

C a r o l H a l i d a y - M c Q u e e n

Today is March the twentieth, 1998. And this is the interview with Carol Haliday-McQueen, Professor of Fine Arts at Columbia College.

OK, if we could start off by—if you could tell us when you came to Columbia and what the circumstances were that brought you here.

Well, I think I started in 1975. But sometimes I think, “Wait a minute, was it ‘76?” But I think it was ‘75. And I had recently finished graduate school and was looking for a place to teach fine arts.

And what brought you to Columbia?

Well, I was looking at smaller schools that wouldn’t have so much bureaucracy and administrative overstructure, perhaps.

And had you heard of Columbia, did you know, did it have a reputation?

Well, this was before Columbia had a big reputation, but I knew of it. I think it was usually known as a school that was a radio, TV, communication, arts type of place. And in the beginning I probably didn’t even know it was fully a college. But I was checking into different colleges in the Chicago area and it looked very interesting to me.

Could you maybe tell us a little bit about your background and what it was that made you want, you know, a smaller school, or what you were hoping to bring to wherever you ended up?

I had gone to large universities myself. I attended the University of Michigan for my undergraduate

years, in Ann Arbor, and that’s a very large school. Although the Art department at that time was very small, actually, very small and very focused. I mean, either we wanted to do this night and day or we weren’t there. And then I went to the University of Maryland for some graduate work, in College Park, Maryland. And then I did my final graduate work at the University of Illinois, Urbana where, yeah, even though the graduate program was very small, it was a very large university. I really found the politics to be very unnecessary. And I’m much more interested in what the student has to work with and how much they can learn, what they can learn to do, you know, and grow with much more energy towards progress and growth for the student than towards lots of little stuff that’s going on that I don’t think is as relevant to teaching. It’s just not a very hands-on experience, and Columbia’s always been a very hands-on place, and I enjoyed the teaching that I had done. I had taught junior high for one year, and started an art program for that junior high, taught high school for one year and—a small, rural high school where I learned a whole new way of life. I come from the northern suburbs of Chicago and went to a very large high school myself. And I decided that, you know, business didn’t have to be only above that. And I wanted to be at Chicago because at that point that was where we were living. And I was probably more interested in being in New York, but I had already been in New York... so Chicago is a great city. I think it’s a wonderful city and I was interested in being here in an urban way, you

know, at an urban school. I really did not want to deal with a school where the students are all the same.

What did you find when you first came to Columbia? How would you describe, you know, the atmosphere and maybe some of the people that stand out?

I was actually here, my first semester that I was here, in the building over on Ohio Street. And it’s hard to have had a lot of impressions in that because it was a small, small space. And we came over here—it might even just have been the second semester I was here. So most of my memories are really from the 600 Michigan Building. And then approximately eight or ten years ago we came over to this Wabash Building.

And who are some of the people that you first met or you interviewed with? Who hired you?

This was before Mulvany was here. It was Ernie Wentworth. And it was really more of a kind of crafts



approach. You know, I mean, there was the fine arts but there was also kind of a crafts approach. And Ernie was a very back to the earth type of guy, and he lived on a farm and he was just very natural. And there were no pretensions at all. Nothing was stuck-up about the whole place in any way, shape, or form, and I really liked that. I have gone to “more exclusive” schools or been in more exclusive programs or departments or whatever, and I was really interested in dealing with different types of people.

And that changed with the change in the... was that difficult, or how did that work for you?

No, because gradually our Art Department grew and I was part of the growth of it in helping it to grow. I mean, I feel I was very much part of forming it, really. And so that was very interesting. And it was wonderful to have classes be a little more directed and a little more focused and to concentrate on, you know, teaching certain things at a time, not trying to teach everything at once.

Could you describe some of those things, when you said you were a part of that growth and shaping it...

Well, Columbia was very small. I mean, when they moved to the 600 Building I don't even know if we—maybe we had five hundred students. And so the building was huge in the beginning and it was lots of space. And it, it felt more pioneering, I think. It was very, it was very interesting. Every class of students I have ever taught at Columbia is completely different than another class. And I just find this absolutely fascinating. And the dynamics of the class and the different types of people, the backgrounds are often very different.

And once I realized I could teach people that weren't all from “more elite” backgrounds, I just found it so much more interesting.

What types of courses...

Well, I've always taught drawing, painting. And I taught a lot of two-dimensional design, and then I went off into color and composition and gradually gave up the 2-D design because of the color and composition emphasis, which is so important to me... and so that's something I feel like teaching, that extra passion.

And you said that each class of students is different.

Always.

But are you able to make any—have the students changed, are there any kind of descriptions you can get, you know, from '75 to the late 1990s?

Well, generally speaking I think the students are probably better prepared. But I had some wonderful students in the late '70s and early '80s. And I feel that, ever since 1985, that even though somebody will say, “This is the best prepared group of students we've ever had,” I've found more of a fear among students, and that they all have to spend way too much time at their jobs and it's really cutting into their creativity. I mean, I just have to say that I do not think that the majority of students, especially transfer students that come here from the junior colleges, are equipped and how they ought to be, you know, what they ought to know to take the classes that they want to take.

And you use the word fear, economic?

Economic and feeling the world is huge, there isn't room for all of

them. They can pass those cuts and those laws starting in '80... they took effect, you know, earlier than that but you didn't really—they didn't really see the effect from it until '85 on. So I would say that, when I was out of state in 1985 and then I was back in 1986, and I really feel that it's been a big change ever since then. I still have students that want to learn everything, they work as hard as they can but they just don't always come in knowing what they need to know or realizing how hard they need to work now. And not enough time is usually spent outside of class on the work.

And you mentioned their jobs.

They're in our class, you know, in our classes for maybe four hours a week. When I was an undergraduate I was in the same class for twelve hours a week and still did work outside of class. So, I mean, I realize my program was incredibly intense but, you know, I feel that it's very difficult for them to learn as much as they need to learn. A lot of them are not very much self-learners. Although I do find that I do have students that really stretch themselves and really want to stretch themselves—they just work. And the students come here thinking they just need a college degree and they don't care what they do. I don't think that it works to major in anything in particular here because I don't think they can work that hard to be in that communication field, to know what they need to know.

And do you feel that, again, you were saying too that the outside demands of students...

Terrible, they're terrible. The work problem is really a serious issue. Students are trying to work forty hours a week and go to class full-time. And they, their life isn't long

enough for this. They can't sleep, they get sick, they're sick too much, they miss class, they fall behind in everything. It's a problem; it's a real problem.

How would you describe, in your own words, the mission of Columbia College? And maybe you can think back to, if it's changed, what it was when you came, has that changed or not, you know?

Well, you know, students have not always come here fabulously prepared if they're very young, but Columbia always did have a lot of returning students. And when I was first here, I remember the proportion of returning students was fairly great.

Do you mean adult students or...

Um-hmm, or students in their mid-twenties on up or, you know, over twenty-two.

Not directly from...

Right, not directly from high school. And those students were always willing to work extra and to take up however much time they need because they realize that there's things that matter. It matters to really be able to work at something to learn as much as you can about it. And so that whole attitude has actually been very wonderful here at Columbia because of returning students. And I still love getting these returning students in classes. I've had mothers whose daughters were my students and they said they had such a good time that the mother wanted to come and go to school and get the degree, and is so happy she can. You know, it's just wonderful. And of course they're fantastic students; the daughters were too. But, you know, it's just wonderful, it's a lot of fun. And I

just feel that it reaches out to a cross-range, you know, a broader cross-range of people than a lot of colleges do. But I do feel that there are a lot of them, younger ones, and sometimes some that are a little older, are very ill-prepared to be here. And I look through their portfolio. I don't know how they're going to survive in our class with their background without retaking some of these classes.

So the mission—from your point of view—is that reaching out to that specific population of returning students or students that...

Oh, I think Columbia's always had those people.

And that continues?

Oh yeah, in an important way.

And would you say the mission, anything else you would say the mission is?

Well, I think the open admissions policy has always been fascinating to me because, again, being surrounded by so many different types. But I do feel that now, that the open admissions policy, I mean, it has problems, there's no doubt about it, it has a lot of problems. And the fact that some students are not prepared to be in college and they really don't read and write, they should not be here. They don't know how to think sometimes, because they don't know how to read and write, and they didn't learn to think along with their reading and their writing, OK? It doesn't mean that they couldn't do it, it just means that they haven't yet reached that point. And some of these students that come from very fragmented backgrounds that are still gangbusters when they come to Columbia, they are a big problem in the classroom. And I don't think they deserve to be here yet. So, you know, while I really love

open admissions, there's problems with it now and I feel that the open admissions has to be very selective, who they are allowing in.

I mean, this school cannot just grow and be twelve million students. I thought it was excellent when it was around sixty-five hundred. And I think that was the size it operated at absolutely superbly. And I think it's very overcrowded now. I know we don't have enough space, I know we cannot provide; I have too many students in my class for some of the desks, OK? I have twenty students in a painting class, that's insane. I mean, I have always taught big classes here because I would often let extra students in, but now I'm not even letting extra students in and I have twenty in a class, twenty in a Color and Composition class, and there aren't enough desks. And I think that, you know, this is an issue. And the rooms, the drawing rooms are not big enough to teach eighteen students drawing with the drawing boards because there isn't room where they can all see the set-up. We don't have, we just do not have enough space. And I know the College favors certain areas more than others. And I can understand this because they need a lot of technology to keep up, but at the same time we've needed another very large room for drawing for ten years and we haven't had it, and we don't have it, we're no closer any one year to having it than we were the day before. So I feel that this is a negative problem for Columbia and we've got to influence the assessment and what is seen in this College as to not be adequate. The printmaking facility is not adequate the way it is set up, other classes are being taught in that room. I mean, there's a problem

with our facilities when you need the space. It's not just classes where you come in and read a book and listen to people talk. You need actual physical space to accomplish the work that you're doing. It's not a luxury; it's part of what the visual world is about. It's a struggle—students have to carry lots of work when they come here when they're in art, lots of supplies, they can hardly get here with it. And then when they get here to not have enough room to be able to work in, and to be able to work the correct scale of their work, they shouldn't be working tiny, tiny in drawing class, they need to, they learn so much more quickly by working larger. It's the numb factor.

You've touched on a couple things: open admissions, where, Bert Gall said, "Open admissions, at one time, meant for people that didn't have access to have access," and it's become open admissions meaning everyone and anyone - which, I think, you act like that's an issue, and size. Why do you think Columbia—this is a problem that is repeated frequently—why are they unable to address this or who should address, I mean, what are your thoughts on this?

Columbia is a business. It may have a fabulous mission statement and Mike Alexandroff had fabulous ideals for this place, but this place is a business.

Meaning that it's not necessarily gonna check its growth?

Well, I haven't seen it do it yet and I think it's turning into a real problem. We run eighteen sections of Beginning Drawing and twenty sections of Fundamental 2-D Design every Fall. And yet we only have three Beginning Painting

classes and one Painting II. The students have complained to me for over ten years about this. And I get huge numbers, huge numbers that have come to me and we don't have a second Painting II section because we don't really, probably, have room for it. Because there's probably Figure Drawing class being taught at the time that that class could be going, in the same room. And Figure Drawing and Painting should not be in the same room in a facility that's, you know, up to date in 1998. It just doesn't work. Paint gets all over the drawings and you need a different kind of model stand and you need different lighting for the model; it's a very different situation.

So we've got open admissions and what that means, size or this unchecked growth, and competition for resources, or competing...

Within the College competing because there's so many good programs and so many important programs. And technology has to keep up and be the latest, then the money goes to them and to facilities for commercial programs that they can see exact results about. Fine Arts is much more ephemeral and the direct results are not always understood by everybody. There are direct results that come, students learning certain things and working certain ways based on where they started out. They will always grow and you can encourage them to grow as much as possible, which I do, but if you have too many students in a class and you can't talk to them all individually enough about their work, you know, they suffer a bit—and maybe a lot sometimes. And I think there are classes taught here where some students get all the attention and others don't, because I get complaints from students where

some teachers are never paying attention. And some of that has to do with class size and some of that has to do with other factors, of course. But, it's difficult.

Does your department have, I mean, could that also be a function of dividing the part-timers and, I mean, is that an issue with full-time and part-time and then student/teacher ratio?

I don't know. I don't necessarily think so because I've had this problem with classes I've felt being too large ever since we've been in this space. Maybe not right away, not the first year.

So people are getting left behind?

Our painting facilities, our drawing facilities were out of date when we moved here. We did not have enough room, all right? We were so happy to be here and have more room than we ever had and to help design a space where we had a fabulous painting room, finally, and an open studio where students could work all day on their own—which we never had. For that we had to sacrifice the drawing rooms and they're way too small, we just do not have enough space.

If you could be king or queen for a day or a week what would you address first? Do you have any recommendations you would make to change things for the better?

I would have sensitivity training for all the faculty concerning racial issues, considering gender discrimination, considering the way the students are treated at Columbia. We have a wide range of students from a wide range of backgrounds; they're very sensitive to what they know and what they come from. They often realize that they know certain things very well after

they've been here a while; they're lacking other areas that they may not be as strong in. They need to all be encouraged that if they work and involve themselves in their work with intensity that they will grow and they will change and they will be able to do a lot of wonderful things with their work. But they have to all be given time and attention, to know that they are equally important, that not just some people that may hang around a teacher are more important than others. And I think that's a problem, I'm sure it's always been a problem on all kinds of educational levels, I know it has, but it's just something that has to be addressed—sometimes a little more seriously—when students are older in a college situation, because the varied backgrounds they come here from, all over the city and all over the surrounding area, it's a... range right now. And Chicago's a city of many, many minorities and a city of many people who want an education—it's just about men telling everybody what to do anymore; or white men.

Were some of those issues less of a problem when the student body was smaller...

When there weren't as many faculty and I think the people that were here initially cared very much about teaching very equally, very hands-on, and we were very committed to that. And so I didn't see that issue—I didn't get complaints from students. I did get complaints about certain faculty, always about certain male faculty, but I didn't find them as difficult to work with. I didn't find it that big an issue. I found it—if I knew that faculty person, and I can tell them other ways they might approach them or something.

Could you elaborate, if you will, on the issue of gender or the issue of sensitivity? And the reason I ask, a couple of interviews I've done, that was something that—when the tape ran out—the individuals said, "Oh, I wish..." Women?

Yes.

I think that there's a real problem with this school with gender discrimination. And I think it may exist at every school, but I don't care about every school; I care about Columbia. And I would not have stayed committed to this place for so long. I think there's a major issue, we need a very strong gender discrimination and sexual harassment policy. There are problems. I have students that are coming to me every semester about problems that they are having in other classes. And they're very often ashamed, they won't speak up to other authorities, they don't know where to take it to take it any further, it often stays controlled by males or by people who want to be very much a part of the patriarchy, and the way that has perpetuated the problems of the patriarchy. And this has to be dealt with very strongly right now, I'm finding I'm having lots and lots of students coming to me. I'm hearing way too much from female students.

Has that increased or do they feel that they're more willing to talk about it?

I don't know, I think they still have a very terrible time talking about it. I think they talk to me about it when they know me and so it doesn't come up when it needs to come up. And then maybe it comes up too late and that they're very afraid of repercussions. They're afraid that there will be retaliation, they're afraid that the faculty are all in

cahoots, that the chair and faculty is all in cahoots and that they'll be kept down. And there has to be fair access for all racial minorities and for all genders at Columbia—and gender preferences at Columbia. And I think that this is very crucial here.

Is it a problem, too, in numbers of women on the faculties and administration?

Well, there are more men; there's no doubt about it. I mean, now we have more women, I've seen it grow. Ten years ago, in a department, there were three women that were full-time; now there are seven. So that's quite a growth. And so there's more people, you know, that can be sensitive to something like this. But still, the students feel very outnumbered and they'll often seek out faculty that they know with all the similar background to them because they feel comfortable with them, and it's wonderful that we can have, you know, minority backgrounds teaching here, people with different sexual preferences teaching here, because that makes it more open for the students. But I still feel that this, the sensitivity is big because people are coming from neighborhoods and from backgrounds where the situations were—things that are said within a group of people that know them can be understood and then misconstrued in a situation that is now different and larger and involving more of a wide range of people.

I am, what I've been hearing is—it's very interesting, because some of the males don't see Columbia as a patriarchy, right? And don't, and so, but, and that's understandable at a certain level, but I think that many people

think at Columbia it shouldn't be there.

At Columbia we can't get away with it and at Columbia it shouldn't be OK to still get away with it, and it is.

And could you just speak to, why should Columbia be held to a higher standard or what do you feel that...

Well, Columbia is trying to reach out to people, it always has. Columbia has always tried to reach out to people; it has not only tried to reach the upper-middle class elite that go to the best high schools in the country and go to the best universities in the country. And this is part of the mission of the College. So the College seriously wants to have its mission and to be dealing with this fairly with any amount of fairness to their students that, you know, are paying a lot of money now to come here. It's a big burden for these students to pay this much money to come here and they are not being treated absolutely the best. Well, they're consumers and so they're starting to say, "Wait a minute! I'm paying all this money for this and I'm ashamed that I have to leave here having these terrible thoughts about a place that, basically, was wonderful, but because these situations came up it wasn't wonderful," and I don't think it can be allowed. I don't think that Columbia—with the type of mission and the type of, you know, ideals that it has always been about—can do that. There's no excuse for it. This is not an upper-middle class institution. This is not the University of Michigan, this is not Harvard, this is not Oberlin, this is not the University of California at Berkeley; maybe similar to a state school somewhat, you know, not in the university system but in a state college system somewhere in California, sure. But

it's not comparable to the University of California, Berkeley. And why would it be? It's not even the same type of structure or same type of goals at all, it wasn't structured the same; it's not meant to be.

You have stayed and you've been very honest about challenges that you think Columbia has to face...

I think Columbia has to be honest about this because Columbia, if it wants to succeed, has to deal with these and this is why I, you know, felt very strongly about this.

But can I ask you, you know, why have you stayed? What keeps you here?

Well, I think, again, I found it to be interesting here.

Is it the students?

It's the students and a lot of times it's other faculty. And it's in general the openness that I feel that Columbia has always been about. That I just found it fascinating. Because I come from very, kind of elite schools myself. And I didn't feel like repeating that in my teaching career. You know, I care very much about education. I don't think it's the easiest thing to deal with, by far. I think the world's full of other things that are easier to deal with. But I find it just an absolute wonderful challenge, and it's the future, and I love young people and they are the future.

How does your, you know, based on your experience at Columbia and perhaps what you were looking for when you, you know, sought this out, how has your vision of education, has it changed..

Oh yeah, oh, absolutely. I am not the elite snob anymore. And I don't think I was ever that elite snob, but

because of the situations that I get in that kind of thing, of course, was highly perpetuated. And, you know, it started from when I first was in school. So I really, you know, all I needed to be was at that high school one year teaching in the country and everything opened up. Actually, all I had to do was teach for the first time and everything opened up and I saw the possibilities.

Did you come in with kind of a set mode of, and have to change it or what...

Oh no, I think I'm a very fluid, growing type of person. And I very often, probably too much for a long time, adapted my classes to the students and still probably do. If they haven't covered what they need to know in the Drawing II, well, I'm gonna have to teach it to them, then. And then we aren't gonna maybe get as far into some of the things that I think we ought to get into in Drawing II. So that's an issue, that's a big issue. And that's why I have problems with students that are ill-prepared from other places, such as junior colleges, or where they're not challenged as much, not as much is expected of them, they go to school very close to home and it's the same people they've always known, maybe. I'm not quite sure because I'm not really spending time on the schools, but it's not necessarily the same situation of what we have here in the urban area.

So you're making a distinction, too, between someone who comes without any drawing and someone who... So would you say that your vision of education, does it continue to evolve and change?

Oh, it sure does, of course; constantly. But I also see more now of what they need to know when they leave a certain class. And I

don't want them to be cheated because they may never learn this in another class and I know—in some cases—they won't learn certain things in those classes if it's not taught in that class.

What, we talked about, I think you named several things that, challenges that Columbia has to face. But looking back, over the time that you've been here, are there specific events or crises or accomplishments, things that stick out in your mind in Columbia's history that you feel are important or are turning points?

Yes. Oh, I feel the first time we were really getting seriously accredited. I remember all the faculty, we all fit in the boardroom. We were crowded but we all fit in the boardroom in the 600 Building. It was most fascinating.

Describe that then.

Well, it was one of the first times I'd been together with that many people from that many different departments. And it was absolutely fascinating. I also loved the graduations when they were over at the Auditorium Theater. And you'd see all the parents and all the kids and you'd really get a sense of the real background of everybody before the school got too large. And it was just always so much fun, it was like such a celebration.

That has come up before too, that kind of—that investment that the faculty made in the students, they felt more a part of it. I mean...

I think we did it. And I still do, all right, I still do feel this. but that's because that's the way that I teach, all right—I feel that like it's important for me to teach them certain things—they need to learn these things if they're going to be

in this visual arts field. If they are going to communicate, they need to learn it somewhere. I know which things I teach the best, I try to teach those classes, and because I know that I will cover those areas the most thoroughly. And so I don't necessarily think everybody can just teach everything so easily no matter what anymore, especially studio classes. I think people have different ways of working. Some people may work fabulously with graduate students and one-on-one. Some people may not be able to work well with a large group and give everybody time and attention, and I think this is a big issue as Columbia gets bigger and it's something they have to seriously deal with. You know, I think they've done a wonderful job keeping a cap on classes and not having gigantic lecture classes so that students in art history can be in classes that are no larger than forty-five and very often no larger than twenty-five people, it's wonderful. They can have much more attention and much more time and they can actually grow because I do think that even the brightest, most qualified, most knowledgeable students grow the most—and I know this for a fact—when they get the most attention. And this is it, period.

And that's another part of your philosophy...

Absolutely—absolutely. Because I've just seen it over and over and over again...

And how do you have that and run a business?

Well, fortunately I'm not on the business end but I think they better watch themselves. Because I think this is getting to be a very tricky time now for colleges and

universities in general and that all schools have a size they work best in, OK? Based on the structure, based on how the administration runs the school, based on what the administration allows the faculty to do and allows decisions to be made. This is not a school that can be controlled by one deed. It's too big now and it hasn't been controlled by just one deed for a long time, yet there's still this little mom and pop Banana Republic attitude that just doesn't work anymore, and it hasn't worked for a long time. And I feel that a lot of students get very cheated, or they only get part-time faculty, or perhaps they get the faculty that are not going to be giving them as much attention as they would get if they had another faculty member, and how do they know—we register students for classes we don't even know who the teachers are half the time, it's terrible. I can't say to somebody "Well, you're taking English Comp, I'm going to put you with somebody I know loves to teach"—because it's the "Staff." And that sometimes when they sign up for registration early the names are all wrong, I've been down sometimes for teaching the same class—teaching two different classes—at the same time. Two different subject matters at the same time. That just happened last Fall.

Some people think they are getting you...

Yes, people thought they were getting me and they thought, "Oh my God, this is Beginning Drawing." And then people tell me afterwards, "I didn't know, I wouldn't have known if they hadn't told me. Oh, we're so disappointed because so and so walked in and the class was completely the opposite of what we'd been looking forward to." And that was an entry-level class, so they couldn't have known

it personally.

So, you're not just saying that the size itself is bad but we don't have the facilities...

We just can't, I'm not ready to keep up with what is here now, and I think this is going on...

And in little ways...

...in lots of little ways. There were times when the early registration form would come out for second semester in December and automatically for many, many times my classes would be switched with another faculty member's. They had us mixed up for three years straight running or something. I mean, there weren't that many full-time faculty, but it would go in wrong. And now this is still happening and now we're huge, and I find that there's a very few people in administration trying to control everything, and that's insane. That isn't how good education really works. Good education really works when you have people that are committed, that are willing to work with the students, and they are committed to teaching. They are committed to their goals and their ideals and to what really matters; and a love of learning and a love of growth becomes part of the student. I feel that at Columbia we often have to spend way too much time motivating students, but I don't mind that, because I feel that the students that really matter, that really care, are the ones that will stick through it. But sometimes entry-level classes here are scary, and I've taught them where they've scared me. With some of the people in them and some of the needs those people had, they were so needy they did not belong in a class with sixteen other people, you

know, in Beginning Drawing. They just had issues that were so beyond everything and they wanted to take over the class with these problems, these issues, and that's scary.

Any other memories that stick out—or peak individuals too? And maybe, going back to the first years that you came here...

Well, I remember going to some of the first faculty retreats, the full-time faculty retreats, and just loving being together with people from all the other different departments who I never got to see otherwise.

And what were those, being able to talk with them...

Oh yeah, be in meetings and then be able to talk in groups and get to know different people in the College, and I always had such respect for the other faculty. What they knew and who they were, what they'd accomplished and what they wanted to accomplish and how dedicated they were to their teaching. They're interesting people.

Have you had time to devote to your own work? How has being here influenced you?

Well, I feel that what I loved about it is that we are required, in my department, to be here three full days a week and work very intensely, certainly those days with our four hour classes, and sometimes two four hour classes on one day. And that we are given days that we can work on our own work and be off campus doing what we need to do. And certainly since I have a daughter, and that has been crucial sometimes when she has been ill and, you know, whatever. So I was able to schedule myself not to be here on Mondays, which was the day she often seemed to need to be home, and, you know, when she had illnesses and certain

things. You know, that has been very important. I feel that it's kept us all working on our work as much as we can. I talk about my work to students, I talk about, "Oh my God. On this painting yesterday, I could not believe I was having all these problems." "Oh my God, you've been doing this all these years and you have these problems? Well, it can't be that bad if I'm having them." Or you know, just in general the way that, you know, it connects, the way that we do our own work with the way that we teach I think is very, very crucial, very important, and something they benefit from in a very rich way. When we share, which I think again is very crucial of course, that is what teaching is about.

And has, I don't know, your subject matter been influenced?

No, I am an art person not trained in the city and I have none of the Chicago art pressures, influences on my work, which is not good when you live here, because the kind of work that I do is not shown much here and I've always been happier in New York or California. But I love the city, I love the school and this is where I am. And I feel the school has been supportive of me not just because—I mean, they don't care that I don't like doing work like everybody else in Chicago. They want a range of people that are here and that's what makes this a strong place. And I don't know if this happens at some other schools in the city. I think they get dominated by certain graduate schools and certain things that are going on right now, where they're trying to—some schools in the city are trying to have super, super strong departments and get all the big stars. Well, the big

known get for a reason. They were picked out and they kept working in that mode continuously, and I'm not sure those are the people that have grown the most or even do the most interesting work. But because the art world is small right now and became very small approximately ten years ago—in Chicago it was always small, unfortunately. That, this attitude has spread, and places like the University of Illinois at Circle and the Art Institute I do not think can be as successful, given a strong foundation program, as we can at Columbia. At Columbia I know our students can leave here if they've worked intensely on their work and gotten enough feedback and go to a graduate school and do wonderful work. I think that's very important. They can continue to paint, work on their work, and they've learned a lot. And even if they end up not having the time to work on their fine art as much as they want, they bring it into their whole life and they are rich people in spirit and rich in knowledge and have a lot to offer to other people. I see it with my former students. They're marvelous. The ones that I know about, what they're doing, and they keep in touch periodically.

Anyone you'd like to mention, memorable students or what...

Every year there's memorable students. That's the wonderful part of teaching. But I think every student matters, and when you're in the system of educating the masses you have to make adjustments to dealing with people that are different from you, and reaching out to them, and not expecting everybody to be like you and come to you and hang on every word you say. It's a tough world right now,

it's a very tough world. It's very competitive. It has been for a long time, I'm not saying it hasn't been, but these students are kind of afraid. They don't know if they are going to really have a future. That's what I find very strange about the times right now. They are afraid, and there is so much going on that they do not feel connected to at all and they need to feel connected somewhere, and sometimes they just find anywhere that they're connected and they can't grow beyond it, if they don't get out of their neighborhood or if they don't get out of their area and move around and see the rest of the world and the city. I think they're very, very limited. I think the ghettos are in the suburbs now. I think the ghettos are everywhere. And I think that people need to move outside of their small territory. And when they come into the city to go to Columbia or when they come from other parts of the city to go to Columbia they do this, every one of them, because none of them grew up here on Wabash. Now that all the condos and everything started, one knows when all the new apartments and everything. But previously, of course, there were many other things.

Has the attack on NEA and, you know, just our government...

Terrible, because the government is taking over in areas that they have no business being in. They're trying to tell women how to control their bodies, for heaven's sake, their sexual habits, trying to control what artists think, what people think. It's Big Brother. And there are some people that are very powerful in Washington D.C. and in city government and in state governments, county governments, that have way, way too much influence and have been there way too

long. Period. The wealthy, old, white men or people that have learned to be like the wealthy, old, white men because this is the way it's set up. And the patriarchy is appalling. Period. Because it is not to the benefit for men or women the way it is set up now. Men are restricted, men are hampered and so are women. There is not true freedom. And there won't be until people can be treated more equally. It shouldn't matter that Kathleen Willey, because she comes from, perhaps, a middle-class or even an upper middle-class background and is older, is more important than a twenty-four year old Monica Lewinsky. They're still both groupies. And it's very, very judgmental to say that one of them is or that someone that comes from a working class background isn't as important to listen to, as a person who has had more education. And certainly we're seeing it today in federal government.

That silencing of...

Oh, it's disgusting.

Do you find that in the classroom, where, you know, someone really might like art but whether they're aware...

Yes, they're...

You have to convince them that it does matter.

Yes, yes, yes, and I think that they love that so much. They need it so much, when they realize that what they do is important and can have a lot of importance. That every piece they work on has value to it. It's not perfect, there's a lot we need to work with on it, but there's value to it and it can go somewhere wonderful. By their work we may learn and have good learning situations and good working situations,

that they can grow and turn out wonderful, wonderful works and be very enlightened human beings. This is what education is about, people learning from one another.

And does that speak to us of why you've stayed here at Columbia? Probably, because I felt too many other schools were a very certain way, or it was just a community college, or a school was just an elite school, or a school was maybe way too big, you know. I didn't care to teach at a department that was as big as the University of Illinois at Circle, it's just too big. And the undergraduate body is overwhelming but you see, I'm starting to realize now that our undergraduate body here is almost overwhelming, with all the sections that we're running. And I don't think it's fair for Columbia to say, "Yes, we accept you, we accept you, you're here, just give us your money," and then not have the facilities or the classes or the right faculty to accommodate them. I think it's a big issue. And I don't think you get anywhere by keeping people down, be keeping faculty down, by saying you're only part-time, we're going to pay you cheap and who cares if you leave because we'll just get more. You just don't look at people that way. People are not just little stock market items. We're not robots and nobody that comes here is one. And in order to have a really fine education, which can be had anywhere, you need the right situation and the right people to do it with. And if Columbia doesn't provide them with the right people or the right situation, then they better seriously be thinking about why they're doing this. Because it is not the mission of what the College was, when I came here, to just take peoples' money.

Another person said that if Columbia didn't have the fallout students, if they tomorrow retained every student...

You don't want to retain every student that comes in here right now, the way open admissions is. You don't want them to stay.

Because you wouldn't have the facilities...

Oh my God. You not only don't have the facilities, there are people admitted here that couldn't stay, they do not know enough. They cannot read, they cannot write, they can't think yet.

What would happen if, let's say, just pretend that they could, they were prepared, could you handle the numbers?

No. Of course not. It's ridiculous. It's not possible. It's wonderful to be populated, I believe in it completely, I always have. But you can't say, "Yes, we are accepting the world into one school, you may all come here." It's absurd. No school does that. They all run into problems.

Are you hopeful or worried about the future of...

Both, I'm very worried, actually, and I don't think I was this worried a few years ago. But I just see the problems growing and as it's gotten bigger each year, the problems have been exacerbated. And the structure of a small school, the small administration, that suddenly within a twenty year span turns into a school that goes from five hundred students to almost nine thousand students, that kind of growth...

We were talking about your word, about the future of Columbia and the rate of growth...

Oh yeah, absolutely. You can't take a small administration where every key was handed out very carefully and master keys were not allowed

because oh, who knows what might happen, and suddenly grow to a place of nine thousand students with the same person handing out the keys in the same way. I'm sorry, it just doesn't work.

What makes you—you said you were both worried and hopeful, what makes you hopeful?

I'm hopeful because so many people are interested in going to college, so many people are interested in learning. And again, I love young people, and I love the way that they get excited about things and work on things and look for things and can challenge themselves when they're provided the opportunity to do so. You know, it's just—young people are wonderful to work with. And again, the big mix here always keeps it very lively, and you know a lot of students' personality comes into class, comes into their work, and everybody is enriched by it. I think they learn a lot from being here, being in class together with their fellow students. And I think that's an important part of what education should be about, because that's your community. That's your community when you're a student. You're no longer just in the community of your family and people that think just like you. The world is bigger and that's what happens when students go to college. Oh, for something that becomes bigger when they're eight years old, but this is not necessarily the case for most people. So—and mostly it doesn't when you're eight anyway. A lot of positive things about Columbia, but it cannot be controlled by a few people that are trying to control a system that worked for five hundred or fifteen hundred students. It will not work, now it is not working. And I think the students feel this.

And when you describe it as a business, do you think, was it always that way but it was a small...

No...

That's a change in approaching...

Yes, because I think education has become a big business.

So it's not only Columbia...

No, no, no. I think it's just a consumer world right now. All right, this is what the late nineteen nineties are about, and Columbia obviously is part of that and this is not Columbia's fault at all this happened. This is the times. But if Columbia wants to stay viable, it has to decide what is most important to it, what it wants to focus on and what it wants to do, how it wants to do this, and then it has to be done that way. I don't think everything can be done at once by adding one school. I don't think it ever could. It never did. There's no school in this country that claims that they teach everything equally well in all subject matter and all areas. You focus on certain aspects that you're equipped to deal with.

Why hasn't the ideal of—and I know you've said that the reality versus the ideal of Columbia and the mission statement—but why do you think ideal of Columbia hasn't been copied elsewhere? Why isn't the mission of Columbia the mission elsewhere?

Well, when Columbia started to grow, many other small schools in the country, especially ones more in the hinterlands, started to have trouble attracting students. We're an urban school. This is a new phenomenon. An open admissions, urban four-year college that has graduate programs. This is a new thing. There never was anything like this—well, I suppose in New

York, the City University of New York, would of course be very comparable, and to be that would be a fascinating place. But there just aren't a lot of schools like this. The city schools tended to be either technical schools or art schools or trade types of schools, and there were times when Columbia did have that hanging over it a little bit and I think that, you know, certainly as people got more sophisticated, as the times became more complex and sophisticated that, obviously, that kind of mentality can't be at Columbia, and that there may still be some trade school mentality here that is just not acceptable for a school in 1998 that wants to be a college. It's fine having liberal arts and communication arts together but you wouldn't really recruit someone to come here to major just in science, I don't think. You can come here and find fabulously interesting classes to take, and certainly they should have them and they need them. You know, I would hate to think that they didn't exist, I love a lot of these classes, whether in the liberal arts, in the general studies, and in English, science and math. But I do feel that people do not generally come here to major in math or science. And you can just look at our program and see that, you know, we do not have certain types of things that people would need if they were majoring in it. And that's fine, they can come here, however, and do a lot of art and do a lot of science, which is something that maybe they couldn't do at a school like University of Michigan where we had to be in class forty hours a week—back in the Dark Ages. There's no time. Besides that, these students are working at jobs too many hours a week to keep their selves going. They are making themselves old when they are twenty and twenty-two years old

and it is unfair. There has to be more help for higher education and more aid. And just because somebody makes a hundred thousand dollars a year does not necessarily mean that they can afford to pay, you know, thirty thousand a year to send their child to Harvard. Who knows what other obligations and whatever things that family has that have to be dealt with? The country is not set up to support public education for higher education. The city of Chicago isn't even set up to support it in the public schools and I think it's a travesty. People are trying to enforce all these standards, "Everybody should take more tests. More tests will show this." No they won't. It's getting some care and some teachers that care that they're teaching, and the right people teaching, that'll do it. There's a lot of people teaching that should never be teaching groups of kids. They only get along with one or two of them, not the group. There's group dynamics, there's things you do, you work with people, you, you have to deal with all of those. They all matter, they all count. And you can't not have books, you can't not have access to learning. It does not work to do it all by computer and by TV, I don't care what anybody says. People will not learn enough, they'll be robots, and they will not be creative in thinking, there will not be any serious learning going on. It can be combined, but it can't be all there is.

So if we look at problems outside Columbia, I mean, Columbia's job would be easier if students came better prepared

But Columbia has to deal with some things, seriously, itself. And having the adequate facilities and adequate, you know, preparation for what students are being taught.

How can you have eighty part-time people in a department and know that they're all teaching class the way they're supposed to? Who is gonna watch that all the time? Somebody would be on roller-skates consistently and never sit down if they tried to do that. A chair can't do that; it's insane. And we have, like, twenty full-time faculty in the department. I don't know, between twenty-two and twenty-four I think, usually, and at least eighty part-timers. How can one person oversee everything done by that many faculty? Of course not. And our chair has another department too, he has Photography. It's not his fault, you know, it's the system that needs to be worked with, adjusted, and I think Columbia's too big right now.

And it seems like you're also pointing at that it's an ethical question.

I think it's a real ethical issue. I think it's really the crux of the whole thing that, I'm not, and I know this happens at other universities right now. I know this can happen at the best universities, the largest ones, because they may be using TAs to teach that do not really want to teach, and they're just there doing it because they get paid for it and it's a way they can finish their degree. So I am not saying that this is only to Columbia that this happens. I am saying that this is something that higher education should seriously consider. And if they have the most qualified, interested, involved people teaching, and if they don't, how can they expect to have those qualified, interested, capable students leaving the schools anyway? And the inbred systems that perpetuate things in a deadly way are murderous to students and

their growth and their excitement and their learning. Not just everybody was made to teach, ever. Just because someone has a degree in the field doesn't mean that they should be teaching it. This is real important.

And, like you said, an issue nationally; but Columbia, which repeatedly brags about a system that relies on...

And you have to understand that I know some of the most fabulous part-time faculty here in the world. I mean, I'm so impressed by them and what they do and what they offer. So I am not saying that part-time faculty cannot be qualified, that's ridiculous. We have wonderful people here in the part-time faculty, absolutely wonderful. And some of the ones that have been here a long time have so much to offer in such important ways to the students that we think of them as being, you know, integral to the department. There's no doubt about it. And Columbia's been able to get away with this to a large extent. And I guess a lot of schools are doing this now. I mean, I understand it's happening at my alma mater, the University of Michigan. When I was there, everybody was full-time. And now I understand that there's so many people that want to be in Ann Arbor because, of course, it is a wonderful place, that they're there part-time. And so too many faculty have to travel too many places to make a living and while they may be very committed to teaching, physical obstacles get in the way. This city is a large city to commute within in... smaller, the commute is not a serious issue usually. Now when we lived in Detroit, then of course it is a serious issue. But, you know, it's a problem getting around in Chicago. It's a problem for our students to get around between

their jobs and their work and their school and their home. They have three places they need to be: work, they may have more than one job, most likely they do, they have school, and they have home. And all those things are polarized far, far away from one another sometimes. Or else, everything they do is close to their home but school, so they don't get to spend enough time at school to be part of what's really going on and the activities that are really being held and all the wonderful film festivals and exhibits and lectures and things that are being given. And they're still stuck out in their...