Oral history interview with Larry Holmes, October 7, 2013

Holmes, Larry, born 1942
Painter

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MARGARET: Okay. This is Margaret Winslow, Associate Curator for Contemporary Art, interviewing Larry Holmes on October 2, excuse me, October 7, 2013 at the Delaware Art Museum. So Larry you arrived in Delaware in 1973.

LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: Correct. Okay and your BA and MA were from—

LARRY: Well at that time it was Kansas State College. It’s been renamed since then Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, Kansas, Pittsburg with no H on the end just a G.

MARGARET: No H, okay. And what year did you receive your MA?

LARRY: Well it was actually an MS and it was 1965 I guess, in ’65.

MARGARET: Okay. And then you went to Cranbrook Academy.

LARRY: Right. I taught public school for three years. I was in the Navy for a short time, discharged after an automobile accident and taught two more years in high school. This is all in Kansas City and then went to Cranbrook. I guess I arrived at Cranbrook in ’71.

MARGARET: In ’71, okay. 1971 arrived at Cranbrook, and so then finished in ’73.
LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: So you went immediately to the University of Delaware?

LARRY: Immediately.

MARGARET: And who hired you?

LARRY: The chair at that time was George Nocito.

MARGARET: Can you spell his last name?

LARRY: N-0-C-I-T-O.

MARGARET: Okay. So he was the chair. And remind me did he go to Cranbrook?

LARRY: No.

MARGARET: He did not.

LARRY: No. I’m not sure where he went.

MARGARET: Okay. So Julio was the first—

LARRY: Julio was, I’m almost positive he was the first from Cranbrook to go there and I think. I don’t remember what year he graduated, I think it was in the mid ’50s or so, ’57 or ’58 somewhere in there I think, ’55 maybe.

MARGARET: I think he was at Delaware in the mid,—yeah and I think he was at Delaware at like ’56-’57.

LARRY: Okay so he probably came—

MARGARET: So immediately prior.

LARRY: —directly from Cranbrook as well.

MARGARET: Right, okay. So just two years later, okay so to University of Delaware in 1973, and what courses did you begin teaching?

LARRY: Just foundations courses, mostly design. Exclusively design I guess for some years.

MARGARET: Okay. And so you became involved, certainly exhibiting work, at the Delaware Art Museum fairly soon after your arrival. So the first, it seems like the first Delaware Art Museum annual show you were involved with was in 1974.

LARRY: That sounds about right, yeah.
MARGARET: And you exhibited *Busby Berkeley Slept Here*, and I’m sure as you know—oh no, where is my—oh here it is. So Otto Dekom wrote about the exhibition. This is from the August 16, 1974 Morning Jews, excuse me *Morning News* and for Otto Dekom this is actually a pretty, I don’t know if I’d say a rave review of your work, but certainly he had nice things to say.

LARRY: I don’t recall the article either.

MARGARET: So this was for the 16th Delaware exhibit and he says for, “The modern geometric construction by Larry W. Holmes is exceptional.” And I don’t know if you remember much about Otto Dekom—

LARRY: I do.

MARGARET:—but my goodness he was certainly harsh when it came to anything modern, contemporary.

LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: I’m curious because knowing your work, and I admit in terms of the interview I’m getting a little off-topic but I do want to talk about the work that you were making at this time. The work that I know now is representational, these wonderful kind of contemporary still lifes. And so when you arrived here in Delaware in 1973, you were making constructed geometric paintings.

LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: So very different from the type of work that you’re doing today.

LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: So can you tell me a little bit more about these? I feel like in the brief things that I’ve written, err…read, they were described as three-dimensional constructions.

LARRY: They are, yes although there was only one piece that was freestanding that I ever made and the rest were mounted on the wall, made with plywood substructures with some canvas stretched over them. And pretty much the color limitation was defined by the shapes within the construction so wherever there was a physical break from one section of the painting to another that’s where the color would end and another color would begin. But usually there was a patterning that went on of the color. Those paintings were exceptionally heavy. I mean just the amount of plywood in them was kind of staggering. They just weighed terribly.

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: In fact I developed a hernia that I had to have surgery for.

MARGARET: Oh my goodness!
LARRY: And I’m sure it was from carrying those things around because they were so—

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: And not very practical. In fact I think I only sold about three or four of those pieces because they were such a physical thing to have to deal with, particularly for anybody in a residence you know.

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: But those eventually gave way to some constructions that were made out of Styrofoam and covered with illustration boards so the surface became very, you know smooth. It was almost like canvas boards if you can think of what those are like. You know they’re cardboard with canvas over them.

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: These were made out of various levels of Styrofoam with illustration board on them and then canvas glued to that. And then the painting on those became really quite elaborate in a way of patterning. And I can—I’ll send you some photos of these too.

MARGARET: Oh that would be wonderful.

LARRY: There’s some announcements that have them on them.

MARGARET: Now was that change in construction, to the Styrofoam, was that really to reduce the weight that you were dealing with?

LARRY: Largely yeah.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: I mean it’s sort of coincided, we were, my wife and I, were building a house. I guess that was in what ’76 or so, and between working on the house that we were building and trying to teach at the university, I wasn’t making much artwork during that time period. So when the new house was finished and my new studio was ready, it was in the house itself, I mean physically whereas before I had had a separate studio in a barn that was adjacent to the property that we were renting.

And you know I couldn’t have all this woodworking equipment and making you know tons of sawdust and noise. But when we moved into the house you know it just seemed clear that that wasn’t going to be very successful there, even though we built the house in two separate wings. There was an entry way and I had a studio that was in one wing of the house separated by the entry way to the living quarters. But still it was way too close to the living quarters to have that kind of noise going on and that much dirt.
MARGARET: Right, okay.

LARRY: So I started looking for a way to reconcile those kind of things. So because we had so much building materials around, some of which was Styrofoam and it was so light and I thought, “Oh this is wonderful stuff.” So I evolved this way of utilizing it and I guess I made those pieces for about ’76—“to it must have been well right up until the, shortly before I had the show here—

MARGARET: Oh so in the—

LARRY:—in ’84, so those paintings that were in that show in ’84 were probably the second group of just flat paintings that I had done since graduate school.

MARGARET: Oh interesting. So that’s really kind of a transitional moment.

LARRY: It was yeah. And the first group of the flatter paintings were sort of an extension of those patterned constructions. And it was a pretty short-lived series. I think there were only about six or eight of them or so. And the patterns began to take on more and more of representational qualities, things that, you know there were leaves or fan shapes or shell shapes and sometimes they were casting shadows. In fact that brochure that I was talking about from the retrospective has one of those in it so you can see one of those as well.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: But that led me to start thinking about representational ideas and somehow, I don’t really remember exactly how this came about, but I think somebody had given me a rubber alligator, and I don’t know who it was or how that came to be, but it got me thinking about shapes in nature that could be viewed in perspective and sort of leading into the space. Do you know that Mantegna paining that Ed—Christ, where it’s like this severe—?

MARGARET: Yes, the incredible sense of—

LARRY: Well I was thinking about that and you know partly the whole interest that I had in construction was a notion about the spaces in paining, you know the physical space as well as an illusionistic space. So the more I started thinking about representational work I started thinking about really extreme kinds of space: so these alligators. And I initially started out just making them up and you know positioning them and looking at them in these sort of raked spaces that led from you know the foreground of the paining into it with this kind of fanciful landscapes around them. And then I had occasion to go to Florida for a friend’s wedding and went to an alligator farm there and photographed tons of alligators.

MARGARET: Oh.

LARRY: So that really led me into actually basing the paintings more on observed things.

MARGARET: Okay. So observed things that you’re photographing but are you still arranging still life as well?
LARRY: Yes.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: The things that were arranged were sort of coming from all over the place you know.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: They were the alligators themselves. That series of paintings I think was, it too was not a real long series, maybe, oh I don’t know, eight or ten works, something like that. They were fairly large and took a fair amount of time to make but—I forgot where I was going with that thought. Out the window.

MARGARET: Things you’re observing in nature, so both photography and construction, arranged still lifes.

LARRY: Oh, so a lot of the things that I was putting together with these alligator images were old landscape images that were coming from photographs from vacation trips that we had made. We did some traveling in Spain for a while so I had some Spanish interiors, sort of garden interiors and things that were just cropped from magazines and National Geographic. There was one painting sort of based on a, oh gosh, trying to think of the, the name’s escaping me now. A couple of the, various artists from that Hudson River School you know the sort of spectacular ground scene.

MARGARET: Thomas Cole kind of.

LARRY: Yeah those kinds of guys.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: So I was thinking about them and folded together a couple of mountainous scenes out of National Geographic and put alligators into them and it was just—

MARGARET: Oh interesting.

LARRY:—no real connection between them other than just what always seemed to me to be formal ideas more than they were anything else.

MARGARET: Hmm, okay.

LARRY: And maybe just a little bit of fancy too and kind of humor.

MARGARET: But in terms of formal ideas, still thinking about this physical and illusionistic space and the depiction of that kind of space formally.

LARRY: Right.
MARGARET: Okay. So you participated in the Museum’s 75th, 76th annual exhibition. So at that point you would’ve still been showing either the three-dimensional things or maybe going into the flatter patterns.

LARRY: I think both of those were geometric constructions.

MARGARET: Those were still both geometric constructions, okay because I couldn’t, one was untitled and then I couldn’t find the title for the other exhibition, for the ’76, I couldn’t find the title of the work that was in that.

LARRY: I don’t recall if the Museum continued to do those shows.

MARGARET: We did. We had the annual exhibition up through 1989 and then beginning in 1989 it was the combined biannual. So both, we combined the annual and the, we were doing a contemporary craft show as well.

LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: Those were combined into the biannual, the first of which was held in 1989. The last was held in 2000. And then we suspended the biannual due to the Museum renovation project and then brought it back for the centennial last year. Let’s—sorry I’m a little bit all over the place cause I’m wanting to talk about your work—

LARRY: That’s all right, so am I.

MARGARET:—as well as what was happening in New York and in Wilmington. So in Wilmington—well first let me ask you, how aware were you of some of the contemporary art kind of scenes in communities in Wilmington in the 1970s? And I’m thinking specifically of Fifth Street Gallery. Rob had the gallery, he says from ’73 to ’79. It seems like the majority of his activities were really taking place between ’75 and ’78. That’s when the gallery was the most active.

LARRY: Yeah. I don’t remember it being open for all that long.

MARGARET: And that’s what quite a few people have said. And realistically, honestly I haven’t been able to find the documentation to support that.

LARRY: I’m trying to remember when he passed away. It was—

MARGARET: He passed in 1989.

LARRY: ’89?

MARGARET: ’89.

LARRY: Okay.
MARGARET: He went up to New York I believe in 1980, right around 1980. He had an exhibition of his fiberglass shrouds in 1984 at the Leonard Perlson Gallery but prior to that he showed the work at Pier 34 in 1983 which was interesting. But as I said it seems like the majority of the activities at Fifth Street were really from ’75 to ’78.

LARRY: Well I would have thought that Julio would probably be the greatest help to you there. I think he knew Rob quite well and they were pretty friendly.

MARGARET: Yes. It seems so and it seems like he was almost a bit of a mentor to Rob as well and then Rob subsequently showed his work.

LARRY: Yeah I think so. And Joe Moss might be able to help you there as well because Rob was one of his students I think.

MARGARET: Right. And it’s interesting, Joe actually has a sculpture of Nick Snook.

LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: I don’t know if you remember Nick Snook.

LARRY: Yeah I do.

MARGARET: And Nick Snook showed at Fifth Street. What’s interesting is that Joe now has the only sculpture that still exists from that exhibition that Nick had at Fifth Street.

LARRY: Wow.

MARGARET: He got rid of all of the other work, destroyed it. I think, I don’t know if you remember seeing the exhibition but he had converted a, I think it was a Volkswagen and kind of, you know kind of cut it in half and pushed it together as kind of this one man little machine.

LARRY: Yeah I do.

MARGARET: It was this interesting man machine kind of juxtaposition that he donated to like a junkyard or something like that. So Joe has the only existing sculpture which is interesting. Do you remember coming up to see any of the shows at Fifth Street?

LARRY: I think I came up for Julio’s show.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: I vaguely remember the space. It seemed to me that it was upstairs.

MARGARET: Right, yeah. So it was on the second floor of the Queen, and the way some other people have described it is kind of this vast kind of warehouse kind of space.
LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: And one that was the most kind of New York in its aesthetic, the most contemporary in its aesthetic and the display of the works, the exhibition schedule that Rob had for the gallery. And by comparison the other gallery’s commercial spaces, there weren’t really, and there were a few at the time—Hardcastle and Carspecken-Scott at that point. Somerville Manning didn’t open until the early 80s and Station Gallery not until the late ‘70s. So really—

LARRY: That’s about all I’m aware of.

MARGARET: Yeah and that’s really, there’s one other gallery and I’ve been asking everyone if they remember it. It was the Wilmington Circulating Gallery of Paintings. It was operated by Grace McFerrin out of the Wanamaker building on Augustine Cut Off.

LARRY: Vaguely familiar.

MARGARET: It’s interesting. I know that Dan Teis showed there, or she carried his work. It seems like, you know because it was in the department store, it was kind of like a sales and rental space similar to what the Museum was operating here, what Alice was doing with the Museum sales and rental space. But not a lot of people have any solid memories of that.

LARRY: I don’t.

MARGARET: Okay. That’s good to know. A lot of this is asking people if they remember things.

LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: Let’s see, how about Newark? From what I can gather there were also, I mean aside from the University of Delaware gallery spaces—

LARRY: Well let me interject something about that.

MARGARET: Yes.

LARRY: Early on when I first came to Delaware there was nothing in the way of an exhibition space on campus with the exception of the old student center building that was run by Jack Oberman, I think that was his name. Anyway he was very supportive. There was university exhibitions committee that Victor Spinski frequently chaired I think. And Victor was pretty active in bringing fairly decent shows into that space.

But the space itself was just lousy. I mean it had windows on three sides and the one wall that you could actually hang something on had these segments of, well it was marble in a panel about this wide covered with burlap and then more marble and you know just really chopped up and no lighting to speak of at all. So there was a lot to be desired for exhibition spaces at the university. And it took forever and a day for the university to really address that need.
MARGARET: Interesting.

LARRY: Fortunately when they renovated old college, that’s when that space at old college became a fairly legitimate exhibition space. But even then in their infinite wisdom about protecting the purity of the architecture of the building they, you know they had insisted on revealing the chair rail so that the exhibition—the walls start above the chair rail and you know you couldn’t hang anything with any scale on those.

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: You needed to have freestanding panels to do something like that.

MARGARET: To do that. I wonder when that, do you know off the top of your head when that renovation took place?

LARRY: Well I’m guessing it was early ‘80s.

MARGARET: Okay. So then prior to that faculty and students showed their work either at the student center or I know they were showing at Gallery 20.

LARRY: Yes.

MARGARET: Through the Campus Ministry’s Association, something like that.

LARRY: Right. That was a fairly decent little space, not great.

MARGARET: And that was a decent little space, okay.

LARRY: And then Clayton Hall—

MARGARET: And Clayton Hall.

LARRY:—had, I mean another very inferior exhibition space but it was a big space and you could, well I did a show up there when I first moved in, of those big heavy constructions and they had tracks above that they used and the first one I hung on there just buckled those and they—

MARGARET: Right.

LARRY: So Steve Tanis, who was a good friend of mine and a colleague from Cranbrook, we were at school together, he graduated the year before I did, he and I went around and drilled holes in all that tracking and put in toggle bolts and you know beef it all up so that we could hang a show there.

MARGARET: Yeah. And I don’t even know—
LARRY: I can’t think of any other spaces that would have been around in those days.

MARGARET: Well there was, so not really a proper exhibition space but a few people have talked about hanging work at the Deluxe Luncheonette, the greasy spoon.

LARRY: Yeah that was something that—

MARGARET: But that seemed more like of—

LARRY: Yeah it was, well it never seemed very serious to me you know.

MARGARET: Right, right.

LARRY: Mostly student things I would think.

MARGARET: Right. And it’s kind of like silly themed shows that they were doing there.

LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: It did seem like Gallery 20 though was working to support an interesting exhibition schedule and then having artists in residence.

LARRY: Right. I’m trying to remember the woman’s name. It was—

MARGARET: Well I know that Helen Mason was involved and Joyce Schweizer as well.

LARRY: There was someone before them—

MARGARET: Someone before them?

LARRY:—who was also involved in Clayton Hall, what was her name, Sally, oh I won’t think of it now.

MARGARET: When you think of it later you can email me because I haven’t heard another, I don’t think anyone’s mentioned another—

LARRY: Sally Cohen [Donatello].

MARGARET: Sally?

LARRY: Cohen.

MARGARET: Cohen.

LARRY: C-O-H-E-N.

MARGARET: Okay.
LARRY: Now whatever became of her I have no idea.

MARGARET: Sally Cohen? And so she was at Gallery 20 and at Clayton Hall?

LARRY: I think so.

MARGARET: Okay. And assisting with organizing exhibitions, things like that.

LARRY: Mm hmm.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: And conferences too. The art department did a fairly big conference there in, I think it was ‘85, something like that, ‘86 maybe, that Sally was very helpful in getting that all organized.

MARGARET: Okay. Can you speak to some of the other activities the department was undertaking? I’m thinking about artists in residence that would have been, who would have been invited in and any memorable artists who would have visited the department.

LARRY: Well boy in terms of visiting artists, gosh I wish I had a good record of those. You know we were so close to New York we could easily bring people down for just a day and not have to worry about putting them up in a hotel and the expenses of doing all that. And usually people were quite willing to come for fairly minimal amounts of money. But in terms of really artists in residence that we had, let’s see we had Oswaldo Romberg, he was one that came quite early on, who was an Argentinian and Israeli. And then, well actually Jerry Pinkney, whose show is up, I think it’s still up at the Delaware Art Museum now, he was a visiting professor for I think two years or so.

MARGARET: Oh interesting.

LARRY: And he commuted down and just, I think he just did two days of back to back and then would go back. He never did move down there. He lived at Croton on Hudson I think in New York.

MARGARET: Oh okay.

LARRY: Gosh, well another artist, you know we were doing biannual shows at the university for quite some time as well. I don’t know how that got dropped but it did. But anyway we started doing it so that one year we would do the biannual which was a juried show and the next year we would do a one person show, an invitational show. So we did, the first year I think it was Donald Lipsky who was an old classmate of mine from Cranbrook. I knew Don pretty well and it was easy to get him to come down. And his career was just beginning to take off at that point. James Turrell did a show there.

MARGARET: Yes, I did see that.
LARRY: And that was largely due to, gosh what was his name, in art history, who had had Terrill as a student I think some years earlier and they had stayed in touch, I can’t remember his name.

MARGARET: It wouldn’t have been Bill Homer.

LARRY: No. Oh Cope, Morey Cope.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: Whose wife took over for—

MARGARET: Was Penelope Bass Cope, okay. How interesting. And I know that Clayton Pond was involved with an artist in residence program, it said through Gallery 20 but must’ve also been at the University of Delaware.

LARRY: Yeah. I don’t remember his work all that specific, I remember his name. Is he a print maker?

MARGARET: Yes, a print maker.

LARRY: So I think he had, he was connected with printmaking and I think that was probably with Rosemary Cooper, who is now Rosemary Lane and she’s divorced.

MARGARET: Okay. So there was a rich program of visiting artists with the department.

LARRY: Well particularly in painting. I think we in painting were a little bit more dedicated to bringing in visiting artists and particularly once our graduate program took off you know. We felt like it was really essential for graduate students to have that kind of contact with other artists.

MARGARET: And remind me, when did the graduate program—?

LARRY: Well let’s see when Dan Teis came as department chair, which would’ve been in about, I don’t know ’80, I can’t even remember now. No it was probably in the ‘70s I’m thinking. It must have been like ’78 or 9, somewhere in there I think. He took it on as his mission to get us both a BFA degree and an MFA degree.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: And he eventually did. And the graduate program I think was pretty low-key for its first few years. Joe Moss I think and Victor Spinski I think embraced it a little bit more than anybody else in the department at that time. At that time Julio and Charles Rowe were pretty much running the painting program.

MARGARET: Okay.
LARRY: And I don’t think Julio had a great interest in the graduate program. I mean he might say that wasn’t the case but, but eventually things moved on and faculty were reassigned in other places and myself and Steve Tanis, Robert Straight took over the graduate program in painting and we got to be a lot more missionary about bringing in visiting artists and taking field trips too. We did a number of field trips.

MARGARET: Okay. Now I know that Bob started in 1980. So Dan Teis, err no when did Steve Tanis?

LARRY: Steve started the year before I did so he started—

MARGARET: Oh before you did, in ’72.

LARRY:—in ’72 and ‘73.

MARGARET: Okay. And Dan Teis would have been just prior to Bob Straight.

LARRY: I think.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: I don’t remember when [George] Nocito stepped down as department chair but Dan replaced him.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: And then Nocito sadly died just a couple years after he stepped down of a brain tumor.

MARGARET: Mm, okay. So let’s move ahead in history a bit because I know that, I want to go a little further back to some of these other—

LARRY: Can I ask where you pulled this off of?

MARGARET: This is on your website.

LARRY: Oh you found it. Oh good.

MARGARET: So I know you were exhibiting extensively, certainly all over the northeast, but thinking specifically about New York and Wilmington, you became involved with Somerville Manning Gallery it looks like in the mid-1980s.

LARRY: Yes. That didn’t last a long time but I think I did, well there were three faculty members—Dan Teis, myself and Joe Moss that they invited to do a show there. And I think I did one or two other group shows besides that.

MARGARET: Okay.
LARRY: It seemed like things were going to get more serious than that but I had some other opportunities to do some things in Philadelphia about the same time with Rosenfeld.

MARGARET: Okay. So you went with Rosenfeld and then you exhibited later with Mangel Gallery.

LARRY: That was just a couple of group shows.

MARGARET: A couple of group shows okay. And with Blue Streak in Wilmington, group exhibitions?

LARRY: Yes, yeah.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: Those have been mostly things that have been invitations you know.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: I’m trying to remember what her name is that runs Blue Streak.

MARGARET: Ellen Bartholomaeus.

LARRY: That’s it.

MARGARET: Yes. Okay. Did you exhibit, I didn’t see it here but I just wanted to ask you to be sure, did you exhibit with Susan Isaacs or have any recollections of her space?

LARRY: I do. I remember her gallery. I didn’t exhibit with her but the show that I had at the DCCA when I’d, right after I retired, that would’ve been 2005, she was, I think largely responsible for that or she was curating for them at that time. And even though it was a juried process I remember she seemed to be pretty enthusiastic and I think she pushed it quite a bit.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: But I do, I remember some of the shows that she had there. The one I remember most vividly was the Hilton Brown show.

MARGARET: Oh I didn’t know she showed, oh that’s interesting. So she did a Hilton Brown show. And it seems like after Fifth Street, her space was the next, perhaps most contemporary for lack of a better description.

LARRY: I think she had two spaces at first if I remember right.

MARGARET: Yes because—
LARRY: She had one upstairs space that I recall and then one that was sort of downtown that was a much nicer space.

MARGARET: Right. And that second one was the one she was operating on her own. The one prior was when she was still with Linda Brennan Jones, when she was involved with her.

LARRY: Okay.

MARGARET: So do you remember, was Hilton Brown’s show—

LARRY: That was in that upstairs space.

MARGARET: In that upstairs smaller space, okay.

LARRY: Yeah. I don’t know if he ever showed at the other space are not.

MARGARET: At the other one, okay.

LARRY: But I do remember that she, she showed a graduate student of ours at that newer space shortly after he graduated, he’s a black artist whose name was Edward Bates. I think his first name was actually Darrell but he went by Edward Bates.

MARGARET: Edward Bates? Oh I haven’t heard that name.

LARRY: In fact he worked here I’m sure in the sales and rental gallery for Alice [Hupfel].

MARGARET: Really? Oh.

LARRY: I think he—I’m fairly sure that’s the case.

MARGARET: Interesting. Did Alice carry any of your work in the sales and rental gallery?

LARRY: Off and on, yeah.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: She actually did, she made a nice sale for me.

MARGARET: Do you mind me asking if it was corporate?

LARRY: Well actually she made two. One was corporate, it was to Wilmington Trust before they went belly up, which I mean—interesting story about that. When I had the retrospective in Delaware I was trying to get a hold of that painting from Wilmington Trust and they couldn’t find it. To this day nobody seems to know whatever happened to it but I’ll bet it’s in somebody’s home.

MARGARET: Oh I bet it is. This is my concern about corporate collections though.
LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: Works of art get lost. Yep, or walk. Like that big Sheila Hicks that was—there is a Sheila Hicks in a Wilmington corporate collection, don’t know where that went.

LARRY: Well let’s see, what else we got?

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: What else I was going to say about and then I forgot it now.

MARGARET: So one corporate sale for you in—

LARRY: Oh, what’s the name of the woman that she sold it to, who is pretty well known here in the Delaware, Wilmington area? In fact there was a show that the Museum did some years ago.

MARGARET: Yes you were in *Private Eye*.

LARRY: Yes.

MARGARET: In 1993.

LARRY: And that was, it was from her collection.

MARGARET: And it was from her collection.

LARRY: It was listed as anonymous but—

MARGARET: Her collection was listed as anonymous?

LARRY: In the catalog yeah.

MARGARET: In the catalog.

LARRY: Although I knew who it is but I’m trying to think of her name. She and her sisters were both active in the arts community. One of her sisters just passed away recently and her other sister was killed in a car accident some years ago and one of the galleries at the DCCA is named after her sister.

MARGARET: Oh, Draper.

LARRY: Yes Reeve Draper, that’s who bought the paintings from—well actually that’s a more convoluted story. I think Alice took Reeve Draper to New York to see some work up there and I had some work with Littlejohn Smith Gallery at that time. And so the work was actually purchased from them but Alice was I think largely responsible for the sale.
MARGARET: Okay, okay. That’s interesting to know. We have installation images from *The Private Eye* and I can see your work in the gallery in the installation image. But that’s interesting that it’s listed as anonymous. Okay. Oh wonderful okay. This is great.

How about the DCCA? So I think what’s interesting in thinking about the foundation of the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts is that a lot of the energy that was here in the city in the years immediately prior, I think certainly led to the establishment of the DCCA. So you have of course things that are happening in downtown Wilmington thanks to Rob Jones and Fifth Street Gallery. And he was really I think getting a lot of energy after the renovation of the opera house and then the installation of Market Street Mall.

Then you have Faith Street Gallery and here simultaneously at the Delaware Art Museum you have my goodness, almost 40 artists who were participating with the CETA programs. So this is government funding putting artists, largely photographers interestingly enough, here at the Delaware Art Museum. So you have all of these artists coming into the city and I think that’s in part what really led to the foundation of the DCCA. So these are artist looking for space to work, space to show, you know physical space.

LARRY: I don’t know how accurate it is but I’ve always had the impression that Rick Rothrock was quite instrumental in the formulation of the DCCA, if not, I mean not he alone, but I think he was a prime mover in getting that off the ground.

MARGARET: Oh certainly, yes certainly I would say. I guess you never want to identify one founder for any organization because—

LARRY: But he’s close to it.

MARGARET: So many people are involved but he is the closest there is to the founder.

LARRY: I think so.

MARGARET: And he was involved with ArtSquad and all of the things that were happening with that group of CETA artists that were here.

LARRY: Right.

MARGARET: I’m wondering, did you come to the DCCA? Do you remember any of the early activities?

LARRY: I do. I remember some of the, somewhere I think I still have an announcement from an early group show there that was in I think the very first base they ever had which was upstairs in a really run down kind of pathetic looking—

MARGARET: Yeah.
LARRY: I remember checking off the people who were from the university’s program, either graduate or undergraduate programs and faculty that were in that show. And it was an awful lot of—but yeah, and actually I was on their board for a short time when they moved up to the old waterworks building.

MARGARET: Oh okay.

LARRY: Gosh what was the woman’s name who was, who’s State Arts Council at that time?

MARGARET: Would that have been, that wouldn’t have been Carol Balick? No.

LARRY: No.

MARGARET: And not Gina Bosworth?

LARRY: No. Oh gosh, again you know I’ve got her name in records in my archives but, I’ve forgotten where I was going to go with that too. Oh, I think she was, I had been the grant review panelist for the State Arts Council on two or three different occasions. And she had asked me if I would serve on the board for the DCCA, which I did for I think just a year or two years.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: And then between being department chairperson and trying to get my own work done I just, I couldn’t keep up with it all so I stepped down from it.

MARGARET: Right, okay. But quite a lot of the faculty, students from the University of Delaware showing in some of the early exhibitions of the DCCA?

LARRY: Yes.

MARGARET: Which is exciting to hear because that disconnect between Newark and Wilmington, I mean certainly you see it today and it’s you know as you said it was even more so before.

LARRY: Well the DCCA really helped to bridge that a great deal I think. I mean Bob Straight I remember had a show, well he’s had a couple of shows at the DCCA but the first one he had was when they were still in that old waterworks building.

MARGARET: Hmm, okay, interesting. And the Delaware Art Museum was doing some interesting things it seems like with the University of Delaware in the 1970s. I know when I interviewed Joe he was talking about one of the large outdoor sculpture exhibitions that they had here at the Museum with faculty and students.

LARRY: Mm hmm.
MARGARET: So same thing. I think the, it’s interesting both the art museum and DCCA engaging in a new and interesting way with contemporary art, local artists and then faculty and students at the University of Delaware as well.

LARRY: Well you know the show that the DCCA is doing now, the graduate student work from around here, that originally started off as just University of Delaware graduate students.

MARGARET: Oh interesting.

LARRY: I don’t know how many years it went on like that but Steve, what was his name?

MARGARET: Lanier?

LARRY: Steve Lanier, yeah, when he was director he was pretty much responsible for that.

MARGARET: Interesting.

LARRY: Yeah.

MARGARET: Yeah. Oh this is wonderful. Well before I stop this are there any other details, memories, recollections you’d like to add in regards to—?

LARRY: One other gallery that comes to mind that nobody has mentioned, that I heard anyway, was the Grand Gallery that Sewell Biggs ran.

MARGARET: Okay.

LARRY: This was long before he opened the Museum downstate. And the only exhibition that I can recall from there was an early exhibition that Steve Tanis had there.

MARGARET: Steve Tanis showed his work there, oh that’s interesting. I’m interviewing him in a few weeks and I’ll be sure to ask him about this because you’re, only one other interviewee has mentioned the Grand Gallery but they couldn’t remember even any artists who had shown there. So you’re the—

LARRY: But other than Steve I can’t remember anybody either.

MARGARET: But that’s good. I’ll certainly, I’ll ask Steve about that as well because, so that was, I know someone said maybe to the right if you’re facing the Grand, I can’t remember if they said to the right or the left.

LARRY: I can’t remember.

MARGARET: But what’s interesting is I think right around-ish, around the same time Rob Jones was operating a disco on the second floor of the Grand and this was kind of the scene for some of the, you know the after parties from Fifth Street. Oh this is wonderful. Okay, so Steve Tanis
exhibited work. So Sul Biggs it seems like was showing local, I mean was showing contemporary art.

LARRY: Well he was showing, I think primarily realist art. I don’t think he got anything abstraction at all.

MARGARET: Okay. Oh that’s perfect. This is wonderful thank you.

LARRY: You’re welcome.

[End of Audio]

Duration: 49 minutes