

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Carol and Chris Pierce

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Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: Thank you Carole and Chris for doing this interview. We appreciate it.

CAROLE: Thank you for doing it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's just talk a little bit about, about your history and how you got into it. How you got into the arts that you've been involved with. Maybe you can tell me just as a starter, in a sentence or two or three, what it is overall that you've done as your art. Carole maybe you could start.

CAROLE: Well I've always liked fabric as a child. I started making doll clothes, and then I started making my own clothes, and then I started making fabric. I love the fluidity of it. I love the way when the threads cross they make different colors. I love color, the color in nature. Therefore, I've made a lot of wearables, because I like to see fabric move rather than just be stable on the wall.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay Chris?

CHRIS: Well basically it was looking for a job that brought us out. I had graduated with an advanced degree from the University of New Mexico. I had not heard of Berea until I was job hunting, and I was fascinated by the roll of craftsman and self taught craftsman of Appalachia. So I was accepted at Berea College as a faculty member, and came out in 1967. That's when we both came members of the Kentucky Guild. That's the beginnings of our belonging.

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's go back a little bit before that, I'm talking about your growing up. Were you born in Kentucky?

CAROLE: I was born in San Francisco.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. And you said you loved fabric as a child, did your mother sew?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you learned a lot of this at home?

CAROLE: Yeah, yeah. I had my, I had grandmothers who did all the embroidery, the flower sacks, and they took them apart and embroidered on them, and made them into dish towels. I still have some and use them.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. How about you Chris, where did you grow up?

CHRIS: I grew up with parents as artists, and people said, "Oh - you're going to be an artist?" I said, "Oh, not necessarily", because I was very interested in

anthropology and archeology. But I came back to art and the teaching of art, and that's why I said I'm an art educator. But that's my story, you know, art education, and my own art during the summers, because I didn't have time during the school year. That's it.

CAROLE: Make a stop right here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

CAROLE: Chris is very hard of hearing.

CHRIS: No, I've got it.

CAROLE: No, he asked you where and you didn't answer that. So that...

WILLIHNGANZ: Thanks. Yeah, maybe I didn't. Did you grow up in Kentucky?

CHRIS: No. I actually - if you really want to know, the Pierce's left Kentucky in the 1880's. Left Kentucky to go out to Colorado. The gold rush and things like that, and that's why I was born in the west. So to come back, in some ways, to the roots of the Pierce clan was very interesting.

WILLIHNGANZ: So, when you were growing up, did you do a lot of art work?

CHRIS: Yes, that was one of my interests and talents. You know it was a part of me.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What brought you to Kentucky?

CAROLE: He got a job.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now you teach at Berea?

CHRIS: In Berea Community School.

WILLIHNGANZ: Community schools? As an art teacher?

CHRIS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. So you moved here, when was that?

CAROLE: The fall of 67.

WILLIHNGANZ: Fall of 67?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And then how soon did you get involved with the Kentucky Guild?

CAROLE: Almost right away.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. How did you learn about it?

CAROLE: That is what I was trying to remember. Somehow we met up with Richard Bellando, who was the first director, and he said, "Oh, you've got to join this." So we did. Then we went...our first fair was the Guild's second fair, which was in May of '68. And we learned a lot about rain.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about that fair and what it was like.

CAROLE: It was rainy. It was muddy. People took off their shoes because it was easier to go barefoot in the mud.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now this is out at Indian Fort?

CAROLE: Yeah, Indian Fort Theater, yeah. It was quite an experience. It was our first time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now what were you displaying at that fair?

CAROLE: Weaving.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

CAROLE: And Chris was displaying small sculptures and jewelry.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you have a tent or anything?

CAROLE: The Guild then provided tents. Wonderful striped tents. It gave it a very festive air. What we weren't prepared with is plastic to cover the tent.

WILLIHNGANZ: How bad did your weaving?

CAROLE: Oh, I left and went to the farm supply store. Put siding.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, I see. Where you able to sell stuff at that first fair?

CAROLE: Yeah. Oh yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Who else was there that you remember?

CAROLE: Oh, a lot of people were there. Gin Petty was there. Wally Hyleck was there. Jim and Nancy Wright were there. I can't remember if Marie Hochstrasser was there. She might have been.

CHRIS: I think she was.

CAROLE: Fred Sheppard was there. Emily Wilson was there. William McClure was there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did many people lose their art work?

[DOG BARKING]

CAROLE: Shhhhhh. There is a dog down the street barking. No, for the most part people were pretty well prepared for it. I think the first fair people did lose art work.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you were actually at the second fair?

CAROLE: We were at the second one, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: But it rained at the first one too, didn't it?

CAROLE: It rained at all of them **[laughing]**. I mean that was just it.

WILLIHNGANZ: When, when you got involved with the Guild, what was your, I mean beside liking Richard Bellando, what was your goal in joining the Guild?

CAROLE: Well. I was a new weaver and so I needed a way to get outlets to sell my work, and since we were new to Kentucky that was a perfect place to do it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. And what did, what did they actually provide you with, what kind of support did you get from the Guild?

CAROLE: Well first it was just tents, and of course, advertising, and the fairs had a good population. Later on they added so you didn't have to get your own credit card machines, they added that you could send somebody down with a receipt and the Guild took care of the credit cards for you. They did workshops. They did marketing, a lot of marketing things trying to show you how to do it. How to set up an exhibit outside. Just the comradery it was great fun.

CHRIS: I would like to add to that that the Guild originally, for many many years, tried to maintain high standards. It's done. Just any fair that anybody can sign up. It was really a rigorous set of standards that each artist had to be able to do, you know, quality - one of a kind, no repetition, no weird copies from China, things like that. I think

that is what kept us in in the organization, is that it had maintained high quality, high quality arts and crafts.

CAROLE: Well for awhile the Guild was accused of being elitist. But that was not the case. I mean the jurors always looked for quality work, good finishing and proper finishing. That kind of thing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now were you juried to get into?

CAROLE: Yeah.

CHRIS: Oh yes.

CAROLE: And then became jurors.

WILLIHNGANZ: You were using tapestries or fabrics?

CAROLE: No, not tapestries. I was making wearables.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wearable's?

CAROLE: Scarves, ruana's, capes with hoods.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What did you submit, Chris?

CHRIS: Primarily bronze, brass and silver and gold jewelry. Lost-wax casting technique and miniature sculptures.

WILLIHNGANZ: That was pretty much it? When you went to some of these classes did you learn things about marketing that were really helpful with you?

CAROLE: Oh yeah. Presentation - that is very important, I mean that's it in a nutshell.

WILLIHNGANZ: As the years went by how long were you a member? Are you still members of the Guild?

CAROLE: Oh yeah. Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you've been members the whole time?

CAROLE: Yeah. I mean I'm even a lifetime member now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Aw, a lifetime member?

CAROLE: Yes. I was given that last fall. Because I've done a lot of work for the Guild.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see.

CHRIS: And Carol has been a mainstay, primarily when the Guild was having some awful trouble financially, and Carol and several others were there to save them. In a sense of, you know, it was losing money, and you know, they had to put it back together, and that happened two or three times. And right now, I think the Guild is reasonably stable, but it wasn't for many times, and Carol was definitely a part of salvage, and that is why she got the lifetime. They want to keep her.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well they've had ups and downs. When you joined they were still doing the art train?

CHRIS: Right.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: The craft train, whatever they call it. Did you ever go on board that? Did you see that?

CAROLE: Oh yeah.

CHRIS: Jerry Workman was in charge of that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right. And then you, did you get involved in the administration of the Guild? Were you on the board and all that sort of thing?

CAROLE: Not until 1980. But I had been on jury committees, and we had, in the name of the Guild, had done a workshop in Eastern Kentucky with some women who were weavers. And they needed to know a little. What they wanted was to get a little more design and color knowledge. And some of the women there were weaving just to earn some extra money so that their kids could go to school, because they realized how important that was. To get a freezer to freeze their goods, and there was one woman there who was tired of taking federal vacations for moonshining.

WILLIHNGANZ: Was weaving able to save her from this production?

CAROLE: Yes *[laughing]*. So we met some really interesting people doing this kind of thing.

CHRIS: And that was the enjoyment. Because I had presented in a small unit on color, and one was, okay let's look at this red sweater, stare at it, stare at it. Now switch over - what do you see? People would switch over and they would see this after image, and the after image was green. They would look at me and say how is that possible. You know, red square becomes green after image and shape. And some of

them just absolutely said no, no, this is not possible. But that was sort of the hidden dimension of what color is, it is a mysterious side. So that is what, what we gained, and I think we as instructors always learn from our students.

WILLIHNGANZ: What types of people were members of the Guild in the early years? Were they mostly people who were educators? Were they people who were just artists on their own right? Or were they people who had other jobs and did other art in their spare time?

CAROLE: All of the above.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

CAROLE: All of the above. There were the traditional Appalachian crafts people.

CHRIS: Not many.

CAROLE: Well, quite a few. I mean there were basket makers.

CHRIS: Okay, and chair makers.

CAROLE: The Childress' and Chester Cornett from where was he from? Troublesome Creek?

CHRIS: Yeah.

CAROLE: He was...he made several wonderful chairs, but he made this one in May of '68 as a demonstration at the end of the fair, and we asked if he had sold it. He said no, so we said we would like to buy it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you buy a lot of the craft work at the fair?

CAROLE: We did a lot of bartering. I mean everybody does that *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well that's good, that's good. That's a good thing a good feature.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: The Guild seems to have had ups and downs, and clearly, I think when Richard Bellando was organizing things and getting going he had a lot of momentum up.

CAROLE: Yes, he did.

WILLIHNGANZ: Things, he was very influential, and then things sort of tapered off a bit, and the support for it sort of faltered somewhat. How did you get through those hard times with the fair? And with the Guild?

CAROLE: Well people...there were people who simply supported it. Saw the need for it. And so, you know, it thinned out. But it started building back up again.

WILLIHNGANZ: And have you had good luck in terms of doing outreach to bring in new members, or has that sort of gone up and down too?

CAROLE: That had gone, but there that is happening again. The spring fair is going to be in Bowling Green this year for the first time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: So, the Guild is trying something new. Many years ago we tried a fair in Horse Cave, that didn't work. I mean the Guild has tried different things, because people always say oh you can't just keep being in Berea. So they seem to think of it as the Berea fair rather than a statewide.

WILLIHNGANZ: The Guild has also had a certain amount of, if you will, competition from other organizations like the Southern Highland Guild.

CAROLE: Right, right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you been members of those Guilds?

CAROLE: No, we didn't.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. How has the Guild responded to that kind of challenge?

CAROLE: Well, Southern Highlands were around before the Kentucky Guild, so, I think, I think the Guild has more or less remained static. It hasn't changed that much and I think that hurts it. Because now there are so many fairs. And really, the Kentucky craft marketing program, they came to the Guild to find out how we did standards, and liked it so much they use some of our ideas when they do standards. But they have gone on; they've just gone much further ahead. Because for some time now the Guild really hasn't done workshops and classes and that kind of thing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, do you think the energy or the impetus behind the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program has been because they did new and innovative things, or because they basically had state funding and people to run it?

CAROLE: They had state funding, that had a lot to do with it. A whole lot.

WILLIHNGANZ: Has that funding been steady for the craft marketing program?

CAROLE: Pretty steady, but I think it's going to be cut off, way off this year.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. I don't know the politics of that what's going on right now, but everything is going to be cut.

CAROLE: Yeah, everything.

WILLIHNGANZ: So it seems likely.

CAROLE: But it has provided a good market for, because they do work hard to bring in wholesale buyers.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think there is an advantage to having an organization that is based in the artist as opposed to based in administrators?

CAROLE: That is a good question. I think that has been part of the problem with the Guild, is that the board is does consist of artists.

WILLIHNGANZ: And how has that been a problem?

CAROLE: Some of them quite don't understand how to be on a board, and what a board has to do, what you've got to do as a working board.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have they been able to make liaisons with other craft organizations?

CAROLE: I don't know what they are doing currently.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have they historically been able to work with other organizations?

CAROLE: With some...with some, yeah. With some groups based in Louisville. We did - we did a couple of shows.

WILLIHNGANZ: Which groups are those?

CAROLE: The Louisville Watercolor Society, the Louisville.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is it the Visual Arts Association?

CAROLE: Yeah, but I don't think it was called that then.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh. They may have changed their name. I don't know.

CAROLE: Anyway, there was a Louisville, there were three groups that we were working with and had some shows at the water tower.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right that would be LVAA?

CAROLE: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: But I don't know if it was called that at the time you did those shows.

CAROLE: Yeah. I don't remember.

WILLIHNGANZ: Then when when the Kentucky Museum of Art and Crafts started, has there been any interaction between the Guild and that organization?

CAROLE: I can't tell you that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

CHRIS: Well sometimes they would ask you to be, you know, to submit your work. And then they might use the Guild membership form, but as to give activating and interconnection with them, no. But individually maybe.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Now you said they haven't done educational programs in awhile?

CAROLE: Because they haven't had any money. They have been kind of in disarray.

WILLIHNGANZ: I see. How long has that been true?

CAROLE: For quite a few years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Do you see signs that it is improving?

CAROLE: I think they current board is trying to improve that and get it put back together.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Do you know what your membership is right now?

CAROLE: No, I don't.

WILLIHNGANZ: How often do you go to meetings or?

CAROLE: There aren't any *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: You're no longer on the board or acting in any of those areas?

CAROLE: No, no, no.

CHRIS: I think she says no because, you know, she has been overworked on that for quite often, and just really overworked.

CAROLE: I just felt like after the last time I had to back off.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. That just got to be too much for you personally?

CAROLE: Yeah. Yeah. When you put a whole lot into something and then you see it go down once again, you say okay, it's somebody else's turn now.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well I'm sorry to hear that *[laughing]*. When you work as a weaver are you able to, basically, connect to other weavers on your own, or do you need to work through organizations like the Guild?

CAROLE: How do you mean that?

WILLIHNGANZ: Or, it is important to you to work with other weavers?

CAROLE: Oh sure, to contact, yeah definitely. Just for you learn little hints from other people. You learn different techniques from other people. You learn sources for materials. And we all have the same kind of sense of humor.

CHRIS: What about the Berea Weavers Guild?

CAROLE: Yeah, we've got a small weavers group.

CHRIS: Very active.

CAROLE: But it's mostly beginners and we, you know, are helping people learn to weave. But I have to go off to work shops where I can learn something rather than being the one teaching all the time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure.

CAROLE: You know you're always wanting to learn something new.

WILLIHNGANZ: So where do you go to workshops?

CAROLE: Oh, the Hand Weavers Guild of America sponsors a convention every other year all over the United States. Those are...they do many different kinds of workshops there. So you can take many different kinds of things, and it is just fun again meeting people, greeting people. I'm a member of a group called WARP, Weave A Real Piece, which has to do with helping Third World women get economic sustainability through weaving and textiles.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CHRIS: And that also connects with Peace Craft, and Carole was a director of that, of the Berea Peace Craft.

CAROLE: That doesn't have anything to do with this.

WILLIHNGANZ: What is?

CAROLE: Peace Craft is a non profit, a not for profit shop that's in town. There are a lot of them all over. There is one in...it's a Twelve Thousand Villages store there. There is one in Louisville. I think it is called Just Creations. Anyway, they are selling work, fair trade work.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right. Yes, I have been to Just Creations now that I think about it.

CAROLE: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

CAROLE: So I've met some wonderful weavers from Guatemala through that.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: And in Peru.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you actually met them physically, or?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: They come to town here, or?

CAROLE: No. I've gone there.

WILLIHNGANZ: You've gone there? Wow. That's interesting. And when you've gone down there to meet with these people, have you been there just to learn about the weaving? Or, have you been there to set up trade relations?

CAROLE: Just to learn about their weaving. Although this one group from Chincero, like the pillow over there, and the pillow that Chris is sitting on, and that one behind you. I did help that group with just some challenges on pillow sizing. You have to have standard sizes if you want to sell in the United States. Just something that simple. But you learn a lot from them, too.

WILLIHNGANZ: What sorts of things do you learn from them?

CAROLE: You just learn about living. The importance of color. The importance of things, you know, just everything in your life.

CHRIS: Also survival. This is, survival means.

WILLIHNGANZ: So this is something that they do basically from necessity to make a living. This is their livelihood - period.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: I've been surprised by how many of the people that I have interviewed are not full time artists. They do this as sideline.

CAROLE: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: Real jobs...they have a day job teaching, or whatever it is...

CAROLE: Yeah, exactly.

WILLIHNGANZ: As they can't really support themselves by doing craft work.

CAROLE: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: What would you say are the things that have gone into making your style of weaving? What have been the influences?

CAROLE: Color.

WILLIHNGANZ: And when you say color, I mean I'm sure there is color everywhere, but how has that influenced you? Where did you learn about that? How did you get involved with it?

CAROLE: I've just always loved color. I've always loved putting things, different colors together. I can show you some of what I've put together, but nature. Mother Nature puts wonderful colors together that people say, oh no, you can't do that. Well, sure you can.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's interesting. Now you've collected, I've noticed on your on your mantel here and frankly everywhere in this room, a lot of little knickknacks and things. These, are these items that you have consciously collected, or are they just things you've stumbled across and that caught your fancy that particular day?

CAROLE: That's usually what has happened. Some have been given to us.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you have any theme in what you collect or?

CAROLE: No *[laughing]*. I mean this is our village.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. It is an interesting village. I'll say that for it. How long have you had these pieces?

CAROLE: It's constant *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Did you pick up many of these at the Guild fairs?

CAROLE: None of those.

WILLIHNGANZ: None of those? I see. So where did these come from?

CAROLE: All over.

WILLIHNGANZ: All over - like in different countries you mean?

CAROLE: Different countries.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you travel around a lot and go to different...like the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft? Those types of places, like the Artisan Center and whatnot?

CAROLE: Some, but not a lot.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. But you, where do you find these then? Do you find these at shows?

CAROLE: Where did we find them? That's hard to say. Different shops, different places, yeah. As I said, some of them have been given to us. These two Kachinas were Christopher's high school graduation present.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, wow.

CAROLE: So you know there is stuff like that. There is Pueblo things up here.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay and the Pueblo things you got those out in?

CAROLE: New Mexico.

WILLIHNGANZ: New Mexico?

CAROLE: Uh-huh.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Have you looked into the Mexican art? The various art centers in Mexico? Have you been through there?

CAROLE: These are from Wahoka.

WILLIHNGANZ: These?

CAROLE: Critters.

WILLIHNGANZ: I can't actually see them unfortunately, because the light behind it.

CAROLE: The light behind it yeah. Light wouldn't do.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, but they are interesting pieces to say the least.

CAROLE: And the painting above that I call The Village was Chris' dads.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh really?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So that is a fairly old painting?

CAROLE: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. So how much time do you currently spend doing weaving?

CAROLE: Depends - different amounts. I'm slowing down because of arthritis, unfortunately.

WILLIHNGANZ: Something we are all dealing with. I was noticing I have this finger right here just comes and goes, unfortunately, hoping it will go more than it comes.

DOG GROWLING

CAROLE: Chance. NO!

WILLIHNGANZ: But are you still able to market your weave?

CAROLE: Well, right now the market is sure thumbs down. I mean, usually I sell at the Kentucky Artisan Center, and usually I get another order at the beginning of December for scarves, and they've still got plenty of scarves.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: Yeah. But this is happening all over town.

WILLIHNGANZ: Are you...how do you know that...are you talking to people here?

CAROLE: Oh yeah, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Artisan Place?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: And that's pretty much what's happening across the boards because of the economy.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. You think.

CAROLE: If you don't need this kind of thing, you don't buy it when you don't have the money.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Well what do you think, given that's the truth, what do you think the future for the Guild is going to be?

CHRIS: Wow.

CAROLE: Oh it goes in cycles. We've been through this before. Once the economy picks up, then sales will pick up another year later. That is usually what happens.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. So it's just a wait it out?

CAROLE: Yeah. The economy hasn't been this bad in a long time.

WILLIHNGANZ: That would be true.

CAROLE: So it is going to be harder this time. And there is probably going to be more shops closing and less attendance at fairs.

WILLIHNGANZ: So the overall economy of Berea is probably not been doing that well?

CAROLE: No.

WILLIHNGANZ: How is Berea's College been affected? Do you know?

CAROLE: Oh, yeah. Their endowment is way down. They are laying off staff, not hiring some teachers.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, yeah. That is very difficult, to say the least. Okay. You traveled around; you've basically gotten some ideas from that. Chris, are you still doing work with metal or artistic work?

CHRIS: Actually, I have been doing a lot of painting. I went through a three or four...well actually, more like ten years of very much a different type of painting, and now an objective, abstract, and occasionally I do wedding bands. I used to be known as the as the artist who makes wedding bands. If I had one commission per month - that would be my job *[laughing]*. Because people sometimes want individual design ring or rings. But basically I'm not pushing that, I just don't want to overpopulate the world with more art objects than...

CAROLE: Well, those four squares are his.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh. Let me see if I can capture those.

CAROLE: I don't know if you'll get too much reflection on those.

WILLIHNGANZ: No, actually those are pretty good.

CAROLE: So they don't have glass on them, so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now those are, are those oil or water color or acrylic?

CHRIS: They are spray paintings on aluminum, which is obviously not canvas.

DOG GROWLING

CAROLE: Chance!

CHRIS: An experimental way of producing images, and so I've been doing for that about the last ten or twelve years.

WILLIHNGANZ: Is there much of market for that?

CHRIS: No *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, that's too bad, because I think they are beautiful.

CHRIS: Um, its just maybe, just doesn't fit into Kentucky concept of what painting is...it's not outhouses and, you know, steel mines and.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now Chris *[laughing]*.

CAROLE: I think there would be more of a market for this type of work on either coast.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah, probably true. I can see where that sort of abstract thing would be more difficult to sell here. I believe that's true.

CAROLE: And then Chris' mother did that resin piece. That's very minimalist and abstract, so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Indeed. Wow.

CAROLE: So that wouldn't go here either.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well it's hard to know what's going to go, and in this economy it sounds like not much is going to go.

CAROLE: Yeah. No. I don't think so.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, you keep hoping it will turn around so that we can get back moving in a better direction. Now what do you think traditionally has been the place of craft work? I mean, has it been mostly as a hobby or an outlet for energy that people have, or has it really had an artistic focus more?

CAROLE: I think it is a combination. Because when you mix together somebody who is doing traditional art form, that's come out of something they've made for their own muse, like baskets, to somebody, who is a contemporary artist, doing maybe non-functional work there all mixed together.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well I've just spent time down the street here with Walter, and he talks a lot about his movement, from basically doing specific pieces that had a political social message, to getting into more form verses function concerns. And then getting into place, and if you've seen his platters and stuff he is talking about. About how that relates to places, and how we occupy places and what they mean to them. When you do pieces, they obviously have a function. You're weaving a particular piece that away. So to what extent to you design it according to the function it's going to be used for, or for the aesthetic that you want to create?

CAROLE: Both. Both are equally important. The form has to be appropriate to the function. And the aesthetic, yeah you want something to be as beautiful as possible.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you work primarily in wool, or in what fabrics do you use?

CAROLE: Lately I've been working in chenille and loop mohair. I dye all the loop mohair yarn so I can get a good variety of color.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: So, and as I say I can show you some of those.

WILLIHNGANZ: I would think dying it would be almost an art unto itself.

CAROLE: Oh it is, but its great fun to see the color emerge. Then again, see what you can do to stretch the color.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well maybe you could take me around the house and show me a little of that. Is that possible?

CAROLE: Sure. Summer loom.

WILLIHNGANZ: Hold on - say that again please.

CAROLE: Oh. This is my summer loom, because my main studio is up in the attic. It is not air conditioned up there. This is a chenille warp.

WILLIHNGANZ: What is chenille anyway?

CAROLE: In French chenille means caterpillar. And it's, it is the way the thread is made. Okay this is what I'm doing. I put a metallic thread in there for interest, and it is called a turned over shot. These aren't finished yet. I haven't done the fringes. But see how I like color?

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh-huh. It's gorgeous.

CHRIS: There's several of those that are one warp, so she gets that much color change from that to that with that one warp.

CAROLE: That's the same warp.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm getting a lot of dust flying across my screen here. Is that just the threads?

CAROLE: Probably, because these haven't been washed. They have to be what's called dry finished. I mean wet finished. But I can't do that until I've got the fringe done.

WILLIHNGANZ: And is the wet finishing...is that like set the dye, or?

CAROLE: It sets the threads. In the case of chenille it softens it, which means it really drapes better.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh.

CAROLE: Which is what you want.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you work in here?

CAROLE: For just doing the chenille ones. These are the mohair. Do you see how that is? Now I've dyed all these yarns.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: And again, from one warp I can get many different scarves.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh-huh.

CAROLE: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now looking on the walls here. I'm sort of interested in what this is.

CAROLE: That's from China.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: That's part of an old baby carrier.

WILLIHNGANZ: And these?

CAROLE: Those two - the top two are from Taquile Island within Peru. It's really a submerged mountaintop that is in Lake Titicaca. Those are very finely woven. They tell the history of a year in this village. They are woven on a backstrap loom.

WILLIHNGANZ: What's that?

CAROLE: They are attached to a peg. It's very primitive looking, and look at how fine, and the detail they've got.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. That's pretty impressive.

CAROLE: It's very impressive. And then that also is from Peru, and that's called scaffold weaving. And that's two people weave going towards each other. It's hard to explain.

WILLIHNGANZ: It is.

CAROLE: And the concept is just...

WILLIHNGANZ: Huh. Again, very pretty colors.

CAROLE: Yeah. It's a nice one.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What else can you show me?

CHRIS: These are from...?

CAROLE: Ecuador.

CHRIS: Ecuador. I picked those up directly from the weaver herself.

CAROLE: This one is from Guatemala.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, and you have one of the masks?

CAROLE: That is from Mexico.

CHRIS: This is curls. I don't know where that is from.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now that's just a weaving right?

CAROLE: Yeah, that's a tapestry.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tapestry weaving?

CAROLE: It's called a bound weave.

WILLIHNGANZ: But, it's yours?

CAROLE: Yes, I did it.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, lovely. Have you been to Philis Alvic's studio?

CAROLE: Yeah, yeah, oh yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: She has some pretty amazing stories. Pretty interesting.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. What's that?

CAROLE: That's a bag from Ecuador *[laughing]*. Is not real practical. Okay. Would you like to see my upstairs, too?

WILLIHNGANZ: Sure. Yeah. Sure. Lead on. This is the view up the stairway as we come up.

BACKGROUND NOISE

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Now these are patterns you have up here on the wall?

CAROLE: Oh. Those are Amish quilts from calendars.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh wow. And then, back here.

CAROLE: I've got another light to turn on back there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Wow. Now what is this right here?

CAROLE: That's just a shawl from Mexico.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, it's nice.

CAROLE: Yeah *[laughing]*. This is the loom that I've woven the mohair things on.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh-huh. How old is this loom?

CAROLE: It was built in the early 1940's in New Mexico, for a training loom for World War II. This one was never unpacked, and so the guy needed some money, and I needed the loom. And it's wonderful because most...it's all wood except for the one ratchet for the brake. Every other part of it is wood. Wooden pegs, and everything is wood.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it's really pretty. And what is this loom here?

CAROLE: That's a Glimakra; it's called a countermarch loom. It's got ten harnesses, and I don't have anything on it right now.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you work up here in the winter and down stairs in the summer?

CAROLE: Yeah. I can't work up here in the summer anymore. It's just too hot. And I love these are all from Guatemala. There are just fun, just fun color ideas.

WILLIHNGANZ: They are just gorgeous, wow. Oh, look at all these.

CAROLE: These are just color studies with color aid paper. They're just kind of fun to do.

WILLIHNGANZ: Uh-huh, gosh. Do you do a lot of sewing?

CAROLE: Yeah, yeah. And, of course, I need the good sewing machine for finishing the work, too.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow, how many years have you been up here?

CAROLE: Well, we bought this house in 1975.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Okay. That is terrific.

CAROLE: Okay.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thanks.

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Have you ever actually flown that?

CAROLE: No. But one of our cats, one time, leapt in it and it went flying down stairs **[laughing]**.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about this piece.

CAROLE: Chris?

CHRIS: It's called a Chariot, and it's a combination of fruit.

CAROLE: A dipper gourd.

CHRIS: Ferns.

CAROLE: A banana.

CHRIS: Banana.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. It's pretty interesting. What is it made of?

CHRIS: Bronze.

CAROLE: No. That's pewter isn't it?

CHRIS: No. It's...it's a type of bronze alloy. There we go.

CAROLE: Oh, here's another one.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'll take a look at it. You have a real whimsical sense of things, don't you?

CHRIS: That's my anti-Vietnam piece. In which money is giving knowledge to a child, and that's actually a ladies fingers okra form.

CAROLE: From our garden.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Let me get in a little closer here. Well, that is quite a piece.

CAROLE: *[Laughing]*.

CHRIS: I went definitely through my Mickey Mouse stage.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's really adorable *[laughing]*. How funny. I'll bet you kids love these.

CHRIS: I went through a stage you know found art objects combination, statements serious to humorous.

WILLIHNGANZ: What is this?

CAROLE: That is a death cart. It is from New Mexico. It is very traditional. How did you come apart. There. And the rest of these are day of the dead figures from Mexico.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, yes. Well lets quite a lot. Now who did these pictures up there?

CAROLE: That is a Japanese printmaker Noboru Sawai. He taught one year at Berea College.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

CAROLE: And this is Christopher's when he was in graduate school.

WILLIHNGANZ: Really?

CAROLE: Egg crates.

CHRIS: No. I don't think it was graduate school. I think I did that here my first year here at Berea College.

CAROLE: Really? Well maybe you did. I don't know. Yeah, you're right, because it has the baby moon hubcaps.

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, funny. Well it's good to have a sense of humor.

CAROLE: Yeah, because what's the alternative?

WILLIHNGANZ: That's the truth. Gosh. It's amazing how much stuff you have in here. All those masks up on the wall up there.

CAROLE: Yeah. I see some cobwebs, too. Let me get those down.

WILLIHNGANZ: Those are from Mexico, too?

CAROLE: Yeah.

CHRIS: Yes.

WILLIHNGANZ: And all of these pieces, these are just pieces you've collected?

CAROLE: Uh-huh, from Peru.

CHRIS: Ecuador.

CAROLE: Mizuni Indian.

CHRIS: Mexican.

CAROLE: Wayne Bates in...where is Wayne? Murray.

WILLIHNGANZ: What is this little grouping here?

CAROLE: Peruvian and Guatemalan.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Interesting. This piece is pretty interesting too. More day of the dead figures?

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well.

CHRIS: Membership has always been, you know, the basis...the basis of the survival is to have enough crafts people to to be willing to show their work, and I don't know whether the Guild will be a magnet for new younger artists.

WILLIHNGANZ: What do you think it needs to do?

CHRIS: That's a hard one.

CAROLE: It needs to.

CHRIS: Have more exposure and more publicity, more PR. I think that is one.

CAROLE: I think it needs to do more for the membership than just have two shows a year. I mean that's what is has been about lately. It's just doing shows and nothing else. That's a lot, but there's got to be more.

WILLIHNGANZ: The educational programs seemed to have been more focused toward just marketing. Is that a good way to go or?

CAROLE: No. There's got to be a variety of programs. Marketing is in there, it has to be in there. But they've got to be other...well there should be programs on how to improve your own work.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's a real good question.

CAROLE: That's...yes. They do have a mentor program for people in standards. You either pass or fail, but there is this middle score where you can have a mentor. You're not in, but if you get mentored and you go through again and you pass, okay.

CHRIS: I think that has been a good edition.

CAROLE: But there needs to be more emphasis on that, I think.

CHRIS: I think that is one of the misconceptions, that it is a fair, and anybody can participate. As I stated earlier the standards have to be maintained at a high level of creativity, craftsmanship, all sorts of one-of-a-kinds. It's unique. It's not a copy. It's not a repetition. It's not a formula, and unfortunately a lot of arts and crafts are just plain, you know, production, and not the individual, so. We have to maintain quality. That separates it from other fairs.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you think young people are losing interest in crafts?

CAROLE: I don't know. I think there are a lot of young people who are trying to make their living at it, and finding out it is harder than they thought. They've got to have some kind of, they've got to know a little bit about business. How to keep books and that kind of thing so they can know where their bottom line is.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well. I just look at what we reinforce in the schools, and in, you know, general. It just seems to me like the amount of craft that we have support for art classes that we've had before have been cut, eliminated and just ignored. It's gone the way of civics classes, which...

CAROLE: Yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: Used to be a routine part of the curriculum. We all had to learn civics and should have. Know how your government works.

CAROLE: Right.

WILLIHNGANZ: It's not being done anymore.

CAROLE: There is too much not being taught anymore.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well.

CAROLE: Locally at Berea College, we've got a very good art teacher in the elementary school and in the high school. In fact, right now, at the Berea Arts Council the 5th graders made art pins, and they are wonderful. So there is, there is some innovative things coming at least locally.

WILLIHNGANZ: At least locally. Well, that is good.

CAROLE: So there is some hope there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Are you planning to basically keep weaving until you die?

CAROLE: I'd like to, or until my joints give out *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well, it's a great environment you've created here. It is a very unique statement.

CAROLE: Yeah that's true *[laughing]*.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you ever feel it's just too much to dust?

CAROLE: Oh yeah. I do that once in awhile *[laughing]*. I don't do it very often.

CHRIS: She did today, yesterday.

CAROLE: Because it was time.

CHRIS: And we have an old furnace, and half of its dust.

CAROLE: I mean we keep the filters clean, but it still...

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Well, thank you very much for your time.

CAROLE: Well, thank you.

WILLIHNGANZ: It has been interesting talking with you.

RECORDING ENDS