

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association, Inc.

Interview with Gwen Heffner

January 23, 2009

Interview conducted by Greg Willihnganz

WILLIHNGANZ: This is Greg Willihnganz interviewing Gwen Heffner at her home in Irvine, Kentucky for the Kentucky Craft History Education Association. It is January 23, 2009. Good morning Gwen.

HEFFNER: Good morning.

WILLIHNGANZ: Thank you for taking time to be interviewed here.

HEFFNER: My pleasure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Can you sort of give me an overview of what your career has been, and what you've done, and what roles you have filled?

HEFFNER: Well it has sort of come full circle. I started out as a studio artist with training in the fine arts. Ended up going to graduate school and working as a studio potter supporting myself that way. I did some work with the Kentucky Arts Council. Initially, after graduate school, to save money I sort of set up a studio and did some teaching with them. Then, I did some wholesale work with Nationwide, and had accounts across the country. When I married and moved here we built this studio that we're in today. That was in 86, 85, 86 and I had a studio in Cincinnati at the time...Was going back and forth on the weekends to continue making pots to fill orders before it got fall, as we were building the studio. So, I did wholesale selling for a long time through the American Craft Council shows in Baltimore and other places. And then had an opportunity to do a gallery situation in Berea. One of the things about selling is that you need feedback from your public. When you wholesale you come take your orders at a show and come and you make your work and you ship it out. That's really the only contact you have with the buyer; not with the public who's buying the work. So it appealed to me to have an opportunity to sell my work in Berea. I did that for about 13 years. Owned and operated the Contemporary Artifacts Gallery. Then, I was sort of looking around for something a little bit broader, and the Artisan Center was being built, and I went to a lot of the initial meetings for that when it was in the planning stages. Had been the tamarack, and found out what we were going to be getting...and I applied for the job and have been working there for the past five years. My title is Information Specialist, which is an odd title. Basically I have three jobs. I direct the programming at the center--the arts programming which is events, and artist demonstrations, performances, public readings, and those kinds of things. And those are weekly, so it's a very busy schedule. Then I coordinated (microphone noise in the background) two or three at least a year exhibits at the center, and then I also do all the PR for the center. So that of course has its own time line weekly, and with that so. The PR is part is the busiest part of my job there.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Could I ask you not to rub your knee? I'm sorry.

HEFFNER: I'm nervous.

WILLIHNGANZ: I understand.

HEFFNER: The sound?

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah it's the sound. We have a fairly sensitive mike.

HEFFNER: Oh (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Let's talk a little bit about your growing up. You were born in Louisville, or Kentucky, or?

HEFFNER: No. I'm from Ohio.

WILLIHNGANZ: You're from Ohio originally?

HEFFNER: Yeah. I was born in a Southeast area of Ohio not too far from Columbus. In between Columbus and Lancaster. In a rural situation. We had a small farm. We had horses. My parents are both musicians so I grew up in a world of the arts. I can practically sing every musical song there is. I went to all of the practices and all my dad's orchestra performances, and they did private lessons as well. So, I was surrounded with music a lot, and my father loves horses, so those were the two big loves of my life when I was growing up that influenced me. And nature in particular...we lived in a big woods and stuff. So that kind of nurtured me, you know, all along my parents supported me. I think every artist, they never, they don't always admit to it, but almost everyone who is successful has an edge somewhere. Either they have someone who believes in them so that they go forward with their life, as a mentor, or something like that. Sometimes it's financial support, sometimes its just moral support; sometimes it's an opportunity that occurs that leads them down a path. For me it's always been I've had people who believe in me. My parents were really good at backing me. They have been wonderful. I still have my mom and I had wonderful teachers. I went to a college in Iowa called Luther College...it's in Decor Iowa. It's a small little Lutheran Arts School and that's where I learned pottery. That's where I became involved in arts. Actually I was on my way. I was on the track for biology and veterinarian school, and took a class in painting and got side-tracked (laughing). And, I was also very involved in music there. I sang and performed in the choir. Lutheran College has a wonderful choir called Nordic Choir. Anyway, I just, you know, continued in the arts. My parents thought I would teach. I come from a six generations of teachers...goes way back almost to the old world. I was one of the first ones to break it. My brother teaches, and my parents were real nervous because I didn't, you know, go into education. But I have taught, you know, I've done a lot of it to top college level, to elementary level, even without a degree. It didn't seem to matter in the long run, but I wanted to do my art first. I figured that, you know, you need to know how to do it before you teach it, basically (laughing). And I really loved pottery, so I had two double...I had a double major, print making and pottery. When I graduated from undergraduate school I didn't know which direction I was going to go in. I had an opportunity to apprentice with a print maker in Arizona, and I was a little too chicken to go that far into such unusual terrain. I had never been to the South West so...So I ended up doing pottery and working in a pottery shop in a Minneapolis production shop.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where there people who were mentors to you, or?

HEFFNER: Yes. My print making teacher was wonderful. His name was Orval Running. I don't even know if he is still alive or not. He is going to be in his hundreds if he is. Wonderful man. He just assumed I was going to be a print maker (laughing), but I took clay at the same time, and the pottery that I was taught was from the Bauhaus tradition that comes out of Germany and the Weimar School. My teacher was a student of Margaret Wildenhain, and he really lived and breathed her work as one of his...one of her favorite students. I never really quite related to Wildenhain's pots strongly. I found myself going to the college library looking at Yee Dynasty Porcelain. And the voluptuous white pots of the Asian ceramics, and was drawn to that, where as this ridged German, you know, even though I have German blood in me (laughing) it just didn't didn't relate that way. So I was a little closer to my print making teacher, and he was really wonderful. And then I, my graduate work was...specifically I came to Kentucky because of graduate school. I got my degree from the University of Louisville. I had a great experience there under Tom Marsh. He has passed away since then. But he was a wonderful teacher. He learned in Japan under a master there. Sukuma was the name of the potter he studied with, and a traditional manner. Japanese apprenticeship that way. He learned Japanese, and so he had this Asian, Japanese aesthetic, and I had this German background, you know...Bauhaus background...and so it was a wonderful meeting of East and West for me. It was really perfect and I knew I was not ready to go out and set up a studio yet. A lot of, a lot of students from Lutheran went out and set up pottery shops right away, and tried to make their living, and very few are still making pots today. Part of because they just didn't have the nuts and bolts they needed when they started. I knew I didn't have it. I have always been very patient to look around me and see how other people do it, and learn from, you know, take a little bit of what I've learned from that person, and maybe from this person, and figure out how I want to put it together. Graduate school taught me how to build kilns. It taught me about firing. It gave me glaze chemistry, and I didn't have any of that in my undergraduate work...and undergraduate work was mostly throwing. Learning form and that was, I had a great bit of training in that. But I knew I needed to know more, and needed to learn business things, so. Tom Marsh was wonderful for me in that way. He is just a great man. He taught me more about living than almost in pottery. I stayed in their home when they went on sabbatical, and they lived in Southern Indiana...Was surrounded by wonderful pots. He had an incredible collection of work from all over the world. Japanese folk pottery, South American pottery, and their house was just full of it...and living there for a half a year. I really, you know, it was wonderful...you learn a lot from just handling pots and looking at them from all cultures. So that was a great experience for me. I learned a tremendous amount at U of L. I have a lot of to thank them for, for where I am today. So I've had really good teachers...really strong parents, so I've had a lot of edges that away. People who really helped me along the path.

WILLIHNGANZ: So after you got through with U of L's program...then where did you go from there?

HEFFNER: Well, actually for a year I worked as a graphic designer. I had a scholarship for graduate school. I had teaching assistantship...paid for my tuition...and I had another scholarship from the Funk and Wagnall's Foundation...where I grew up in a little town called Lithopolis, Ohio...where the Wagnall's family was from, and they built a library, and had a

scholarship fund. And, I got \$2,000 a year I didn't have to pay back back in 1979...that was enough for me to live--on believe it or not. I would write a check for \$10 for my cash for the weekend, you know, for spending money with my Volkswagen. But anyway...so I was able to basically go to graduate school without being in debt, but I didn't have anything to start the studio with. I had graphic design background as an undergraduate, and high school actually, and I landed a job in downtown Louisville, and made good money...and saved it. And I went to Mexico just because I was ready to change jobs, and the Arts Council had a thing (laughing). Just on a whim, I applied to their Artisan School position...used to be the Arts Council the...Kentucky Arts Council...had a residency that was a year long. When I was in Mexico, they were calling me trying to tell me they wanted me to have this job. And, I got back and interviewed, and I worked for three years for the Arts Council. I worked in three different counties. I worked...the first year I worked in Pendleton County, and then I was in Grayson County in Western Kentucky, and then Prestonsburg--which is Floyd County. So I was in Northern Kentucky, Western Kentucky and Eastern. This is the way I learned Kentucky. I learned the state. I learned the cultures in these areas and it was an incredible experience for me. The Arts Council paid you a stipend. You moved into the community, rented an apartment or a house, and they were required to give you a studio space. You were required to teach a set amount of classes, and they were supposed to give you at least a month off to do your own work. So, if you wanted to prepare for a show, or do something on your own, you could. So it was a wonderful experience where you went into a community...you met the people. I taught education classes in evenings for adults everywhere...all these residencies. Not every person did this, but I thought it was really important to really talk to the community. The first thing I did when I moved into the communities, was get to know the editors of the newspapers (laughing). So I knew it was really important to place myself, you know, and it was a good PR for the schools too. Because they got an artist in their community. One school...I was in biology room that wasn't being used. One was a basement storage room that they had cleared out. So it held together. We built wheels. We built shelves. I had the students help me. We...they...I mean they basically learned how to set up a studio. They learned how to use a circular saw, nails, and the girls would learn. That, you know, was a great experience. I learned a lot about Kentucky and a lot about its people by doing those programs. And I was able to sell, excuse me, to sell my work, because I was creating it at the time when I was teaching, and to have that stipend to live on, and even save some on. I was able then, after those three years, to set up my own studio. So I didn't just go out and take a loan and jump right in. I went to shows and I looked at people's booths, and I watched how they marketed it, and I saw how they set things up. And I did...I've always just, you know, paid attention.

WILLIHNGANZ: Where you a member of any of the guilds at this point?

HEFFNER: Well, when I was in graduate school I applied for the Guild. I think it was 81. Yes. 1981.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, this is the Kentucky...?

HEFFNER: Kentucky Guild of Arts and Craftsman. I applied to that and got accepted. I started doing art craft shows.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you got juried in right away?

HEFFNER: Uh, huh. Do the standards and then I immediately, you know I did me a tour of war, and I was the secretary from 83 to 86, rather 81 to 83. And I did their newsletter for, from 81 to 86 for five years. One of the things that...during the time that I was on the board...there was a really good working board at that time. There were some new people and some younger people involved.

WILLIHNGANZ: Who was in charge of the board at that point?

HEFFNER: The President was Mike Iams.

WILLIHNGANZ: Right.

HEFFNER: He was a potter, and he is now living in Milwaukee, I believe. He did hand-building and did wonderful work, and he was a really, really good at pulling people together without sort of, like, being on stage all the time. He was kind of in the back more. Unusual for people in the arts. We kind of like to be on stage, center stage being at (laughing) ...I'm joking of course. But halfway not. And so Mike was really a good leader and like I said that was when the Guild was coming of age with the 21st year, and we did the...I knew some of the people in Louisville because I'd gone to U of L. I knew John Begley, who was then the head of Louisville Art/Visual Art Association. Another couple members were from Louisville also. We realized that with the foundation...it was called foundation...then the Kentucky Museum of Art and Craft. I still sometimes call it the foundation. But Rita Steinberg and those folks were real active, and I thought it would be a great three-way, so I suggested to the board we follow it up and it became a reality. We did an anniversary show. It was a craft fair on the grounds of the Water Tower, which I...we've talked about before and that continued that show. They did a major exhibition and catalog. Lois Moran from the American Craft Council came down and juried these shows and juried the exhibit as well. She also juried the craft show and gave out awards. We had a dinner, and it was wonderful. It was kind of the Guild coming of age professionally, in many ways. It was really...it was really a great time to be involved in the guild, and the newsletter sort of tapped in my graphic interest and my promotional interest. I've always been interested in PR, it seems like. Maybe that's a spin-off of selling your work. I don't know, but if I discovered early on, and having a gallery, this was very helpful to have this be on my personality. If I believe in something I can sell it, I can sell anything if I believe in it, you know. It's amazing. So it was really interesting to be able to take the newsletter for the Guild and promote it. I've got copies of it I can show you if you are interested later on. For those first issues, I went out...and they had never done...there were a number of Guild members who weren't active who were getting older, and kind of didn't do shows anymore. But they were really quite talented artists. So I went out and interviewed them, and did some articles in the record for that, and that was one of the things that I contributed that I am proud of in terms of the Guild newsletter. Some really wonderful people I got to meet as a result, so I really benefited.

WILLIHNGANZ: Homer Ledford by any chance?

HEFFNER: Oh yes, Homer was one of my closest friends. I really miss him.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Rude Osolnik?

HEFFNER: I knew Rude quite well too. Especially near the end of his life. I got to know Rude because I was doing a show for the Southern Highland Guild. They had a...they had...I can't remember what year it was, but they had their annual meeting in Berea. They asked me to correlate a show for them. They wanted me to focus on people who had been in the Guild at least twenty-five years or more from the region. And that included Rude...that included Walter Corneilson and Bybee. Homer...we used Churchill Weavers, and was Berea College we included...and Hindman Settlement School...Jerry and Joyce Cooper who live there in Berea both are craftsman that have been long time Southern Hindman Guild members. I'm leaving a few out I know. But I interviewed these people quite in depth, and I did a catalog for them that shows the test of time.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you still have a copy of the catalog?

HEFFNER: Oh, I've got many of them. I'll give you one. They have photographs in it. I ran into the archives in Hindman and got some pieces. I've got the original cover that was a...I won't say it was the starting piece at Hindman Settlement School. All those schools Hindman, Penland, the John C. Campbell Folk School, and the Southern Guild...all those things were started by women. They were started at the turn of the century when the craft revival movement was starting, and when the conscience--social conscience of poverty for the first time. Especially when these women were not poor people...they came from very established families from the East. They wanted to make a difference, and so they came down and did, eventually, you know, start all these organizations. It's pretty amazing. But the Hindman collection that I had in the show was wonderful. That some baskets that has never been seen before. I went into Churchill's archives and was blown away. This was 2000 I believe, 2000 or 2001 I think, that was the year the show was. And Marla let me go into their archives, and I went nuts. I mean I found gossamer things. I was just so blown away. She let me take and copy some of the original photographs, and one of the original photographs is actually in the catalog. I put it in the catalog, it was reproduced. I told the Southern Highland Guild about this incredible collection. I was pretty involved and I've always been pretty involved in the Southern Highland Guild as well, and I knew that they had sort of a tutorial archival person there under a grant. So, I told that person you need to come up, and she did. She spent, I think maybe, six months back and forth kind of documenting that collection...which was really wonderful. So, I was really glad I got those two put together, because now it's wonderful that the Kentucky Historical Society has it. It's great...it was...it's an incredible...she kept...Eleanor Churchill kept one of everything they ever made, and on the lids of most of these little boxes is the weaving pattern, and the set up, and the loom, and it's just a treasure trail of incredible information.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. I heard that one which she was talking about it.

HEFFNER: Yeah. It's amazing. Well, what astounded me was in putting that show together, I got to know Rude quite a bit more, because I went out to his house several times and interviewed him, and went out a couple time to choose pieces. And those people...they are all connected you see, because they all kind of came together in this very rich time, and they have such, Rude was such a treasure trail of information. He used to go on the road for the Southern Highland Guild, and with a couple...one other guy...I forget his name...and they would just go out and visit the places, and find people, and encourage folks, and just, you know, gather stuff for the shops; and, you know, pick up work that they would resell. He was amazing. He was another one...I guess Homer and Rude both...they were both wonderful men, and they knew so much. Homer did...I had his work at a number of exhibits I coordinated for the Ohio Craft Museum, and other other places around the country. He was willing to let me have some of his instruments that normally he wouldn't, and he housed a treasure trailer or collection. His wife and his family still have an incredible collection of his original pieces, instruments. It's amazing. As you can tell I'm interested in people. I'm interested in information, and so I've always been sort of a pack rat for facts, and I've always really enjoyed putting people together. Networking, you know, that's, you know...I see something that's really important over here, and this person could really benefit from it, and then that organization's got all of that, and, you know, I really...that's one of the things I love doing.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now. After you...watch the hand.

HEFFNER: I'm sorry (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: After you were the secretary and then the culture of the newsletter, what role did you play in the years following that?

HEFFNER: After that, let's see, that would have been in the '80's. Starting in '86, I got real involved in wholesaling my work nationally. '86 pretty much to '90, '96, for about ten years, and I think I kind of outgrew the Guild in a way. I could not make enough money through their shows to sustain myself, and my location here was not a walk-in location. That's one of the reasons I got involved in the gallery. I was able to sell all the work I made there, and just go over it, basically. I also incorporated my studio into that space, so in terms of the Guild I did some of the shows. I usually did the fall fair...continued to do one show a year, usually. Whenever they needed me for, you know, advice or whatever, you know, I was always willing to help. I didn't serve on the board again. I felt like it was, you know, its time...it's always time to turn that over, you know, let other people step up to the plate.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, previous to that they did a number of classes in marketing and those types of things. But those classes at some point stopped being offered didn't they?

HEFFNER: Well. Whenever they did workshops and things like that, it was usually in collaboration with another organization. The Guild, you know, has never been really financially flush. So usually they always did some kind of partnering, whether it be with another arts organization or location, and I...I just really drawing a blank as to whether I actually participating in any of those workshops. I led one of them one time, but I don't think I ever attended one. I

did a lot of work with the arts council always. I've always been involved with them. The Kentucky Arts Council...I love their programming.

WILLIHNGANZ: How about the Highland Guild?

HEFFNER: Southern Guild...I've been on their board, and I've been a member of that organization since '84, and I did their craft shows...and once again for about five years I did their July and October shows. Then I was wholesaling and I really didn't need to do retail. I really couldn't keep up both. I had to make a decision to just make the product, make the line of work here, and then ship it...or, you know, in that I mean you can, wholesale is wonderful. Everything you make is sold...you get paid for it. I mean you can make \$20 thousand, \$30 thousand, \$50 thousand dollars worth of product. And you can go to a show and you can sell maybe \$2,000. I mean you never make your money back in this business. You don't know you're going to make your money back. Sometimes you do you know in our area. When I sold out I did great, you know (laughing). First year I did an Ann Arbor show, but it's, you know...I decided that wholesaling was much more business stability that I wanted, and that retail...I mean if the weather was lousy you know people didn't come, and you didn't have a good show. I just could not base my income in that manner. I depended on that, so...and I was single quite a long time until '86 when I got married...so, most of that time I was supporting myself. And those are just practical decisions really, as much as anything.

WILLIHNGANZ: I'm always interested in the conflict you get in, when doing basically piece work and doing mass production. And for every artist I think there are levels there, and I've talk to Walter Olson about that when Phyllis George went out to New York and got in big orders...and looked at them and said, you know, we can't do this. We would have to change everything we do in order to fill these orders.

HEFFNER: Right, right. And Walter can sell everything he makes out his front door. You know it has always been pretty much, well not always, but it has been that away for a long time. I mean, his father actually went on the road, and his grandfather, you know, and they sold their stuff from the back of a truck. You know, down in North Carolina and some other places initially, but one thing he became very established. And, I mean in the Smithsonian gift shop...ordered from them regularly. They really pretty much had all they could handle, you know. And retail is obviously a better way to go. You get more money, you know, wholesale. You set your price. I don't want to get into the nuts and bolts of that, but basically, retail is double what wholesale is, and you know you have to set your prices so that your wholesale price...you're making a good profit. You double that for retail, so if you're getting your retail prices for everything you make...obviously that is a much better profit margin. But it's not as guaranteed (laughing). But Walter, you know, Bybee it's...everybody has to make their own decision. Everybody does it differently. Other mistakes that a lot of craftsmen do make, and I almost made it myself. I did to a degree because you think there is only one way to do something. You know you look at someone else who is successful and you think, well that is the way I need to do it. Well it isn't necessarily the way you need to do it, but if you think that if there is this head set that I have to do this in order to be that, not only do you sell yourself short, but you also put yourself in a world that may not work for you. I mean there is lots, lots of

different ways to cut it. I've always done a production line when I did wholesaling. The only time I really blew it...but, I always did things I liked. I didn't make any work that I didn't want to make. There were always things that I continued to make because they were popular, and if I didn't make them, eventually I weeded them out. I'm still comfortable making mugs days on end. I love making mugs. Cups, you know, those are the things people handle, they hold in their hands, and that is the most intimate pottery piece you can make. Because a cup, you know, because the original cup was this so, you know, but some people get a line that is very popular. I have a number of friends who designed a line of work that was an incredible hit and the demand was phenomenal. They hired people to help them. So they became a manager of a shop with many workers. I only had two people ever working for me here, and one of them was a packer. He did all my shipping because that's the part I needed, but folks who got people working under them realized they weren't making like, for potters, they weren't making the pots anymore...they were really business managers. They didn't like that, so it's a tough...there's a big leap when you start having employees and you're a single operator. Really some businesses really require employees like...I'll use that Yardbird's. For an example, Richard Cole, who started out welding scrap metal together and making creatures, and, you know, eventually the demand was phenomenal. He sells them all over the country. He can't make them all himself--its ridiculous to think he could. So but I've always tried to keep...I don't like that word artist...people use it too much...but I've always tried to keep myself in...in my work as much as I can. I've also always had other options for income, because I curate shows and get paid for it, because I can do graphics work, or can do consultant work. You know, I mean there is lots of other ways that I can I can make money without sacrificing what I want to make on the pottery wheel with my clay. But not everybody can make those choices, so it's very individualized. I guess the main mistake is to make something you don't like. One year, oh Lord, I did a lot of work that had all the colors that Fiestaware had, and I did, you know, pitchers, tea pots and cups and saucers. It was almost like a tableware line...is what...is...was...and they nicked and dined me to death. "I want one yellow and one blue and one green". Filling orders was a nightmare because I, you know, it was...I would always be short one green something or one yellow something, and couldn't pack the order, you know...I had to for the next (unintelligible). So there were too many variables. Too many variables in that wholesale line that year. You know, for many years I've just done this matte white glaze. And my name is Gwen, and in Welsh that means white and light, and I don't know if that has anything to do with why I was always drawn to porcelain. It's like a big white canvas. I came across porcelain in graduate school, and pretty much ever since then I've worked with it exclusively. It's finicky. It's tougher to work with...its kind of like working with cream cheese. Its not really cream cheese, but it is it is tricky you know. You can see the bottom...that's how white the...actually...clay is, and my work was white for many many years...and the way I altered the pieces. I have examples. Here is bold year. This all started from designing from flower containers for a woman. I made some vases, but I don't have any examples, but I made some vases that had slits cut in them so that the stem of the flowers could be pulled into the slit and that made the arrangement. The openings were oval and narrow so they are easier to arrange in, and a wide open neck is, you know, flowers flop everywhere. So, I started making these, squeezing my pots and altering them, basically. I always alter the symmetry of the wheel since I made pots,

but I really started doing it once I started doing these flower arranging containers, and that kind of treatment worked its way into bowls. Because bowls are my favorite form...because they are wide open there is nothing you can hide...its all right there, you know. It's also a very welcoming shape and form because it's open. But this, this treatment in a combination with working with those flower arranging containers...and one year I was living in Cincinnati where the studio was in the Krohn Conservatory in Cincinnati...wonderful little conservatory. One really, really blustery winter they had their pre-spring show and one whole room was full of Calla lilies, and I've never seen such huge Calla lilies in my life. I mean the flowers were like dinner plates...they were just huge. And they were so exotic, and I spent just weeks, you know, practically a whole week drawing these Calla lilies. Just filling my schedule, and they kind of eventually worked their way into these bowls. These are thrown on a wheel and then the foot is trimmed and then the rims are cut and altered. They are softened, and kind of curled, and there is no two alike. I like to mimic the cut that I make in the foot here...kind of get mimicked in the rims. But, you know, I make functional stuff. But, really what I'm known for is this altered work. You know, the books that I got were published in these pieces, rather than my functional mugs and things like that. For many years I just did white. When I started adding colored glazes people would come by my booth, and go, "Oh, are you the new artist this year?" No. I've done this show for fifteen years, you know. Well, I've never seen you before. I said, "Well, that's because you didn't see white". You know that kind of thing, so it's kind of interesting. How just changing the surface color of forms will...all of a sudden you've got a whole new clientele. So it's pretty interesting.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. That is amazing.

HEFFNER: It really is amazing. I couldn't believe this lady. I quote this story a lot because, I mean, I had done that show for fifteen years, and now do the craftsman winter fair. She never had seen the work before. It's because I had a very few white pieces, and I had a kind of sea foam green blue, and black, and some other colors. I also had matte surfaces. I really prefer matte to the shiny. It's not quite as durable with functional service, so when I make functional pots I usually use a shiny glaze on the inside. But I love glazes and chemistry and color, and because porcelain is white you know colors look great on it. The potter Sandy Simon in Berkley...she says I love porcelain because blood shows up good on it (laughing). I thought I always thought that was a strange quote. I like to think of it as the great white canvas, you know.

WILLIHNGANZ: I was talking with Walter Hyleck about his tea pots and his whole experimentation with form verses function, and how he is fascinated with tea pots because...and I see you've done some too.

HEFFNER: Yeah. They are one of my favorites.

WILLIHNGANZ: They have such a clearly defined function but they are so...there are just endless varieties.

HEFFNER: Well, they've got lots of parts. I mean they got lids, and they got handles, and they got spouts and bodies, and you know, you can make...really you can just go crazy.

Now Walter...he is an amazing artist. I don't think there is any potter in the state who has experimented, and every idea he has he does great work with it. I mean he did a retrospect show when he retired at Berea College, and he had pots from every period of his career. They were astonishing...every single one. I mean they were so sculptural and they were so different. I mean one...they had a period one time that he was painting big sashes of color and flowers on the surfaces, so it was real surface painterly. And then he was doing kind of rough non-glaze textural stuff. I mean its amazing. He just...he has just so many ideas, and he just pushes them so wonderfully. This...his work's great. I mean some artist tends to...they get an idea, or a kind of work that is unique, and they get successful, and they just keep doing the same thing over and over and over again. They may change the colors, or they may change the pattern a little bit, you know, I mean, that's what I admire about Wally. He is always...Wally always pushed himself to new ideas. He is always on the drawing board trying something unusual with his forms.

WILLIHNGANZ: I do get concerned with industrialized art, and I look at Chihuly Pots, and you can see it.

(BOTH SPEAKING AT SAME TIME – UNINTELLIGIBLE)

WILLIHNGANZ: The whole concept of mass producing...and I realize there is an economic incentive there one way or another, but how do you make?

HEFFNER: Well, that's well, that's the individual decision you have to figure out and there's no formula that works for everybody. It's like what I sort of alluded to before, you know. You have a certain amount of things that you know will sell, and if you get tired of making them hire somebody else to make them for you. Let yourself go on and do the other kinds of work. There are so many ways to do it, you know; that's the interesting thing. There is an artist in Ohio who had a very successful line of he still does, but...Curt Benzle...and he teaches at the Columbus College of Art and Design. He was the first one to really at a large scale add color porcelain, and so he did a lot of earrings that were different in laid porcelain, and then they sliced them. He did all these amazing things, fiord techniques that you use in glass he was doing with clay. With colored porcelains. Putting different colors together and designing patterns and, you know, repeating the pattern the way he laid it in the forms. He was brilliant, and he did a workshop in Cincinnati when I had my studio there. And, he said one of the things I will always remember. He said be as creative with the way you run your business, and the way you make your decisions about you're your work, as you would in just doing your work. In other words, don't just think making, like for me pottery, that making the pots is the creative part and the only part that is creative. That's very limiting. What he said was you should be as creative as you are with the clay with how you sell your work, with how you present your work, with how you promote your work, with how you, you know, connect. Make it all a part of the creative process. Be as creative.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's terrific.

HEFFNER: It is. And he is the only person who ever lit a light bulb up to me. It was just you know something that a lot of people don't think about you know. There is a headset, you know, you can decide that the business part, the paperwork part is boring and you hate it. Or you can decide that its something you can be creative with by the way you file it, or what folders you used, or there are ways to make it more interesting for yourself. Even though it is not your favorite task. So by being negative about it, that only makes it more negative, you know. Or, uncreative look more uncreative than it could ever be. But if you look at it in a different light, and choose to embrace it, then it doesn't become drudgery as much anymore. That's what I try to think about, you know, I mean in your shop. Something as simple as sweeping the floor...I do that first thing in the morning. I sweep the floor. I thought its therapy, I guess, but it settles me for the day. Usually, the first thing I throw on the wheel are bowls or mugs--something that I do. A couple of boards to fool with, and it's kind of like you get in the rhythm. You know, then I will go to the drawing board and think about what I'm going to do the rest of the day. And I always work in a series. There are some people that would be bored to death making, you know, twenty or fifty of this and, you know, because by the time you make your twenty or thirty of one you've got a couple of good ones there, you know. Because you've forgot about what you're doing. You're just doing it, and your Zen is into it, and the form is much better as a result of not being so conscience of it. You know, so I think repeat work is a dirty work for some people, and I think that is a real mistake because I think repeat work is a way to come into yourself--to release your ego in a sense. Let the, let the clay speak as some potters say (laughing). Some of the Native Americans have said that, but I think there is a lot to be learned from from doing things again and again. Or, coming back to an idea that is something that Wally does too in thinking about an idea, and working on it for awhile, and then if it's not fresh anymore. Sitting it on the shelf and doing something else, and coming back. There are some days I come to the studio and I can't make a pot. It's not a right day. I'm not centered. So I'll go do something else. I'll do, you know, clean a shelf or stack a colander, or do something else. Because some days you can't can't create, and that's okay. You know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Tell me about curating shows and what goes into that process.

HEFFNER: Oh its one of my favorite things in the world to do. I love coming up with ways to showcase work that is overlooked or never put up on pedestals, or, a way of approaching an idea through people's works. Some of my favorite shows I've done have really been that way. I took a class I've taught at the Johnson Campbell Folks School for about ten years. That's in Brasstown, North Carolina...taught porcelain there for ten years. Part of the deal is when you teach a class there you get paid, but you also get to take a class for free. It's the way they invest in their instructors. It is very brilliant. I took a blacksmithing class because I had always been interested in a blacksmithing. And from that I was the only woman in the class. It was very frustrating, because I'm used to handling clay with my fingers, and I had to like--I couldn't touch the iron, you know. It was hot so I had to use these tongs. It was so strange I couldn't hardly...I couldn't hardly do it at first. Since I had to have this extension of self to handle the work. You know, because it was hot. But out of that came an idea...occurred and I thought about it a couple of years. What is the difference between what blacksmiths that are male do and what women blacksmiths do, and how many women blacksmiths are there? Why, what is it about blacksmithing that draws people, you know male or female? And, I got to this

idea: what is there a difference that women make? And so, I did a show called "Women of Iron" in my gallery. This show was a really great hit. It was women blacksmiths from the United States and Canada. Very rarely at that point this was in.

WILLIHNGANZ: How did you even find them?

HEFFNER: Oh, well. See. I had taken this blacksmith's class and, you know, it's a network. The world is a network; one person word of mouth really is the way. And I've always paid attention. I've never been tunnel vision to clay. You know, I appreciate...I've always loved blacksmithing and I've always appreciated it. I've always loved glass. I mean, I don't just look at clay, the world of clay. I've always looked around, and when you do a national craft show you're surrounded by everything. The best, I mean, you go to Baltimore...the Baltimore market in the spring, and there's the best of everybody's work there. In jewelry, and glass, and wood...so it's phenomenal. And, I always go around and look at it, you know. I remember people and made connections when I meet people. So anyway, I had taken this class, and I thought about it, and I decided to do it...and we had women from U.S. and Canada. I contacted the few people...the women that I knew, and asked them to recommend women. And they submitted slides and I choose to do the show that away. It was such a successful show though a craft museum came down and visited. I know the director, and she just fell in love with the show, and the whole idea of women of iron. You know it's a great title. I love great titles.

WILLIHNGANZ: That is a terrific title.

HEFFNER: The idea drives the title; the title drives the show. So it went to the Environmental Craft Museum. And then, the American Blacksmith Association was having their annual conference in Asheville the very next year. They got word of it because some of the women were in the show, and say, "Hey, would you like to bring it down to Asheville to the conference? We'll find you a venue we'll find you a location". So I said great, great, you know. Or, can you hang on to it for me...can you store it? They had to store it for four months, and they were willing to do that for me. Because I didn't have storage place.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

HEFFNER: And then we traveled. It...they, you know, we figured out a way to travel it in vans. It went down to the Asheville Art Museum, which was the first official art museum I had a show, at that point, in Asheville...in North Carolina. That was a great show...a really great show (laughing). And, you know, it was wonderful for the women to have this special show just for them. I did come to realize that the work really is more organic. I mean, I don't use the word feminine although you could use it. But, it's a very physically demanding work, but it's not as physically demanding as some people think. I mean, some people think you have to have brute strength. Well, you don't...you heat this stuff and it gets soft you know (laughing). I mean it's amazing, and it turns to clay after it's heated to the right temperature. But, you know, it is a really interesting...actually, this little hook right there was made by Jody Best. I have some in the house. She...that's the only thing I have actually from this show. She did little heart things,

and that's one of the pieces I still have from that show. Also, the bracket that when you came into our driveway...the pottery sign?

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh yeah.

HEFFNER: The bracket was one I did in my blacksmithing class, so (laughing). I have my father's anvil, and some tools, but I've never set up a forge. I might one day still.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow. Did your father do blacksmithing?

HEFFNER: He did a little bit, you know. Another thing I did, and probably why I was interested in it. We had horses, and when I was in high school I apprenticed with a blacksmith. A farrier I should say. He exclusively did horse shoes, so what I did I was the backbreaking part. You know, I pulled the old shoes off and cut them down, and got them all shaved and ready for him to put the form...the shoes. I never did the actual blacksmithing part but I did the prep work. And so I had an interest. I hung out with him, with Gary, and he was a real good farrier. So, I had a little bit of insight to it as a younger person. But.

WILLIHNGANZ: So after you did a lot of curating during the 90's?

HEFFNER: I did that when I had the gallery.

WILLIHNGANZ: And you had the gallery when?

HEFFNER: The gallery...the beauty of exhibitions, you know, when you have a retail space, and this is what the Artisan Center tries to do with their exhibits as well. You have a retail space, you have a stable of artists who you are selling and promoting. Well, you have to have a way of talking about your business, so exhibits for me were a great way to bring new artists and test-drive them. You know, if I had, let's say, the "Women of Iron" show, let's see if some of these blacksmithing products could work at the gallery. So, those things sold well and I continue to carry them, you know. But it was a way of advertising for the show; for having openings of gathering people together. Of showcasing new work, maybe opening the communities' eyes; open to a different art form. You know, and it's a great way to have an opportunity to promote the place...to promote your business. So, it gives you something to talk about other than, "Wow. I had great sales this month" (laughing), you know. Which is a great thing to talk about, but it...are not necessarily what the newspapers and magazines are going to print. Over and over and over again, you really have to have a story. I loved doing it because it connected me to people beyond the state. It connected me in a national way, which was when I was wholesaling, I was doing national shows, and I was networking with people when I sold that way at the wholesale markets. You know, one or two a year. When I started selling just from my retail gallery, Contemporary Artifacts in Berea, then I wasn't out in the field as much. So, having exhibits is a way of connecting people. Another really successful show I did...I was interested in wood firing pottery. And, there was sort of a renaissance of wood firing back in the early 2000, or right in then. And, I thought, well you know, there's all these great wood fire potters. Let's have a wood fire show. So, I did it. I did it two years, and the first year I invited forty potters from all over the country. The amazing thing...they all said, "Yes, they would do it". They all knew my work, because, you know, I have been established in the ceramics field. So,

they knew of me at least. They had a friend or reference. They didn't necessarily know my gallery. But I had a great showing of...sold a tremendous amount of wood fired pots. Which are wood fired pieces...are, you know, that just the clay and the fire. There is not a lot of color. There is not a lot of ways to pretty up the form. It's really the clay, and the fire that speaks, and the forms especially are really beautiful when they are wood fired. So that show was a hit, and the next year I did it I invited eighty potters. And that show, the Southern Highland Guild wanted to have that show, so I traveled it. When I talked to the artists when they first came to Contemporary Artifacts, I said I need to have back-up work. I want you to send me at least three pieces, and I want you to have at least three backed-up. Because, if I sell all three of them at Contemporary Artifacts in Berea, I need another three to actually go to Asheville to the Southern Highland Guild venue. And so everybody thought that's great, that's great, you know...and so I established some collectors at the time I had the gallery in wood fired. That first show I turned a number of buyers onto this type of pottery. So when the show opened at the Southern Highland Guild, I let one of my buyers know about it ahead of time, and when I installed the show he came down and helped me unpack. He liked doing that. He purchased one of the best pieces in the show, a \$2,000 dollar tea bowl from an artist from New Jersey. It was a gorgeous piece that this artist had actually fired in Japan, at a famous guild in Japan, and he pulled it out of the kiln and it was like 2,000 degrees, you know. It was a gorgeous, brilliant, emerald green tea bowl about about like this. So that was really exciting to me, not only to bring the artists together, but to generate clientele that eventually actually became collectors, you know. Then this collector is actually donating his collection. Now part of it went to Centre College recently...in the last few years. The other part of it I'm trying to get organized to go to Lutheran College, my old alma mater (laughing), or U of L. We will see. I'd like to get it outside of the state actually. He developed quite a good eye for good pots, so. That was, you know, I don't know why do I like that, I guess it's, you know.

WILLIHNGANZ: Why did you close your studio?

HEFFNER: The gallery?

WILLIHNGANZ: Gallery.

HEFFNER: I sold it. I didn't close it. I sold it to a couple who ran it for another three years, and the reason I sold it...I got a job at the Artisan Center. I couldn't see how I could probably manage both. A big part of Contemporary Artifacts was me. Because I had a studio there, I made my pots there in in the back rooms of the studio at the gallery. And I really was the driving force in that business. I just didn't think I could do both. So, I had a buyer who wanted to buy it, and it was wonderful and made a good profit (laughing). It ran for about three years after that, and then they had, I guess, complications and it did show. It's no longer a business, but had a good run for about sixteen years. So, you know. It was exciting. The gallery pulled together all of those varied interests. Selling, promotion, making, people, you know. So, it was great that away.

WILLIHNGANZ: Now, you're such a social being it's hard for me to imagine why you would live out here.

HEFFNER: (Laughing) well I do love nature, and I married my husband, and this was the place he had, so I was kind of naive and very much in love when I moved here. I always wanted to live in the country and I had studios in cities. So this was the first time I had really built a studio from the ground up, and that really appealed to me. (Cough) Sorry. Also, at the time I moved here I was wholesaling, so it didn't matter where I lived. Because I made the work and I shipped it out.

WILLIHNGANZ: What made you choose the job at the Artisan Center?

HEFFNER: (Cough) Well, I had been looking around for other curatorial positions. I was, you know, job shopping--not very not real wholeheartedly. But I thought it would be stupid not to apply it right in my back yard. The position, I had no idea I would get it, but the position also included those things, PR, exhibits, you know. And, and working with artists on the programming. And, it left out the financials. See, I don't even know how open the cash register at the Artisan Center, and I love that you know. I don't have to worry about the money, you know the budget. So, you know, it took the good parts of what I enjoyed about running my gallery and put it into one position. And I really like that. Also, I mean, the Artisan Center...it's an incredibly wonderful place. It just shows the foresight of our state and Governor Patton and all the people involved. Berea College and the city and the state's agencies are involved. To have a showcase...I mean our state is light-years ahead of other states in terms of how it has promoted, educated and marketed its creative people. We really needed a stage for that.

WILLIHNGANZ: My understanding is there was a certain amount of resistance among some of the local artists in Berea to having an Artisan Center.

HEFFNER: We shouldn't do this on the camera (laughing). No. Yes, there was. But I think I had a business, and I knew probably that it would affect it. I mean, you know, I knew that. I also knew, and this is the thing nobody seems to focus on as much as I would hope they would, is that it brings a tremendous amount of traffic into that town that would never stop otherwise. Its, I don't know. Part of the problem, I think, is that Berea College...it is the problem. I won't gloss it over. The problem is that Berea College has held up Berea for a long time in terms of crafts and marketing, and, you know, it has a long history of the tradition of crafts...is very visible...its known all over the world. People would stop at Berea because of what they had known about Berea College and Berea College crafts. And, there's a lot of tailgating that went along with that. You know, tail-coating I should say, because the shops had built up around, you know, in the square, and different places, had an automatic audience that they didn't have to work to get. You know, that's wonderful, and it's really smart to locate in a place like that. That's one of the reasons I had my gallery over there, but you can't just sit on your laurels. You have to work it. You have to work at your market. You have to work to get your clientele...your business going. And, a lot of people just never have done that as much as I really think they need to. When I had my gallery, I worked with, well, I worked with the business associations, and we advertised in the Herald Leader. We did an ad campaign. That was not repeated, and I think it really helped our our traffic regionally. I also pulled three other galleries together and we nationally advertised together. This is something I suggested, and I did most of the leg work. There were the Upstairs Gallery, the Contemporary Artifacts, Promenade and the

Log House. All of us, I think it was the Log House, yeah, we all went together, and for a quarterly magazine each one of us would get an ad for each quarterly issue. I did all the layout design. All they had to do was provide an image. Then usually, they used it as an opportunity to promote maybe a special exhibit that was going on, because I was doing exhibitions. Some of the other galleries started doing exhibitions as well, because they figured out it was a way to get people there and advertise. Plus, if you do a colored post card in the mail to people they hang on to it. If it's a great image they will hang it on their refrigerator, and if they don't get there for that show they will remember, and maybe get there in the next month or six months from now, or they still have it, and, you know, on the wall somewhere as it was a digital reminder. I advertised those galleries together. Initially, we just did just did each gallery, and then the second or second year we decided to call ourselves the galleries of Berea. Because we wanted to get Berea in it. We wanted, you know, it was a way to try and get people to have awareness. That worked really well, and we did that in American Style Magazine for a number of years. And, how wonderful little ads they were, like 1 by 3, 3 ½ in the back section. And, they have a section of the magazine called the Date Book, and it's by state and by date what's going on with exhibitions, special shows. I've had people come in the gallery with that part of the magazine ripped out and folded, and in their back pocket, and they are traveling down the interstate trying to catch the places they wanted to go by looking at that date book. Knowing they are going to go through Ohio, Kentucky and North Carolina, and maybe Georgia, all the way to Florida. So, I knew it was a good venue for us to advertise in, and you know, it's like you got to, you got to promote yourself. You can't just sit there, you know. I think that is part of the problem for Berea in general, and I think for some of the businesses, too. I think that probably we have stiffened some of audience off, but on the other hand, at the center there are brochure racks where they can put their advertising free. There is a color video that runs non-stop talking about Berea. There's a full size of this door glass case where they can have their work...free advertised showing. And there is a Berea tourism person now hired out there, and she's really great, Nancy. Everybody who walks in that door is a potential customer for somebody in Berea. She engages every person who comes in that door if they are hanging. If they even stop at the brochure rack, she is over there talking to them about Berea. Our front desk people with people say...ask if, you know, are you going into Berea...which is just two miles down the road. We're cross-trained to promote the city as well as what we have there, and that's something that a lot of people don't know. That our people...our staff is...actually past four o'clock at night...our front line staff will say, "Are you going into Berea?" If they say yes, well, you should probably go to Berea first because a lot of shops close at 5 or 6 and you can get there. We're open until 8. Come back and see us after you go to Berea. I mean, I don't know anybody who would have a customer come in the door, tell them to go away to your competition, and then come back. You know, I mean, that's just something that people don't realize that happens out there. When I do my PR I always organize what's happening at the center around what's happening regionally. Like the Spoonbread Festival, we'll do displays of spoon bread, mix and spoon bakers, Tator Knob mix, the traditional music festival weekend we will have musicians at the center, and in my press releases I talk about the traditional music festival at Berea College. And as a result of that, we are doing music at the center, or the Guild Fair whenever there is a Guild Fair I always do a release that talks about the Guild Fair. And, at the Center we have these demonstrators.

You know, so and that's something. And, unless you are part of the media, you don't know that is coming out, because every time there is a regional event, especially if there is a Berea event I, we the Center, I shouldn't say I, the Center does a release that encompasses what is going on in the town and in the region. And, then we try to tie-in whatever activities or programming we are doing with that. Regionalism is incredibly important. That's, that's something that is probably...is really important to jump on right now. In fact, tomorrow I'm going to a symposium on regionalism. Gallery directors are getting together at U.K., and are going to network and talk about what is regionalism, and how we can share resources, and that sort of thing. So, I think that, you know, part of it is not working hard enough at...at your business you know or advertising. Being used to that, just regular traffic that comes by your door kind of thing, and, and the fact that the Center is probably drawing some people. But, I don't think that the, you know, I mean, I don't think that it's all the Center's fault. You know, I mean there has been some real dilemmas with the Boone Tavern being closed, and a lot of construction around there, so that I know has hurt traffic a lot at College Square. But Old Town has all those advantages. All kinds of stuff going on with the, you know, the new sidewalks and the lighting and you know lots of improvements down there, so. The story just needs to get out better. You know I think (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Is there anything you haven't said? We're down to about four minutes left; is there anything you wanted to talk about?

HEFFNER: Oh, I talk too much (laughing). I guess one of the things that I find interesting about how all of this comes back into the work. Since I've been working at the Artisan Center, I haven't been in the studio on a regular basis. I usually work up here on the weekends. And, what I've learned to do is...with pottery, you make a pot and you have to let it dry a little bit, and then you trim it, and then you finish it off. And then, there's all these steps in firing. So, it's not just straight forward where you just make it and it's done. Whereas weaving...you could start, you know, and you can come back twenty years and finish it. What I started doing is carving on the surfaces on my pieces. I make them, and then I flatten an area, and use that as a place for a frame for an image. I could carve and come back three days later, carve some more, so it allows me to create work that is not consistently being worked on day after day, and that's been very helpful to me to figure out a way. I think that probably things have become simpler with my work. The pressure is not there, necessarily, to market like it used to be. So I have a freedom now that I've never had before in my work. I have ideas that are really exciting in terms of sculpture work that I'm moving towards now. I have an exhibit...a show in Ohio in April that I'm preparing for. So (laughing) it will be all hard work. I guess it all...everything is connected, you know. Everything I've done has informed my work. You know, no man is an island, so.

WILLIHNGANZ: Yeah. Okay. Let's take a little tour of your studio here. (Break in tape – outside background noise) Did you have this built specifically for your purposes?

HEFFNER: Oh yes, yeah.

WILLIHNGANZ: So you designed the layout and whatnot?

HEFFNER: Yes uh-huh. In fact after we had the whole bottom of the flooring down I had...I was looking at my diagram changing where windows and doors were depending on the view (laughing).

WILLIHNGANZ: Oh, makes sense.

HEFFNER: I changed some things around.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

HEFFNER: It's not easy to build on a hillside. We had to step the footer twice going downhill. But it's a great little shop.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Maybe you can tell us about this room.

HEFFNER: The first room in the studio is my showroom. The studio is open all the time, so if people want to come and purchase work they can. Most pieces are marked and I've got a little sales ticket over there. This is just a collection of finished pieces. I did a firing with a friend, so I've got some wood firing pieces as well as pieces from other people. It's just nice to have a place to get the work away from the working studio, out of the clutter, to get back and look at it, so. So it's kind of a nice, nice luxury to have in a studio...to have a clean space to set up the work. So.

WILLIHNGANZ: Do you want to tell us any more about some of these particular pieces?

HEFFNER: Well. These three pieces up here were fired with my friend Bill Whitt over in Waco, just past Bybee, really. They are stoneware pots. They are very different from what I normally do. They are paddled in ovals so that they will fit in the kiln nicely. Soft fire. What I'm mostly known for is this white work with altered rims...also, the carved work. I have a tea pot. There is actually going...this piece is going to be shipped this week to the Ohio Craft Museum. There's a tea pot show and that's got a rose carved in it. My sister-in-law has a wonderful rose garden. She has hundreds of varieties and my son took our camera and shot a lot of pictures of them. From those pictures I did a drawing. Actually it's on the other side as well. I think they are fairly similar. Yeah, I tried to draw about...I think that this is a little bit better drawing, a little bit of a color sprayed on that surface, dusky, kind of a dusky purple rose. She had a rose that was actually that color which was phenomenal. I had never seen anything that way before but, yeah. I love making tea pots because of all the parts. And, this again, I was talking about how I paddle a surface and flatten it so I have kind of a canvas or frame area for the imagery. I don't always do things that are that realistic. That's very unusual, actually. Usually I do something that is abstract. I will look at like the one pedal of a flower, and abstract the form of it, and that kind of thing. Like say one little section. I've always done the carving. I think it goes back to my print-making background. I did wood. I did a lot of wood cuts in undergraduate school and I've come full circle with that, too. Actually, the past three years I've taken a wood engraving workshop at the Larkspur Press in Monterey, Kentucky. Wesley Bates is an artist from Canada who comes and teaches every October, and I've been taking his classes so, it, you know, it helps me with my carving as well. It's kind of neat.

WILLIHNGANZ: I was kind of intrigued by this little.

HEFFNER: Pedestal?

WILLIHNGANZ: Pedestal piece here.

HEFFNER: Oh (laughing) funky little piece. It's just a soap dish. Or, a candle stands either way. That's the, that's the sea foam glaze that I told you I put on the work that all of a sudden the women at that craft show noticed my work for the first time, because it had color on it instead of the white. I wish I had more samples in here, and this...I'm really low on inventory. I have actually more work in the studio to look at there. Unfinished. This is a wood cut by my print making teacher; Mr. Redding. I was telling you about...was one of my first mentors. He paid me five dollars a week to clean his house and that's how I paid for my voice lessons (laughing). He was so supportive.

WILLIHNGANZ: Get rid of some of that shine off the windows. No that doesn't help.

HEFFNER: That doesn't help at all.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay let's see the rest.

HEFFNER: Yeah come on in. Here is another one of my pieces in that wall piece. I should have brought some of the books up I'm in. I'm in nine different books. I actually...I would say probably by being published more people have gotten to know my work that away, than they have by seeing my work in the flesh.

WILLIHNGANZ: Well this is sort of a library over in here?

HEFFNER: Oh, yeah. Actually, you were talking about my shows. These are...here's Women of Iron. When I would do shows I would have a book that had images and résumés, and information about the artists. The wood fire show I did was called Clay Wood Fire Soft; these are the show books from the gallery that I've kept. They are, you know, sources of information and resources for people and books, magazines...and this is a catchall place actually right now. I had a lot of things from the gallery that didn't go with the gallery sale. A lot of records, a lot of information on artists and it's taken me about five years to go through all of that and get to the bottom. So, I'm just now sort of weeding my way through all of it. It's been great. It's been, like very nostalgia, you know, oriented in fact. On top of the refrigerator I've got articles about shows, and, you know, newspaper features that covering the exhibits that I've done in Ohio and different places, so. This is basically sort of a desk. This is where I do a lot of drawing. I've got my sketch books underneath. It's also just an area I like to use just to...if I'm assembling work or if I have a spillover area. Surface area is really important in a pottery just to have room to lay stuff out. This is where I keep the work that is in process as well as the work that has been fired. Most of the work in here right now has been fired once. Some of it raw...the top shelves haven't been fired but the bottom shelves are. I have a lot of tiles here. This is a way; I wish I had a piece of these. The Korean's did this. They made a mold out of clay and did intricate carvings on them. And, I saw...this is the Ceramics Monthly magazine that I found. It was like ten years old magazine. This is porcelain clay that has been carved and

then fired to about fourteen hundred to a biscuit temperature, so that it is hard. But, it's not vetteri...it's not all the way fired. I make slab clay with a slab roller, or roll it out with a rolling pin, and I drape it over here and pound it into this shape. And then, when it comes off, the image is on the bowl. So it's a way of making a carved pot quickly, and repeating the same image over and over again, without having to carve each one. And, I've been having a lot of fun doing that, this rhododendron. I'll see if I can find that mold, the one that is back in there. This is a little slab of clay. You can see it picked up the image, a little dusty. Oh, better not do that in front of your camera, sorry.

WILLIHNGANZ: That's alright.

HEFFNER: But, this is a way I can use the carving and do it repeat work with it. Using these biscuit molds, and that's been fun to do. My son and I did some plant markers, and I've been doing a series of tiles. This one again...I'm interested in plant forms a lot. This is a...I don't know if you can see it very well. This is a tile that if you take another one of these and put it over here, this hooks in to here, and it repeats. So it's like this image just continues a vine, and this is going to be for a baseboard molding around a cabinet. So this is the original, and I will cast...that I will make a plaster mold of that and then make originals from it.

WILLIHNGANZ: What are these?

HEFFNER: These are plant markers my son made. This is Santo Lena (laughing). A friend of mine closed her pottery business and I got a bunch of her stamps. She had probably ten different alphabets. Different sizes...we have smaller type. You can see the difference. This one's got curly, and this one is bigger. See how the letters are bigger. She had two different sizes and these are plant markers. I have very expensive borders, so you asked why I lived here. Part of that was so that I could garden. Even though we are on a ridge and the soil is poor, I've managed to build up perennial borders, so I have lots and lots of wild flowers that I've brought in from the woods, and perennial plants, and shrubs, and every spring for a number of years I did a second sale, the pottery. And I would sale my perennials. After awhile you have to divide them, and if you keep dividing them, and making new beds, you have to keep weeding more borders. So, I got to the point where I couldn't make any more borders and keep up with them. It's very hard to keep up with them now. So I started a spring sale, and it was very popular. It was called Perennials and Porcelain. Porcelain and Perennials. Every...I did it every Derby Day because it hardly ever rains on the Derby. So it was guaranteed, pretty much, regularly a good weekend without rain. First weekend in May. I have a dinner order that I am also working on here for a friend, and this is the salad, sort of the soup bowl has a little trailed image on the side.

WILLIHNGANZ: And will you paint this?

HEFFNER: This will be glazed. This has been bisque fired. This is the backside which is trimmed, and this is my mark. This is how I sign my work. When I'm...when I left my...see it's a lower case G and an H. I also have a business card with that on. When I left undergraduate school I worked for a year in a production pottery in Minneapolis, and the pottery had its stamp,

and the production potters that were hired had their own stamp. So, when I was hired there I had to make my stamp. And that's the same stamp I still use. I...it's just drilled into the bottom of a little dowel rod with a dremel tool. I've been grateful every since, because it's a great easy way to sign your work rather than scrawling a signature across. So I work on a potter's wheel, and this is my original wheel here. It's a kick wheel that I've turned into a table now, the flywheel is still there. And this is my electric wheel where I throw most of my work. The glaze pantry is over there. Lots of little chemical jars and glaze ingredients. I spray my work. See the compressor down underneath the table? There is where I house my compressor. The glaze is sprayed on the surface of the pots. Because I am firing in an electric kiln, the surface of electric fired pots...In a gas kiln, where there is actually flame and an atmosphere, the surface of the glaze melts and sort of blends really well. In an electric kiln there is no flame, there is just heat. And if you have a dribble of glaze on your pot when you glaze it when you apply it, that dribble shows in the finished piece. So the surface has to really...for my forms that are sculptural anyway, has to be a real skin...has to be a really precise skin of glaze on the pots. So, I turned to spraying my work and I use a compressor. It is about ten pounds of pressure, and a little spray gun. I shot out that window. There, that's where I work. It gives that sort of complete surface. If I had my rather, I wouldn't put glaze on my pots at all, because I just love the way it looks and feels. But, anyhow. I was going to try and find a cup piece for you. You were talking about the flower arranging containers. These are all going to be carved, but here is one of these, if I can get it out of here without breaking it. One of these cup pieces...where it starts out as a cylinder completely round, and then I before it is completely dry I paddle it into an oval, and then I take a knife and cut this area here. And for me, it has to be visually interesting as well as function. Now, if you put a stem in here, you can pull it right down in here, and it will hold it. And I just do millions of variations on these forms. Sometimes they're taller, sometimes they are narrower; sometimes there are several slits. My graduate thesis professor Leon Driskell, who is in the English department, who has passed away now...but he looked at me one time when we were talking trying to work my thesis out. He said, "Let's face it Gwen. Symmetry really bugs you" (laughing). And, I made things on the potter wheel which makes every thing symmetrical, because it goes round and round, and perfect symmetry. So, I thought that was pretty funny we laughed about it for years, you know. I'm always altering the symmetry of a potter's wheel when I work, I don't always do that, but I enjoy, you know, shaping the pieces a little, you know. But, I do just straight forward stuff like just a simple bowl. You know, and we can see some pieces in the house, too. I have a lot of...these pieces are done in two sections. It's through unto here and then another section is added. This one was thrown all the way to here and then this part was added. Then I paddled areas here. These are going to keep for the show I was telling you about. I'm going to be carving on these areas here. I got lots of drawings that I have to figure out which ones I'm putting where, and what goes on them. Here is a smaller one of these altered bowls. You can see which one has been mucked up a little hasn't been fired yet. You can see I even push the bowls into another bowl. This little cut here is mimicked in the rim. You know the sort of eclipse of the moon when it's on the way when it's a slit; somebody once told me that that was the shape I used when I cut my pots a lot. I don't know if it's true or not but I like the shape, I like that curve a lot. So, and again, tiles I'm working on...some tiles...I don't know what else to tell you about, really, other than I also tried to put pots around me that I enjoy, and that one actually I'll show what that came from. This is a Tibetan a

friend of mine, is the son of Dr., President John Stephenson of the Berea College, he's passed away now, but his son is David. David went over when his father met the Dalai Lama. And when David was over he got a bunch of these wood blocks which were inked and used to make prayer flags to print and images...a lotus image. I need to get this back to David. Actually, this is made out of wood, and I press this into clay and made a clay mold. Here is the clay mold. And then, I pressed the clay into that and I get...see these are the three stages. Here is the wooden carved piece from Tibet. I made a mold of it here, and when I press clay into this I get that. And then, I have some finished ones in the gallery that are glazed. I put a little hole back here in the back so that they can be hung on the wall. I don't know. Its one of those things that I printed some of these on some hand made paper show that David did at the Upstairs Galleries, and it was a fun little collaborative project. And, these tiles, everybody loves them, and there must be something universal about this image. It's not very sophisticated in terms of how it's carved or cut, but people respond to it. I've sold a lot of them. It's a way of having a small little clay piece nearby.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well. Would you like to go down and take a look at the house?

HEFFNER: Yeah, sure.

WILLIHNGANZ: Can we do that? (Break in recording)

HEFFNER: I haven't done...been real successful at it, but this piece here, the sea urchin piece, is one that I managed to hang onto. I had a couple of double bowls that where published and got talked out of (laughing). Your best work always sells, you know. The things are to try and hang on to a few of them, so I did do a retrospect in my gallery a number of years back. And, I put all of the stuff that I'd saved together. That was my...so this is a collection of just pots from all over. Probably my favorite is the smallest. This is from Chemisette from Japan. He is a national living treasure. It's a beautiful little Saki cup. You can see how small it is by my hand. I bought this at Bloomingdales.

WILLIHNGANZ: Wow.

HEFFNER: They had a show there and I recognized his work because, this is another one of his pieces, but I think the little one is more attractive somehow. This is a rope that he has rolled into the clay. And that pattern comes from...his father was a rope maker, and to honor his father, even though he choose to become a potter, he wraps the rope around a stick, and then rolls it around the pot, and the depressions are filled with white slip. That's his work. These are...I have some Japanese pieces, and this is a repay which is a famous period in Japanese pots. This is a little mustard dish that came from that. I found this at an antique store in Danville, of all places. This piece here...this is made by Cho Chi Hamada when Tom Marsh went to Japan. That I told you, I stayed at his house when he was on sabbatical. He brought this back to me. My cat knocked it over and broke it, and I repaired it with gold leaf, and in Japan when a piece is valuable, if it breaks, they repair it, but they don't repair it in a way that they're trying to hide the cracks. They extenuate the cracks, because what that says to their culture is, that it was good enough that I took the time to fix it and keep it. So, as in our culture

we try to repair things so you can't tell that they were broken, whereas in Japan...so I did, I honored that tradition and put gold leaf in the epoxy to accentuate. That's probably my most valuable piece even though it is broken. Oh, these are pots that Matthew made in shells. I love shells and rocks. And, as you can tell, we went to Maine and Massy, and I practically brought the ocean back with us. Wonderful rocks in Maine. Granites and stone washed, and ocean washed. This is a piece of granite from Deer Isle, Maine. That's kind of pink granite now. The Smithsonian in Washington are made from this marble, granite.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay.

HEFFNER: Let's see if I can find another pot. I don't have that many, actually, I have to look around unless I have other people's pots. I have a number of pieces out right now. I don't have another piece of mine out here. Sorry. I am really short on work. So I could talk about this. This is a carved piece I am working on. I have it down here at the house so I can work on it some down here, and this is bourbon...is made from an oak barrels, in particular Woodford, and some of the other distilleries in our state. So, I've drawn...these are oak barrels...they are kind of hard to see oak leaves over top of it. And I'm doing this for the next bourbon bottle show. It will have a stopper with a leaf on the top of the stopper. And this side hasn't been carved yet (laughing). I don't know it took a lot of time to do this side, so I'm not sure what I will do on the other side. I might just do a bottle of bourbon imagine. Some Maker's Mark or something. This is Phillip Wigs. He is a Berea potter. This is his piece there. Potters collect other people's other potter's pots. We're the best...some of the best clients for your work are other potters (laughing) ...we support each other. It's kind of addictive, I suppose, but if you like clay you tend to want it to be all around you. So, I have a lot of it in here. I'm trying to look here at other pieces. Wow...lots of other potters' pots. This is a wood fire piece from called Caliph.

WILLIHNGANZ: This wood piece up here?

HEFFNER: No. Actually, right up there, it was fired with wood...a great big pot. It's a wonderful wood fire piece. Quite large and you can see the flame pattern going around the pot. That's the color changes. There is no glaze on it, its just this is where the pot was sitting in the kiln. So the color of the clay is still there. I love this piece. I have one in my gardens. I don't know if you saw it when we came down the hill. There is some another one of his pieces. I have out in the garden as I took up an architectural garden pot. It's beautiful.

WILLIHNGANZ: Okay. Well thank you very much.

HEFFNER: Is that it?

WILLIHNGANZ: For your time, I think that's probably it.