

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

COVER SHEET

Transcriber: Janet Norris Gates, Independent Contractor

Date of Interview: 10/04/07

Duration: 48:25 – 56:35 – Video 1; 0:00 – 24:19 – Video 2

Interviewee: Dave Caudill

Interviewer: Greg Willihnganz

Location: Louisville, Kentucky

Sponsoring Organization: Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Funding: LexArts, Kentucky Oral History Commission

Transcription Notes:

DC: Dave Caudill

GW: Greg Willihnganz

In some cases, words such as “um”, “uh”, and “yeah” have been excluded.

Time notations have been included at approximately 2-4 minute intervals.

... Indicates pause, delay in conversation, or, weak transition/no transition in themes.

Attempts were made to verify the names of all people and geographical locations referenced throughout this interview

:04

DC: Okay. Great I had taken your list of questions and there were a couple that I actually marked through that I don't really want to address. But anyway you know. You can just ask me whatever you want and then we will...

GW: Ok, that's fine. Ah, let's just start with maybe you as an artist and maybe you can tell me a little bit about how you got into sculpture and what it is for, for you.

DC: Sure I got focused on sculpture as a primary preoccupation when I did a piece of undersea work in the Bahamas to illustrate the idea of humanity and harmony with nature and once I completed that project I knew that it was a passion that I wanted to continue for the rest of my life and make it my primary focus. And so, I came back to work in gardens and primarily outdoor sculpture. And from that as a base I moved from large scale sculpture into smaller scale work and started working in the craft environment and that's how I got hooked up with the Kentucky Guild.

GW: Okay. How are you trained for this?

DC: I studied at the Louisville School of Art and I didn't take sculpture and when I left school I felt like it was something that was really missing in my education. So I just started carving myself and laid out a program of self-study. So I've worked with a lot of different people, you know, a lot of folks have helped me learn to weld and shown me all kinds of fabrication techniques and every time I do a big sculpture I have different fabrication partners who really create a lot of background for me and give me new techniques and tools and such. And so, it's really a process of learning and being self-taught.

GW: Okay. What would you say are the experiences that contributed significantly to your development? Were they training or seeing other people's work or...?

DC: Primarily seeing other people's work, you know, I trained as a fine artist at the Louisville School of Art and I've been looking at art for almost all of my adult life and just looking at the great diversity of expressions that are there throughout the ages and different cultures has really been an effort to understand my own humanity better as filtered through the experiences of other people and the forms of others.

GW: What drew you to the particular areas that you've been working in? I know you've been working in not only sculpture but in tables and some other things.

DC: Uhm, I originally was attracted primarily to abstract work in pure form looking for kind of a common denominator. I was looking for a common denominator in essence that could be communicated in very simple forms, almost like a haiku in three dimensions. And that work led me into contact with a lot of other people who were working in metal and, you know, in Kentucky the art and craft world have been intermixed for so long that it's real easy to get exposure from one world to another and

that's how I got drawn into craft when I started working with the Guild and started doing their art fairs and such. And it just, it opened me up; it opened up my thinking in terms of what the possibilities were.

GW: How much of your time have you actually been able to devote to your art?

DC: I've been fulltime for about thirteen years and that usually means fulltime, about seventy hours a week or so, on average. And before that it was an avocation that was fun and a hobby but not a significant percentage of my time. But it's my devotion now.

GW: Now do you teach at the same time?

4:00

DC: I do workshops from time to time but I don't do anything else. I just get out and hustle and try to make a living as a sculptor.

GW: Wow. A lot of the people that I've interviewed, uhmm, can't quit their day jobs.

DC: Right.

GW: Despite substantial recognition and displays and awards and the whole thing and I look at, from my own perspective, I've done a fair amount of woodwork, not quality stuff that you would see at an art fair but a fair amount. And I do cabinets and beds and all sorts of things, ah, tables and what not. But, I look at the folks and I talk to them at St. James Art Fair or wherever I happen to be and I just realized that these people are living in poverty for their art.

DC: Yeah.

GW: I mean, it's gorgeous stuff and you think, wow, how fabulous that people can do this. These people must be pretty successful. Well, they're actually not. (laughing) It's so hard to make a living at doing this and that's part of what I'm, sort of, exploring with the whole Guild project here.

DC: It's a real feast and famine process, you know, you have great years and then you have other years where you wonder how long you can hang in there. One of my favorite jokes is the story about the craft artisan who won the lottery, or won the lottery, you know. And somebody said, "Well now you've won all this money and are you still going to do your artwork?" And he said, "Well, I'm a crafter through and through, I'm just going to keep on till the money runs out." (laughter)

GW: Yeah, that's the truth. Tell us a little bit about this table and the sculpture behind you.

DC: The sculpture is a little bronze piece that's designed to balance in lots of different ways so that you can turn it upside down or turn it over. In fact, let me show you that (gets up to demonstrate). It creates a different gesture and a different look depending on how you position it and the whole thing for me is an exercise in expanding my own vision and exploring my own creativity. Because when you put two of these together, then the combinations are really just infinite. And I think that that is a great metaphor for the creativity for everyone because it gives you a chance to be far more flexible in your problem solving regardless of what that problem might be or what that situation and opportunity might be. The table is one of a series that I've done that integrate granite tops and structural steel bases and they also are, they are also efforts to just become more intuitive and to play. I usually don't know what I'm going to do when I start out to build one. I'm just attracted by the way the different pieces come together and then I just kind of let it flow and hope that it turns out to be something that I like. I do end up cutting pieces apart and putting them away because they just don't work for me. But it's spontaneity in intuitive process that really turns me on.

GW: Well it seems kind of odd to move from metal to basically stone cutting and to woodwork and you seem to sort of combine a whole series of different media here.

DC: I have a very unruly imagination.

(Laughter)

GW: Okay. What, ah, of all the things that you've created what, are there things, one or two things that are just what you feel is the best of your work?

DC: Gosh, that's tough. I think probably the undersea sculpture is, is a real highlight for me but the little bronzes and the other linear pieces in stainless are also real important because of that idea of an essence of a common denominator that anyone, regardless of culture and historical background can walk up to this piece and there's a feeling that's a lyrical feeling, a rhythmic, a visual music that I think is real important to an elementary sense of sculpture.

GW: Okay. What has been the hardest thing to overcome in mastering your art?

DC: Oh, mental discipline and focus. I mentioned that I have an unruly imagination. It leads me off in different directions so I don't give an effort sometimes the complete focus and discipline that it would take to turn it into a thriving business. I don't do it for business success. I do it for the enlightenment that it brings to my life. And sometimes, to me the question of art, the making of art is the answering of a question in the process of asking it. You don't really understand completely what's going on but once you throw yourself into the middle of it and you make something, when you're done, you know you are done and only then can you look at it and say, "Ah-ha, that's what that was about."

GW: How do you feel or do you feel compromised in any way by the need to make money through your art?

9:35

DC: Making money is certainly a big challenge and it's a daily motivator that I have to live with. I think we all do. I try to look at it as a challenge instead of something that's stifling me. Ummm, there are so many things in life that I really want to do that, when I wake up every day, there are almost no bad choices. And I have a temperament that allows me to really enjoy working with people and I don't mind business dealings at all, that doesn't trouble me at all and I don't mind selling my work. I think it's a matter of finding your tribe, you know, it's finding the people that get so much out of your work that they are ready to help in lots of different ways, whether it's referral or whether it's buying your work or whether it's commissioning something for a public place. And in that process you, you relate to all of those people in very special ways that go far beyond the realities of the commercial transaction. They really become significant soul mates in the development of your life because they help you and they teach you.

GW: Okay, let's talk a little bit about the KY Guild of Artists and Craftsmen and what your history has been with them. How did you first hear about the Guild?

DC: I was, I grew up as an artist in Kentucky and in the late sixties and early seventies there was an exhibition called "Objects USA" that really put craft on the map in terms of the average person's consciousness. It was highly promoted, beautiful exhibition and it had work from people in KY. And I learned about people like Alma Lesch and Rudi Osolnik and lots of other craftspeople and I looked at that exhibition and it changed my attitude about what art was. And in the process of becoming an adult, supporting myself and coming back into art, I realized that if I was going to live in KY and work as an artist whose body of work overlapped the craft industry that I wanted to get more involved with the Guild because they had been there in the beginning. You know, the Guild has always been an important part of craft in KY. I'd say one of the top three organizations in KY and they, on their own initiative have achieved a great deal in terms of recognition for craft and what it can do for the average person in KY.

12:19

GW: Now when did you get involved with the Guild?

DC: It was probably about ten years ago, something like that, I think. And I was showing at the KY Crafted Market in Louisville and folks who were active with the Guild came around and recruited me and I got more and more involved. I got interested more deeply and so, I came on as a member, as an exhibiting member and then I started volunteering and doing different projects with them.

GW: Are you aware of their early history?

DC: Somewhat, I don't know as much as many but I know about the train and the whole process of trying to create a wider public awareness. That's one of the things that was real inspiring about the Guild.

GW: Okay, have you made a lot of new friends and acquaintances through the Guild?

DC: Sure. I think it is one of the strongest points of the Guild is the networking that happens among artists of lots of different disciplines and over ten years I've enjoyed a lot of new acquaintances and some really deep friendships that I'm very grateful for. Those folks all approach their artwork in many different media from so many perspectives that it's just a constant learning experience to go to a fair and to meet new friends and to find out what makes them tick.

GW: Do you get a lot of information from different crafts that you might not necessarily be involved in that you can then translate into the work that you do?

DC: I'm always learning from other people. I don't often use their technique and their form directly in the work but I'm confident that it goes in and comes out in some way that I don't completely understand. I'm very interested in those common denominators among artists and among the average person on the street and see it as a continuum that constantly informs all of us and creates a much more creative environment for us all.

GW: You know there are so many of these things that most of us aren't even aware of necessarily as crafts. I always thought, you know I grew up with all the clichés about basket weaving, something for idiots to do to keep them busy. And then I go to the Chicago museum of art and there is baskets and these baskets are so stunning and so amazing to me. They are like sculptures...

DC: That's right.

GW: And I realize there is a whole other world of perception there that I was just unaware of.

14:54

DC: That's true for all of us. It's just amazing. I think it's the, the "ah-ha" moment is what we are all looking for when we are looking at art whether we realize it or not. And when it happens, it's that inspiration that just drives us to go deeper into our own humanity.

GW: Well, I've been looking at the history of, if you will, crafts and artwork, really craftwork more, ah, in terms in our country's, and society culture, if you will, development. And you know for a long time, I think, the crafts work was what we did to live, you needed a chair, you built a chair. You needed a basket, you wove one together and that was your basket. And then we got into the industrial age and we started manufacturing all that stuff and now everything comes from China.

DC: Right.

GW: And what we get is, we get craft fairs where the actual production of craftwork is such a specialized thing that it's almost reserved for this elite group of artists who get to do this. And, uhm, and in some ways I think it's almost antithetical to bringing craftwork back into the schools and into the culture and into people's homes so that they take part in it. And basically appreciate it on deeper levels. I don't know that I will ever make a piece of woodwork that is worthy of being sold or even displayed necessarily at St. James or one of these other places but it helps me so much to have done that when I'm looking at woodwork. And I've always go to woodwork first when I go to one of these places because I'm fascinated with what they can do. Some of these really patient, has the equipment, the time, the energy and the focus and has the creative spirit to take that raw wood and craft it into something that is extraordinary.

DC: Sure.

GW: Anyway, I don't know if there was a question there, I was just mumbling on there. I just talk a lot.

(Laughter)

DC: I mentioned earlier the idea of a common denominator and for me, it's all about creativity. You know, I've created workshops where I've enabled young kids and older adults to weld a small sculpture themselves and in the process talked to them about the creativity that they were born with. Because it is native to us all, it's just, (clears throat) excuse me. It's just the process of acculturation that beats it out of us and we, we become, we, somehow we get the idea that we are not creative and that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. I think it's the challenge and the opportunity for artists and craftspeople to enhance the understanding and creativity for everybody who meets them and sees their work. Because just looking at a piece of artwork can help you become more flexible in your thinking and for me, creativity boils down to flexible thinking and problem solving. If we can all become better at that we become happier and more successful in everything that we do.

GW: Okay, speaking again a little bit about the Guild, uhm, have you held offices within the organization?

DC: I tried not to. (Laughter) I have been involved almost since I became involved in craft on the board of the KY Museum of Art and Craft and my time was really limited. I just, I couldn't devote the time that it would take to be a good officer in the Guild, although I tried to help and as a volunteer in different ways. I chaired an exhibition committee in Louisville to stage a large exhibition here on the occasion of the 40th anniversary. And I donate a large sculpture for a fundraiser and helped out in a number of different, smaller ways. Like most people, most people really pitch in and help a lot but in terms of being an officer or being on their board or what, I never got that deep into it. And it is a particular challenge that is daunting to a lot of folks because the nature of the organization, you know, it's a conglomerate of lots of different people with different purposes and different activities and media and such to find those ways that they can

work together and create real win-win opportunities for them is a real challenge. And it takes a lot of time to do that as a volunteer and I just have not had the additional time that it took to do that with the Guild.

GW: Well the Guild actually started in '61, so it's got quite a long history and you are right, I think it was one of the primary or the earliest organized, ah, groups to work creatively with the whole concept of marketing and developing classes and encouraging the growth of craftwork. They had a lot of initial support through the government, through the governors, a couple different governors were active with it and some major corporations and the railroad, of course, that hauled this art train all over the state, and basically donated cars and gave quite a bit of their resources to this project. But as the years went by, other organizations developed and I'm wondering what the effect was and how that affected the Guild, if you are aware of any of that.

20:42

DC: Well, I do know the history of the other organizations in the state and they went back to the time when Phyllis George was a partner with her husband who was running for governor and got interested in crafts and helped develop all of these routes to market through Bloomingdales in New York and so on. And as an outgrowth of that came the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program in state government and the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft which then was known as the Kentucky Art and Craft Foundation. And it, I think what happened in craft happened as a result of all three of those organizations doing different things to work collectively for the betterment of individual artists and of the group of artists and the whole environment. I don't think it could have happened without all three because they took... they had different roles to play and there might have been some overlap and there might have been some issues due to limited resources on all counts but by and large it is nationally regarding as a big success story. You know, Kentucky is seen as one of the leading states in craft in America. And it, I mean, it's something that I didn't know until I got out and met people all across the country.

GW: Yeah, I was not aware of this.

DC: Oh, yeah, absolutely, the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program is a model for lots of other states, for other state governments to put together some initiative to regard the craft industry as an economic development initiative. And, what Craft Marketing Program has done on a real detailed basis as well as a big picture basis is really quite remarkable. And they have, they have done what the Guild could not do because the Guild has never had those kinds of resources. They've never had the ability to reach out in a very big way across the state, they've never had the muscle that state government offers. And what's now the museum has achieved a great deal precisely because it is not federated by the mandates and the limitations of state government and it's not subject to the limitations of a volunteer, grassroots kind of an organization. You know the KY Museum of Art and Craft is this melding of collectors and artists and people and educators and folks who are interested in the work and the collectors themselves. Uhhh, and you get all of those people together and some real interesting symbioses occur that

just can't occur without that money. And it's a great lesson for the Guild and anybody else to learn that, we are all partners in big teams and those teams change all the time. But if you don't have the attitude about teamwork, you're not going to make it, you know. And the whole organization and the society will not reap the benefit of that success.

23:53

GW: So do you see that there's a group of resources and a group of organizations who are basically competing for those resources?

DC: Oh, no, I don't see competition at all. I mean, there, in a strict sense perhaps there might be in terms of corporate grants and such. But the Craft Marketing Program doesn't go out after grants from corporations. There's no competition there that, the KY Museum of Art and Craft does, but they don't present a competitive front statewide that would injure the Guild in any way. The Guild has an opportunity to partner with these other organizations to further its goals, if it could figure out how it could do that effectively and create that partnership it could be quite successful.

GW: Okay, what would you say are the benefits to the members of being in the Guild, being an active participant in it?

DC: The Guild offers a lot of benefits. I think primarily it would be seen as the opportunity to make a living, you know, through exhibiting at the fairs and selling at the fairs. But by networking with all those other artists in different media, you learn how to think about marketing yourself in new ways. You see techniques that are being employed in the display of your work. You, ah, you hear about initiatives that they are taking, workshops that they are developing themselves. They are becoming, they start out as artists and they become teachers. There are lots of different ways that artists can flourish in our society and the Guild is a great place to learn that for a lot of people.

GW: Okay. Ummm, I think I've covered some of this, ah,...

DC: Oh, the other thing that I could add to that is that the Guild has a strong history and a very credible history and a highly regarded history. And it has a brand that brings a lot of credibility to an individual artist when that artist is juried into the Guild. So, no matter how you use that in your publicity materials, in your booths and in, with the materials that you give to your existing customers and such and in publicity, it is kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that helps both the Guild and the individual artist. But, to think that my work is rubbing elbows, metaphorically, with Rudy Osolnik and Alma Lesch is pretty remarkable, I think. I'm pleased to be in that tradition and in that company.

GW: Uh-hmm. How do you feel about the concept of juried fairs?

DC: It's a crap shoot. It's absolutely a crap shoot. You never know what's going to happen. And I've seen a lot of wonderful work rejected from craft fairs. Ummm, the folks who are judging may be completely different in temperament and in exposure in

idealism to the folks who are entering. I don't think that's it is automatically a slam to someone who doesn't get into any specific show. But it does provide a ladder, a way for people to just continually strive to do better work and to get into some of these shows.

I've tried to jury into a lot of shows nationwide and year on year, I'd never get in, you know, but it doesn't mean that I feel bad about my work. It's just, it's a political issue, you know, that we all have to face and unfortunately it does impact our livelihood but it's just reality.

27:42

GW: Do a lot of sculptor people get into craft fairs, per say?

DC: No, that, that overlap between craft and art, I think probably is more, more common in Kentucky and the craft states where it is very well established, Oregon and North Carolina and there's a lot of them. But typically when you go into those areas, what you find is craft artists who have evolved their understanding in ideas in a sculptural direction rather than the other way around.

GW: Okay. There's a certain sentiment among some of the people I have spoken with that the Guild has seen much better days.

DC: Yeah.

GW: And may in fact, be waning...

DC: Right.

GW: And possibly even going under, ah, what do you think is the future of the Guild?

DC: Well, it's not the first time that they've been on the wane. (Laughing) You know any organization has it's ebbs and highs. It's the nature of a volunteer organization to go through cycles like that. The future of the Guild is a real question mark. But it doesn't mean that's a problem. It, I think the Guild is waiting for some people with an understanding of how their strengths can dovetail together to fight their weaknesses and to partner with other organizations throughout the state and in other communities to leverage themselves up back into a strong organization again. You know, non-profit organizations are really tricky and I don't hold it against any of these people that they tried their best and it didn't work. But what didn't work yesterday might work tomorrow.

GW: Well, that's true. I think there is always though a certain question that you get in to where you, where art meets commercialism.

DC: Yeah.

GW: And you get certain compromises that I expect are in some ways inevitable but I look at, for instance, Louisville Pottery and what they are able to do. Well, they are not really a potter; they are not really a manufacturer. They are sort of half way in-between.

DC: Yeah.

GW: And they are giving us more homemade than manufactured, no one will confuse it with stuff that comes out of China which all looks exactly the same.

DC: Yeah.

GW: But at the same time, is it really, is that really art?

DC: The problem that we face is that, that every thing can be seen through the prism of art and most things can be seen through the prism of craft. But, they share the..., the common denominator is spirit and to the degree that that spirit of the person who made it is in the piece, yes, it's art.

GW: Okay. Where would you like to see the Guild go in the future? Would you like to see them move into new areas?

DC: Yeah, I'd like to see them go to Hawaii and take me with them. (Laughter) You know the Guild, uhmm, the Guild probably has some terrific opportunities to help its members become better designers and to have an understanding of how they can take their sense of design and work with an industry to create a product that can then be marketed and sold by somebody else. I mean, that's essentially what is going on with all this work that is coming in from overseas, that's taking our bread and butter away. Because somebody designed it, it doesn't mean they designed it well, you know. So there is a chance for the folks who really understand the heart and soul of their work to work with somebody who really understands manufacturing and someone else who really understands sales and to put together the team that can enable them to go places they never in a million years would have gone before.

I think that's probably one of the biggest unmet challenges so far in craft in Kentucky. It's been on the table for ten years and it's probably going to continue to be on the table because we can't fight a lot of this stuff coming in from China and Indonesia and Mexico and all those other places. Frankly, ten years ago, you could count on the fact that that work coming in was pretty shoddy and that if people really wanted something nice they would find their way to you. You can't do that anymore because that work coming in is increasingly well crafted and beautiful and the price is so cheap that people who don't have a lot of means are going to be driven to that. I mean it's a reality.

But there will always be a market for the piece that was made by the hands and the mind and the heart of someone that you met and it's that confluence of story and personality and humanity and beauty and ingenuity that's packed all that, that you can pick up and carry with you and that you can afford. And that is the future.

32:53

GW: Are there any specific initiatives that you think the Guild should take at this point?

DC: I'm not, I'm not sure how to answer that question because, I, it's all contingent on the balance of human resources that they have, that's their biggest limitation. I mean, certainly money is an issue but the folks who can come in with the vision and the energy and the time that it takes to muscle these programs together and make it work, that's the biggest challenge. And I think what the Guild really needs to do is to leverage those partnerships so that we create the opportunity for our brand to lend credence to other initiatives with libraries, and with museums and community centers throughout Kentucky. Craft offers the potential for the average person on the street to embrace an artwork not a piece of fine artwork that's abstract and remote from their experience but a piece a craft has that utility. It has that history of media. It has the allure and beauty of a certain substance that it was made from. It has a technique that is only a few steps removed from something that people have done at different points in their life. So it affords a point of entry for a lot of people who are walking around who have no idea about art and art history. They are not taught it in our schools. They don't get any exposure to it. Nobody in their family is an artist. So craft has a really unbelievable opportunity for outreach into the general population and that's where, I think, we need to focus.

GW: I share a lot of those sentiments but I also am aware that when I go to some of these shows, I am so dazzled by the output of these individual artisans, I think to myself, there is no way I can compete or even be in the same league with these guys. I can't, I can't do dovetail joist work on putting these things together. I just can't do that. And it's almost like it discourages you from doing craftwork because of that.

DC: Oh, that's really interesting. You know, I'm continually drawn back to that expression, "how do you eat an elephant?" "One bite at a time", you know. And it's true that none of us master our skills very quickly and depending on the competition for our time, it takes a lot longer for some of us than others. I went into this work fulltime because I realized that if I didn't, I would not be able to make work that was as good as I wanted to make. And so, I went into that and I just started living with it. And just worked fulltime and really started cranking it out and it's only by that process that I was able to get good enough to feel comfortable enough to put my work out there. I have the same response. I look at work in national shows, like the American Craft Counsel shows and I just feel privileged to be there because I know the craftsmanship that those people are exhibiting and that they made is just incredible. But everybody brings something different to the table and I think what I bring stands apart from issues of craft. It's a vision; it's a feeling and a lot of work anymore, a lot of artwork is intellectual. It's filled with angst and I'm simple celebrating life and beauty. (Shrugs his shoulders and smiles.)

GW: That's terrific. Uhm, what do you think is the significance of artistic and craft work? I mean what does it really do for us as human beings?

36:54

DC: It provides inspiration, first and foremost, and that inspiration can take many forms and can relate to so many different areas whether it's heritage or whether it's an extending of the medium itself. You know, the idea that wood could do something that you didn't even know could be done with wood, for example. But I think that inspiration is the foundation for everything, for the future for art. It's certainly the way that the customer and the artist salesman come together. You know, it's the only reason that they come together. Utility is really important but it's really inspiration that people are looking for. It's what we need most in our lives. You know, after you get beyond food, clothing and shelter, you know, we have to sustain that out flow of energy that each of us lives with and you trace it all back to inspiration. I didn't say that very well.

GW: Looking at some of the things that you make, like this table and what not, I think to myself, the number of hours that you must have put into selecting this, polishing it, fitting it, putting it together makes it a very costly thing before it gets...

DC: Right.

GW: I mean compared to going into your local Target and picking up a table.

DC: Right.

GW: It's a completely different thing. Do you think we will ever be at a place where people will invest this kind of energy, this kind of resources into integrating craftwork into their lives?

DC: Oh, sure, gosh, there are lots of markets in America where it is happening like crazy. When I go out and do art fairs all across the country, ah, some of those fairs have levels of participation from attendance and from buyers that far outpaces what is going on in Kentucky. It's a tricky thing to manage but the potential is absolutely there and I'm confident that it will always be there because of the humanity that is involved. I mean it, these are not objects made by machines by and large. We might use machines in the manufacture of them in our own shops but they are made by hands and they are informed by human beings and that is what draws people to craft and I think that will always be the case.

GW: Is there any national organization similar to the Kentucky Guild? And do you as an artist graduate up to basically appealing to a more national audience?

DC: Yes, the American Craft Council is probably the most prominent national organization devoted to craft. And they run workshops. They have exhibitions. They publish a magazine. There is a lot there to be gained for any craft artist to be involved with the American Craft Council. In terms of graduating up, ah, I would say that's a, I'm not sure I would go there because what people are doing now really transcends the, the

issue of workmanship. For so many people both on the buying end and the making end, the objects that are being made are driven by the need to communicate ideas as much as the workmanship itself. It used to be the inverse. I mean an object like a bowl would not be seen as having a story, per say, or as communicating a story. But the minute that you start changing that and turning it into a more sculptural object, it does create the opportunity for narrative to come in and inform the meaning of that piece for the people who make and for the people who appreciate it. So, uhmm, it's a real mixed bag but there's a lot of places for artists to go to extend their opportunities in different directions. The International Sculpture Center is a great place for anybody who makes three dimensional work now because those people are taking seriously the idea of found object work, assemblage pieces of things that are made of fiber and baskets, basically that have lost their function but are wonderful forms for their own sake. There are plenty of routes for craft artists to follow.

41:35

GW: What do you see as the utility of doing crafts work or increasing the amount of crafts work that is done in our schools?

DC: It's the opportunity to get across two really important messages. One is the idea that there are many creative outlets that are available to a young person who perhaps hasn't seen a lot of artwork before. The other really important thing that happens is for a youngster to get a chance to just experience working in clay or wood or metal or glass or whatever it might be. I'm fully convinced that each one of us is born an artist. But it's true that some of us do have, ah, preferences for some media over others. I mean there are natural glass artists walking around who are ten years old and they haven't discovered it yet, you know. If we could help our children learn which routes might be most suited to their talents and their sensitivities and their perceptions, gosh, I think the future of art and craft would be alive and well.

GW: What, what is your feeling about craft, you were speaking about different media. What about the media that are less physical? The media of the mind, if you will, ah, we get a lot of people who are doing filmmaking. It's basically putting images onto film and they are not necessarily in a documentary or a feature film format. They may be impressionistic film collages that are put to music and done this way. And a lot of different things are being put into the newer forms. There is a whole school derivative from the anime and all of those types of things where people are trying to be expressive through variations on animations, traditional animation. Are those part of craftwork or is that a whole separate area of the world?

DC: I think they are linked by the idea of craft, the idea of a person, ah, applying himself or herself to the process of, of developing something from their intelligence and their experience and their perceptions that they really can't even articulate, perhaps. It is a more intellectual reach. It's not obvious to a lot of people but I think there definitely is the linkage and it's a... on the other hand it affords an opportunity for the craft artist because for many forms of expression and creation there needs to be a certain amount of

appreciation of the finer points to be able to enjoy that piece of writing or that piece of film or whatever. For someone who makes a bowl, anybody can appreciate that, can walk up and pick it up and touch it and hold it and the experience of sense of space and form. It becomes a very intuitive thing but I don't think that, I don't think that those realms of expression should be, ah, separated and seen as something really different because they certainly inform each other.

44:58

GW: When you think about your life, do you see it as sort of a series of interesting projects that lead one to another or do you see yourself building to some creation pinnacle or something?

DC: My life is a mess. (Laughing) That's the easiest way I can sum it all up. If I had any discipline, I could be, I could be absolutely wonderful. (Laughing) If I had brains, I could be terrific. But the reality is, uhm, I can approach my work with a great degree of focus sometimes but I really have a hard time separating out the idea that, that I should be doing something when I really want to be celebrating something else. And the best work that I do integrates the celebration and the commemoration. And that's when it all comes together for me and that, that, the perpetuation of that moment is what my life is about. And so I'm not worried about big goals anymore. I'm fifty, almost fifty-seven and at this point in my life, I simply what to enjoy all the rest of it.

GW: Okay. That pretty much is my retinue of questions. Do you have any other comments you would like to share with posterity?

DC: Send money to 1261 Willow Avenue. (Laughter) I don't know of anything else that I could offer at this point, really.

46:43

GW: Well, thank you very much. I really appreciate your time.

DC: Oh, you bet. Good luck with your editing. I mean this has got to be an unbelievable project to, you know, to sort all of this out.

GW: Well, hopefully it will be very interesting.

DC: Oh, I'm sure, and good luck with the fundraising because it will, it will create some opportunities for you, you know, I mean you just can't, you can't keep devoting yourself to something that is not paying the bills and giving you other opportunities that you really need.

GW: Alright, I have 8 minutes left on the tape.

47:16

DC: Oh, okay. I'll try to keep this short. I think the most significant opportunity for every arts organization in the state and across the world is to focus on creativity. It's the common denominator that binds all of us together whether we make art, or appreciate art or don't give a damn about art. It's the creative thinking, the flexible thinking, the problem solving that happens that's going to create a better tomorrow for every one of us whether we are a garbage or a governor. And people really understand that. When I talk to folks and I break all of this process down and take the mystery and the magic out of it to the point where people can really understand what we are doing together, they get it. They get the idea that creativity is a value that our culture needs that everybody in our culture needs to embrace and further in order to improve their own lives and improve the status of the nation and the society. We got where we are by being really great at solving all kinds of problems, little problems and big problems. And art can play a part in that. It can help us practice, by the way we look at something, it can help us practice our creative thinking, our flexible thinking. And whether we like a piece of artwork or not, or whether we enjoy the way something is made, it can stimulate us to think differently. And if we can do that, art and craft will be at the heart of America for a long time and we will be successful.

GW: That's great stuff and I agree 100% with what you are saying. I give a speech at Toast Masters. I'm a pretty active Toast Master.

DC: Oh, are you?

GW: Oh, yeah, and I belong to the greatest Toast Masters Club in the world, it really is. And I gave a speech about creativity and finding solutions and what not and I looked at our culture as compared to China's culture. And there's a picture that I found one time of Chinese students going to the bathroom and they march them in in lines. They have troughs in the floor. They all squat down at the same moment. They all pee. They all get up. They all go out. And you think about those huge sporting events where they have flash cards and they do these incredible patterns. You couldn't do that in America. (Laughter – DC) There would be six guys out getting a beer and there would be three people fighting over here; and somebody else looking for their hat and their car. And it would just never happen. Not in China, boy, they are all right there. But it is that rigidity which doesn't allow them the creative solutions. Why they didn't come up with Apple computers.

DC: Yeah.

GW: Because they don't have that freedom of thought.

DC: Yes.

49:58

GW: And I think it is absolutely critical to our success. I think you are absolutely right on. That's the heart of it.

DC: And that's, you know, when I look at the Guild and other organizations, I think they would all be far more successful if they stressed that. If the Guild, for example, went to Toyota or any number of other corporations in Kentucky and said we can help you with this partnership build a more creative workforce, you know, your employees, your customers will appreciate you and the opportunity to be involved in this program and they will become much more successful in everything that they do for you. That is the future. That's what every art organization needs to do in America because it knits together our neighborhoods and our states and our communities in a way that nothing coming out of China will ever take the place of. We create a future.

50:54

GW: That is that specific initiative I was asking you about before, this is what they ought to do...

DC: Ahhh, okay, yeah.

GW: And I think you are absolutely right.

DC: And I think it would work. I mean I have great confidence in that.

GW: Yeah, there is, and reaching out to organizations like Toyota who are here and who are looking for ideas. They are not stupid people.

DC: No, I mean they are looking for great employees, you know, the people that I know, have known who have run businesses have consistently told me they find somebody really great and they want to hire them and then they will figure out how to use them. You just, you want to bring those people together and see what kind of great things can happen. It, I mean, it's like we are a whole bunch of opportunities that are passing in the night, you know, and we need to start bumping into each other. (Laughter) Sneak a little kiss every now and then. (Laughter) Oh, that reminds me, you know that series on the war that Ken Burns did.

GW: Sure.

DC: Did you see the last one?

GW: I did not see the last one. I've seen some previous ones.

DC: These guys were talking about getting off the boats coming back into America, you know, and how everybody greeting them was just crazy. And guys would grab girls and kiss them and so on and they would be a part of this big throng. This guy says, right on national TV, he says, you could cop a feel and nobody complained. (Laughter)

GW: Okay.

DC: (Laughter) That sums it up. It was really great.

GW: Yeah, I've been meaning to get back because I do documentary work and it's always fascinating, I mean Ken Burns is at least the best known documentary maker in the world. Arguably the best, but he certainly has pioneered things that have been major to the art form and it is fascinating to see how he does particular things and why he makes the choices he did. I wasn't as happy with the war as I hoped I would be and compared to his seminal work the Civil War, it's not quite on the same level. But so much of what he did in The Civil War was so innovative that nobody had ever even dreamed you could get away with this stuff. Just go slowly across the picture and use the right music and suddenly it's got emotion that you didn't even know was in there. And just very, very thoughtful, intelligent stuff and this one, he's put some different boundaries on it. It's limited in terms of what it can do and I don't know that he made the right choices fundamentally for some of these things. Four locations is a lot to try to keep up with. There's a huge cast. There's too darn many hours. I mean.

DC: Yeah, it's long project.

GW: To keep up, it's enormous, obviously it's enormous. It's too easy to get lost or to get distracted.

DC: Yeah, a lot of people won't see the whole thing because of...

GW: Very few people have sat through the whole thing.

DC: Yeah, you know, my thinking was, you know, as a young man, he was really devoted to his budding art form and at this point in his life he probably was overwhelmed by the subject matter of this long conflict and the breath of American involvement and the depth of it. You know, it was from little kids who were doing scrap metal drives to the people who were out fighting the battles and such. And at this point in his life, he reads the newspaper and watches TV and sees where America is going and wonder, how did we get here and how can we stop this? You know, that people can not go around feeling disconnected to the rest of the world and starting big fights like this. I mean the ruin of individuals and families that comes with war is just unacceptable. And for all of these people sitting in Congress and sitting in the Administration who have never been there, to vote to send these young men off to die it's just unconscionable.

GW: Yeah, I'm with you there, brother. I'm with you there. Okay, let's.....

End of video 55:26