Yeah, and that was kind of the nice thing about my experience ...especially with the artists in New York that I was working with, because Helene and Jenelle, at Metro Pictures, really wanted their artists to show in LA. They were kind of hands off and they didn't even take a commission. Normally, a galleries main gallery for an artist and some other gallery in another place. The main gallery would take a commission of the sale. They didn't even do that. I was pretty free to do whatever I wanted. Which is pretty unique in that find.

Romi Maletz: You started doing this so young and in a very different way than how it ended and I'm wondering if politics, all of the art politics, really came strong into the story.

Richard K: Art politics? I don't know, the vision itself was pretty much the same at the beginning, except I was making money later on. And also at the time, artists were becoming more demanding. You had to put them up at a hotel, for an artist to stay in my extra room, that was... so, artists were being more demanding so there was that fact that I had to make money if I wanted to do shows. Shipping was more to LA and I also had to put artists up in a hotels, treat them to dinner, yeah, fancy dinners. I guess that was happening and then the fact that I was competing with a lot of other galleries and in order to keep the artists happy, I had to start doing these big shows...I really didn't have a choice. It was either fish or cut bait, I guess. I just had to follow along with what was going on and of course that brought the collectors along too.

Romi Maletz: Did it take away from your interest or enjoying yourself?

Richard K: To be honest, when I closed the gallery there was another factor that was involved. I was kind of burnt out of the whole thing, and another thing was that you have to keep showing artists. You have to keep changing the exhibitions. There were only so many artists I like, and occasionally I would show an artist I didn't like and that was really obvious because I wouldn't even try to sell the work. It was just like some time to fill the space between the next artist that I liked. I got burnt out on that aspect of it. If I had enough artists to show once every three years or for a month, I would've been happy but I wasn't. And then I'd throw together group shows because I didn't have anything for the next show.

Steph Smith: At what point did the gallery become self sustained?

Richard K: In 1985, right around the time of Matt Mullican's show with Robert Rowan who bought all the work, that's when I started selling, and then the subsequent shows, Richard Prince was finally getting recognition, Sherrie Levine was getting recognition, Douglas Heubler was certainly being recognized, and there were a number of collectors that were coming out and supporting me in that way. So that actually gave me the revenue and the impetus to move on to my next space in Santa Monica.

Fiona Conner: You think that LA was a city that kept in people's imagination, in the 80s?

Richard K: They saw Bladerunner and thought that's what LA was all about. You know the original, with Harrison Ford. I remember Richard Prince just driving on the freeways thinking this is like Bladerunner, he was so infatuated with the fact- He actually moved out here for a while and had a little bungalow in Mar Vista, I think and that's when he became really obsessed with Dodge Challengers and Chargers, that's when he started the whole Jon Dog persona where he and Colin DeLand, he was a great art dealer in New York did this collaboration where Richard took the hoods of these cars, and they would cast them out of something, I don't know what it was, some sort of resin or plastic and the artist was Jon Dog and so Jon Dog would have all these shows in Hollywood. Yeah people really- such as New Yorkers, really had this fantasy about LA.

Erin Kapor: What are you doing now, playing golf?

Richard K: No. I work in my wife's business, she's a realtor. So I do all of her back end database stuff, marketing. Then I'm also president of a board of directors for a non-profit in Santa Monica which is a thrift shop. And it's really fun because I'm back in the thrift shop looking at the paintings on the wall. And we raise money and it's totally volunteer run and we raise money and give it all to local organizations like Venice Family Clinic and others. Support organizations, Spy, which is safe place for youth. So that's really taking a lot of my time. My kids are grown. They're about... I think my daughter's probably around your age, she's 23. She's living in Chicago, my son is 27. So, my wife and I kind of have this different kind of life now. We've actually started going back to galleries a lot, which has been really fun.

Tom L: I was going to say, I've seen you around-

Richard K: Yeah, yeah we're members of The Hammer, you know. And so we actually enjoy going out again. And so, it's fun to get back into the art world again. Although, not from a dealer perspective. I'd actually be interested in collecting some art, you know? But I think most of it's gone by the time I want to get to it.

Luke Harden: Did you manage to collect any of the work that you were working with during your time?

Richard K: Most of the art that I collected was in payment for things. In other words, artists would come out here with a roll of photographs and want some frames. Well okay, well I'll take that picture and I'll pay for the frame. So, you know, that's what a lot of the art I ended up with, still have some of it. Sold a little bit to pay for tuition down the road, but yeah.

Fiona Conner: If you could think about three words that sum up the mentality of the 80's, could you? You can think about it.

Richard: I mean, I just remember it was very, kind of free. People were just, you know.... I suppose we were all privileged, upper-middle class people but people had no.....we weren't involved with politics at all, it was just very free, we're just becoming seen, friends and hanging out and art, yeah. It was very, very different from what I think it is today.

Kersti Werdal: I wanted to get a sense of a certain subject, so if you don't feel like saying anything, it's fine but- other than your close friend who passed away from AIDS, how did that crisis impact you as a gallerist with your friends, who I'm sure, many people were passing away suddenly. How did that impact your process as a curator or involvement in the arts?

Richard K: Well, I don't know specifically if it impacted me as far as the gallery goes, it was more personal than anything else. I still maintained friendships with his (Joes) friends at the time, like Larry Johnson and Nayland Blake, so I'm not sure.

Marta Fontolan: Wouldn't that also have some kind of more political impact-

Richard K: Yeah, it did but that was kind of like, we were all on the same team. There was nobody that I knew that wasn't supportive of curing AIDS, or helping that community. Everybody I knew at the time was very supportive of the whole movement. I guess we were kind of isolated from a lot of what was going on in the world, so I guess isolated and free- and I'll think of a third word, eventually....

Marta Fontolan: Was the isolation more specific to LA compared to New York, for example? Because in New York, it became something very political in the 80's, against the government, against the silence, not taking action to all this.

Richard K: I didn't really see it that evident in New York, I mean I remember there was a group of artists called the Guerrilla Girls, I don't know if they're still around or not but it was kind of like a feminist group and they would go around and put up posters of all the galleries. I wish I had the slide of it here but it had all the galleries and how many men they showed and how many women they showed. That was, I guess that was going on. There was a very strong movement there. Similarly, people were pointing out only three LA artists where this other gallery's showing all LA artists. I did pretty well in that kind of limit. I chose only three out of ten, so... but that was at that time.

Tom L: When I think of the AIDS activists in the 80's... there was... there were these collectors of the art that came together and it partly had to do with the density of the population but there were just many more people in the arts and many more people dying. So there was greater sadness and greater anger, perhaps. This (LA) was a fairly small art world and relationships.

Marta Fontolan: When did the Smithsonian or Hunter approach you about collecting the archival oral history, how did that come about?

Richard K: I actually gave half of my collection to the Smithsonian years before and I was basically fed up with the art world, I wanted to get out of it. I actually entered into the computer industry, right after I left that so I wanted to just shed everything of the art world from my past and so I gave it to the Smithsonian at that time. And then over the course of the years, I discovered more and more boxes of things, like I'm doing now. I still have boxes of things and so- I don't know, Hunter just- I ran into Hunter at an opening and she said, hey you know I'm working for the Smithsonian now, I'd like to take your work into the archives and so, that was it.

Romi Maletz: What's down in the basement now?

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Richard K: I'd love to find out. They really refurbished the building. I don't know.

Fiona Conner: I think they're using it to store suitcases.

Richard K: That's what they did originally.

Fiona Conner: It's come full circle.