

Robyn Horn
First Person Plural Interview Summary
8 September 2014

Intro - Jo Blatti interviewing Robyn Horn for the First Person Plural project at her studio, 8 September 2014

JB Family -

RH Parents Bill Hutcheson, Dede Derick met in high school, Fort Smith
Both still with us, Dad has Alzheimer's, Mom 89, painter
Sister Karen also a painter
Art always obtainable in our lives

JB Dad

RH Sold shoes Tulsa, Fort Smith, Grandma Wortz from Indiana, Wortz Biscuit Company, Fort Smith

JB Where grow up?

RH Waldron Street, near university, little bitty house
Great neighborhood, lots of kids

JB Fort Smith edge of Indian territory, little different area Arkansas

RH Really not that much different

5 min in

1900, grandmother very concerned
Reservations very rural
No Native Americans I recall Fort Smith

JB African-Americans?

RH Some, not many
I went to North Side [school], where parents went
Timmon for two years
Fairly small community
Hendrix [College] Conway

JB Schools integrated?

RH Yes

JB Neighborhood?

RH No. Seemed fairly calm after Central High [in Little Rock]. Not enough people to cause problem

JB Fayetteville –
RH Couple of stores very similar to Fort Smith
JB Sister and brother -
RH In middle, didn't think about it too much
JB Dishes, garbage -
RH Mother didn't want us in the kitchen, make mess
Don't remember stuff like that
Remember music

10 min in

'Opposite Sex' band
We had only learned 7-8 songs, 30 songs
JB Special interest- guitar
RH Popular songs, Rhonda Fleming, I played drums
JB When?
RH Junior, senior - 1968-69
Hendrix - my friends in education
Art easiest
Mother made signs, gifts - couldn't afford decoupage
JB Other teachers?
RH Spanish teacher in high school, then met someone who spoke Spanish
Bob McGill, choir director really good
JB You are a big artist now
RH Maybe in this little bitty pond
It's about making good work, having continuity to it

15 min in

When I started working in wood, brother in law had been to Airmont School, Gatlinburg, TN
Showed me lathe, movement
Albert LeCoff, Wood Turning Center in Philadelphia, met him in St. Louis
Said, might want to think about doing something unique to you
Began looking at ceramics as source
JB How does an artist do that?
RH I'm a visual learner - looking at books, magazines

Started with geodes series, millstones
Than mostly carving, now slipping stones series, find enough variations
John [Horn - husband] and I collect art

David Nash came and did a piece for us
I started doing larger pieces
When Crystal Bridges [Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR] wanted to get a piece for
the museum, [then chief curator] Cris Crosman came out, [successor] David Houston

JB Crystal Bridges, Renwick [Washington, D.C.]
Over 100 people at symposium here - support for the fields

RH One of the best parts is meeting the artists

23 min in

[Introduces Sandra Sell, running my saw for me]

My parents set up Windgate, so many artists on the board, interested in art
Education tailored to written word
Doesn't seem to be an alternative for people who can excel through the arts -Thea [North Little
Rock], Arkansas Arts Center, Airmont
People who would be told they're stupid
Not too many foundations doing this

JB How work with others on this?

RH John Brown [executive director, Windgate Foundation], there is a network - matching,
challenge
grant situation.

JB A favorite among programs Windgate undertaken recently?

RH Choosing one very difficult. A+ program Thea - curriculum that uses art to support all areas.
Paul [Theopoulos] has worked relentlessly on this. Should be an option.

JB An option comparable to STEM [science, technology, engineering and math]?

RH Yes, add 'a' to 'stem', 'stem' = steam
Keep kids engaged, approach from the arts, with miniscule attention spans

31 min in

I've seen results - remarkable
Airmont, Haystacks in Maine basically these schools help students figure out artistic interests
UALR - applied design, UA-Fort Smith, UA-Fayetteville coming around more supportive art
departments

JB Mom creative, yet you speak of modest circumstances
Windgate one of the top foundation in Arkansas
Where'd the money come from?

RH Sam Walton [founder WalMart stores] asked my father to set up shoe departments, eventually entire shoe operation - stock market

36 min in

Interesting to research Arkansas foundations based on similar histories - Jack Shewmaker [WalMart executive & philanthropist, arts & education causes, 1933-2010]

JB You came of age time of change

RH Never had great plans
When out of school, typesetting for seven years, then [Arkansas] Parks and Tourism photographer
Happened on to things
Never had problems gender-wise
Lot of things not usual
Wood not necessarily women's area
Never had any kind of discrimination
Other artists very open

JB Among small group women

RH A couple doing - my husband very supportive

41 min in

He's very impressed with way I can carve
Have to be able to keep it [the saw] sharp
Sandy Sell running chainsaw with me - really great
I've been having some back problems

I was floundering through life [before art]

JB I wondered what parents said

RH I never said that, they've been very supportive. Very proud

JB Remember first credit card?

RH After college, couple of years before marriage, past that time - issue

JB Gloves, hat?

RH High school- dress, Hendrix [college] pant suits, haven't worn dress since March 3.1979, day I married, I hate dresses.
Talks about childhood experience - having to wear dresses

JB Change moved in your direction

RH Yes

JB Women's shows, woman artist?

RH Not experienced discrimination, see it as theme

Curator at Arizona State University very interested in collecting work by women
I'd rather be noticed because my work is strong

48 min in

Makes me a little uncomfortable

[Cell phone goes off]

JB Noticed a talk you gave at Fort Smith on women's history

RH Hadn't done anything in Fort Smith, didn't speak on women's history
Spoke about my work, women who were historically significant to the region, happy to be in the show

50 min in

JB Coming up to the studio is like a sculpture park

RH When run out of room in the house, move outside

JB Very diverse

RH Most relate in some way to my work - form and texture
Abstract work, planes & geometry, lucky to have around

JB Study collection, to family?

RH John has son, seven when we got married, tells story of son crying - thought there would be more babies, they'd made decision not to have more children

JB Art to museum? Family?

RH Responsibility to artist to preserve work, kind of scary as artist - not know where some of [own] work is
Collector has responsibility to benefit

JB Conversation creative/public - where that idea comes from

RH I've always believed
- Value in act of making the work - ex. Barbara Hepworth, David Nash, Isamu Noguchi
- Never like every piece
- Have to build up to museum quality work
- Certain pieces really successful, better than others
- Early pieces as explorations
- If put too much preciousness, comes back to bite you
- Some pieces wouldn't want the public to see

JB Juvenile drawings great artists –

RH Not all in that category

JB Family foundation -25% disbursement

RH We're all getting older, need to get it done

JB Lots of foundations hang on

RH We all make them [decisions] together - mother still active - family
Ford Foundation - new director changed mission -
Ours - art, food banks, etc.

1 hr. 2 min.

JB Where develop that ethos?

RH Arts deep part of us, can change people's lives, we hear it all the time

1 hr. 4 min.

Off

Resume recording

JB Husband woven throughout

RH Roommate Ellen Alexander, dating John's brother
She cooked dinner, set us up
Pick up every other weekend
Letter press printer, met him as Sam's brother
Both had self-esteem issues
He's been a supporter of all the arts I have done
Forklift for an anniversary present

JB Self-esteem- last woman

RH Until you find the thing you are meant to do
He'd been in Viet Nam, bad marriage
Windgate really important

JB Women's opportunities

1 hr. 10 min.

RH Significant, always places
One of these days, a woman president, maybe Hilary [Clinton]
Reproductive rights - just crazy to me
Progress has been made

JB Is there anything I haven't thought to ask?

RH -

Off