HIKMET LOE

Salt Lake City, UT

An Interview by

Greg Smoak

13 September 2013

EVERETT L. COOLEY COLLECTION

Great Salt Lake Oral History Project

U-3224

American West Center
and
J. Willard Marriott Library
Special Collections Department
University of Utah

THIS IS AN INTERVIEW WITH HIKMET LOE ON SEPTEMBER 13, 2013. THE INTERVIEWER IS GREG SMOAK. THIS IS THE GREAT SALT LAKE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, TAPE NO. U-3224.

GS: Good morning, it is Friday the thirteenth, two thousand thirteen; we are at the American West Center. It is my pleasure today to be here with Hikmet Loe of Westminster College, and this is the first interview in the Great Salt Lake Oral History Project. My name is Greg Smoak, and I am very happy to have you with us here today.

HL: I'm very happy to be here. Thank you so much for inviting me.

GS: Alright. Now before we jump into your engagement with Great Salt Lake and your long years of work studying and writing about the earthwork art that is so famous on the Lake and in its environs, let's start with a little bit of background about you. And we always want to get a little bit about that to understand the narrator's life, and so I'd like you to start with just, maybe a brief bio of where you're from, your childhood, what drew you to art and art history, and maybe your perceptions of the landscape itself and even the American West before you moved west.

HL: That's great. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about this. Despite how my name appears to not be an American name, my father is Turkish – I was born in Cleveland, grew up on the East Coast. I did live in Turkey for a couple years as a child, but I – actually it was when I was in Turkey that I developed a real interest in art. As a child I was drawing little biomorphic figures like Joan Miró, the great Spanish painter – but was told by my teacher I should never do that again. And so I went off and did other sorts of art as I was growing up. I think, as an undergraduate at Penn State, I was there in the 1970's working in art history, I think I was looking at art and art history in my life maybe as an escape. But there was always this kernel of thinking that art is a fascinating way to

understand other people. It's just another expression, it's another way of communicating, it's another way of talking. Certainly then I couldn't articulate this, as I was studying art history. When I was at Penn State my family left Pennsylvania and moved out to Utah. So my parents and my two siblings moved out here and I was still in college back east, so I didn't move with them.

GS: Was that because of work? Was your father –

HL: It was from work. My father's a retired obstetrical anesthesiologist; they moved to Ogden so that he could work at McKay-Dee hospital there. My siblings were young enough that they were part of the family that moved. I was the one who stayed back because I'd already started my studies at Penn State. It was a couple weeks literally after they had moved to Utah and gotten settled, that I flew out to see where my family had literally landed. I'd never been to Utah before, I'd traveled out west to California, but I'd never been to Utah. I grew up on the East Coast. It's, you know, very verdant. There isn't, growing up, this sense of directionality. Here in Utah we see north, the streets are pointing north, the mountains show you the east. I didn't have any of that within me. So in that airplane, that first trip, landing in Salt Lake City and looking down at the landscape, seeing what the landscape was in 1977, and seeing how radically it was different to me, I thought "I'm landing in hell." I didn't know where I was. I couldn't visually understand it. And so that two weeks with my family was really difficult, because there was a different sense of space, a different sense of scale. I couldn't orientate myself to the nearest tiny turn in the road, I had to look to the mountains which were very imposing to me, during that time period. And so it was really about

emotionally dealing with space. And I think a lot of that was, of course, emotionally dealing with the fact that my family had just like moved across country.

GS: Yeah.

HL: Right.

GS: Now up to this time did you, when you did your studies in art history did you consider landscape art much? Or was it –

HL: I actually didn't. And that's interesting. Penn State has a really rich and vibrant art history department. There were the basic survey classes you took early on, and then semester long seminars. At first I thought I would go into Italian Renaissance painting, and then realized that I wasn't so interested in Christianity, so maybe that wasn't the right thing to go into. I ended up focusing on early twentieth century spirituality in art, specifically Wassily Kandinsky. I was really drawn to this idea that an emotional landscape could be created, and even at that time in the seventies I wasn't thinking landscape in the broader sense of our environment. I was thinking still very internally. What is that like to have an internal system that is created to be able to express that in art to other people. I read once, and this really makes sense to me, that during times of great political strife, during times of warfare, a lot of artists turn to abstraction. And so certainly Kandinsky, Malevich, other artists turned to abstraction during that time, there's a whole list of them. The early twentieth century great abstract and non-representational painters did that, they turned to abstraction. I think Malevich thought in part about his work as landscape while creating rectangles and squares on canvases. Very revolutionary, very groundbreaking at that time period. My family had been in Utah since '77. I was here for a time in the eighties, went to Berkeley, came back again, was at the Marriott

Library at the University of Utah. I had the opportunity to move to New York and work in museums. My background and my field was librarianship. As an art librarian I worked at the Museum of Modern Art, and from there went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and started to work on my master's degree in art history. Again it was East Coast, a traditional program, a lot of lectures, taking notes, doing exams, and I still wasn't – because I was on the east coast – engaged in the idea of landscape. I had a personal shift that took place in my life in '94, and determined at that point that after seven years in New York, I was either going to commit and buy an apartment and stay there, or I was going to come back to Utah. And I decided to come back to Utah before I finished my degree, before I had written my thesis at Hunter College in art history. When I came back in '94, I reconnected with friends of mine here, who were artists, who were in the art world, who were art librarians at the same library where I used to work, who said "Wow you're back. Do you know that Spiral Jetty came back out of the water? Do you know how cool this is?" And people started showing me these pictures. That local interest turned into my master's thesis topic for Hunter College in New York City. I'll never forget Bill Agee, who was my thesis advisor, when I said to him "I want to talk about Great Salt Lake, I want to talk about the Spiral Jetty, because it's come back out of the water again." And he said – I have the greatest respect for Bill – "It's a dead work of art. You can't write about a work of art that's been under water, that's gone." So that consciousness of Spiral Jetty was very interesting to me. I showed him the pictures from '93, wherein it had, after twenty years, come back, the Lake had gone down enough to let the Jetty re-emerge. So my thesis had the go ahead. The title of it ended being "An Intermittent Illusion: Local Reaction to Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty." It was about

regionally, how were people responding to this work? There wasn't a lot of local reaction or consciousness at all in 1970. There's a lot of documentation internationally about how people saw the work and how they visited it as it was being constructed. But looking at that local angle was new: interviewing Bob Phillips, who was the construction foreman on the job from the firm who got the contract to build the Jetty, and getting to know him. Yes, it is an iconic work of art. Absolutely. Internationally Utah is famous because of it. But the local component, because of where we are situated and where the Jetty is based, I've never stopped studying that.

GS: And how did you capture that local reaction? What kind of sources did you use, did you talk to people who – obviously people were involved in the construction of Spiral Jetty, but –

HL: Yes.

GS: – others who… I mean, what kind of community reaction was there at all?

HL: Well it was community reaction in the nineties. And so it was fascinating then, after this twenty year lull of not seeing the work and thus having no information really about it. And that is fascinating to me because I think we look at Spiral Jetty differently now. I think there is finally that consciousness if it's visible or not, it's important that it's there.

GS: Sort of like it's breathing in, breathing out. It's up, it's down, it's up, "is the Spiral Jetty out now?"

HL: Exactly. And if it's not there it's okay to take the trip out there anyway, because it's about experience, and having that visceral experience on one's own. So in the nineties people I interviewed were artists. Kathleen Carricaburu, who I used to work with at the city library downtown, was one of those artists. I have a photograph that she took in '93

of, I believe it was a photograph taken maybe of her, standing on the Spiral Jetty. It's gorgeous, a beautiful sunset photograph. I interviewed her, and interviewed David Baddley who had done a work called *Entropy*. He's a photographer and I work with him at Westminster College. He stood on the Spiral Jetty, photographed himself picking up rock, and again this is '93, picking up a rock and throwing it in the water. That "let's bring that human element back into the environment." Rick, I'm not going to remember his last name right now but I do have it in notes, was the chief ranger at Golden Spike National Historic Site. I talked to him a lot. And so I interviewed him, and Bob Phillips, and I interviewed Nancy Holt. That was my introduction then in getting to know her. I interviewed – there were other people – some other artists as well. Wayne Chubin was one who had done a work on Spiral Jetty, and he had done it in a format wherein he took multiple photographs and then put – and then cut them and put them together almost as a grid. So it was this beautiful quilted pattern of different colors. You were still getting the scene of the Spiral Jetty and the landscape, but through this sort of quilted pattern. Then there was Barbara Nash, she's a biologist at the University of Utah, and she's had an interest in Spiral Jetty going back at least as long as me. She was the first one to put a photograph of the Spiral Jetty on the internet. I interviewed her. And so I developed then in the nineties –

GS: Is her scientific work related to the Lake and its ecosystem or is it just interest?

HL: It's not. But she has had this deep interest in the Spiral Jetty for a very long time. That was the kernel of what my thesis ended up being. Another person who I interviewed was Bob Bliss. Robert Bliss was the chair of the architecture department at the University of Utah. When Spiral Jetty was being created, Bob Smithson and Nancy Holt got to know

Bob Bliss and Anna Campbell Bliss. The four of them got to know each other, and through that relationship, Bob Bliss invited Bob Smithson to be a visiting professor at the University of Utah. So there is a history of Robert Smithson being here at the University of Utah. He gave a lecture that was called "Hotel Palenque" that's actually very, very famous because the University of Utah was the only place where that lecture was given, then he died in that freak plane accident. But I did interview Bob Bliss for my thesis, and it was great to have his perspective because everybody, of course, as you're interviewing them, brings their own perception, their own experience. So there were a lot of different facets that then went into what this local reaction ended up being.

I assumed that when someone was done with a thesis that you moved on. And it seems that I've never moved on, because the connections that were made from that process were substantial. And I really credit Nancy Holt for a lot of it. My thesis was accepted in '96. Within a couple years I was acquainted and started working with the Center for Land Use Interpretation in Los Angeles, and was able to go to LA and give a lecture about Spiral Jetty. Through that, it's been this ripple effect. I've always kept in touch with Bob Phillips. And further and further research has led me to considering the interests that Robert Smithson had in creating the Spiral Jetty, and taking a bigger, more holistic worldview, which is what he did and he was brilliant at. The Spiral Jetty could be considered to be rocks moved to be a spiral in the Lake. I look at it much differently than that. Smithson used the Lake as his palette, as his artistic palette. We're not painting anymore –

GS: He chose Rozel Point in the north end of the Lake because of the bacteria and because the water is –

HL: Yes.

GS: Red or pink depending on concentrations, it changes.

HL: Sure.

GS: And sometimes it's very red, sometimes it's not.

HL: It's not. Sometimes it's blue, sometimes it's brown. But he wanted inland water – excuse me, an inland body of water – saline colored red. There are lakes around the planet, Australia, Bolivia –

GS: Right.

HL: But this is a lot closer to New Jersey, where they lived. (GS laughs) And New York. All of those considerations were in play then, for artists to move away from using fabricated materials, to do their art. For sculptors to use the natural environment, and the natural environment wasn't anymore just "let's move rocks." It was the water, it was the air, it was all of these different considerations that end up becoming his artistic palette and that is deeply fascinating. I think we get to learn a lot about the Lake and the science of the Lake. One of the local connections I ended up making, because I never have stopped doing research was Wally Gwynn, at the – who has retired now from the Department of Natural Resources –

GS: The Utah Geological Survey.

HL: The survey, the Utah Geological Survey. When he was reediting his book on Great Salt Lake, he had come up with the first edition in 1980 and then as he was looking to reedit it and update it, he had been in touch with Nancy Holt, as she is the widow of Robert Smithson, and said that he wanted to include information about the art of the Lake. That reedit includes my thesis – my master's thesis condensed to be one of the

articles. Another article, book chapter then, in the 2002 edition of the *Great Salt Lake* that he included was about the Sun Tunnels.

GS: The Sun Tunnels.

HL: The interview that I did with Nancy Holt and then information about the Sun Tunnels. Herman Du Toit, from Brigham Young University, did a book chapter on Karl Momen's sculpture on I-80.

GS: The Utah Tree?

HL: The Tree of Life –

GS: Yes.

GL: The Tree of Utah, there are –

GS: Right, The Tree –

HL: – many names that it goes by –

GS: – yeah I know.

HL: And then also a chapter on Native American pictographs.

GS: Yes.

HL: And so I really then credit Wally Gwynn, because as a scientist and a biologist, he has studied Rozel Point deeply. The information he was able to share, the ways he was able to look at the Lake. Then all these different layers of what the Lake means, how people interact with the Lake, the way that then maybe people perceive the Lake as "if you're on the east coast it's like a body of water out of Utah, and where's Utah?" It's that very famous Saul Steinberg cover of *The New Yorker* magazine.

GS: *New Yorker* magazine. Everything beyond the Hudson's compressed.

HL: Everything beyond the Hudson's like a tiny little blip. And when you're in Salt Lake City there can still be this consciousness.

GS: Could we back up just a little bit? What I want to do is get back to your personal experience and a question about when you first arrived here in 1977; you said you felt like you had landed in hell. What was your perception of the Lake? Did your family take you out to the Lake, did you – ?

HL: That's a great question, because everything in the landscape was startling. To see the Lake and the way that I can describe it now is different, because now I have language. Before it was just "what are these patterns on the land? I don't understand it. There's white, there's brown, there's green, there's yellow. There are no thick green trees," which was all I was used to seeing in Pennsylvania.

GS: Yeah. I grew up in the South, so I know that feeling exactly.

HL: Right.

GS: You grow up in a forest.

HL: In a forest. And so to see these different colors in these random patterns on the landscape, I spent two weeks with my family and they wanted me to grow to love Utah in those two weeks. We did a lot of traveling to see different aspects of Utah. And one of them was our trip out to Antelope Island. And there occupied that very first glimmer of "oh this is interesting." We went out there and it was summertime and those bugs were horrific.

GS: (laughs).

HL: Okay, we know about the bugs.

GS: Yes.

HL: It's the no-see-ums that are the horrific ones. These were just gnats that were everywhere.

GS: Yeah, people have this bizarre reaction to the brine flies and they're innocuous, they're just little clouds along the ground, they don't bother you.

HL: They're clouds, right, they don't bother you, but you know, a little visually weird that they're there.

GS: Yeah.

HL: We had our bathing suits on and we were in the Lake and again a body of water to me was supposed to be blue and as soon as you walked into it – I grew up where we had a second weekend home that was on a lake. You went swimming in it; it was deep, immediately deep. Your body interacted with it differently. And to be at Antelope Island, to start walking, to get to the point where the water –

GS: (laughs) Was deep enough.

HL: Was as high as my knees, that's when I started thinking "I wonder what's going on here? This is different."

GS: Yeah.

HL: "This is a different way to think about a body of water." And I loved the salt; I loved that feeling of it. I started doing just a little bit of research at that time and learned that as the pioneers were here and they had settled, Saltair was created, and so the idea that this was a restorative body of water because of the high salinity was interesting, but that's as far as I went with it. Because I did stay back east. I didn't move out to Utah until 1981. And even when I moved in 1981 I was only here for three years before I went to Berkeley. There wasn't a lot of interaction. I haven't thought much about this in these

ensuing years, but I don't really remember a lot of interaction with the Lake. I've never been on a boat at the Lake, I have been out to Antelope Island a couple other times, and I've gone hiking out there, and it's beautiful. I moved back to Utah in 1994, in '95, started thinking about doing my thesis. That's when I started actually physically investigating the Lake. I can't – I don't even know where I ended up the first time I tried to find Spiral Jetty, even though I had the directions in hand that Robert Smithson had written. I went with a friend of mine and we ended up on military property with a big fence out near Hooper, I think. A big huge fence, "none shall pass," with the carcass, bones of a dead cow right there. And I thought "man, this is not the place for me. I am so out of here."

GS: (laughs) That is a very typical Great Salt Lake West Desert experience. It encapsulates a lot about the place.

HL: It was! It's interesting because I still wasn't thinking in the terms of Center for Land Use Interpretation. In those terms of land use. Who has the land? Who has access to the land? How is the land used? Because I just really wanted to try to find the Spiral Jetty and I couldn't.

GS: So now the signs were up at that point?

HL: Oh no, no.

GS: I was just out there on Pioneer Day and I've been out there a couple of times before, but there are nicely lettered signs –

HL: Yes there are.

GS: That said "Spiral Jetty this way."

HL: Absolutely. No, this was way before those signs were installed. There are a lot of different ways that people go back to the idea that the Spiral Jetty, when it's visible, is when we pay attention to it. And that's when the signs came up, when the Lake really hit that drought. The drought began in '99 but we started to see it more visibly 2002 to 2003, when the Spiral Jetty was out for an extended period of time, covered in salt. The whole landscape was salt. It was gorgeous. Coincidentally, that time period was when Robert Smithson's retrospective was being organized. So the fall of 2004, when the Spiral Jetty is visible, is when a nationally touring retrospective of his work occurs, and people start going out there in droves. That's when the Department of Natural Resources decided to put those signs up.

GS: Ok.

HL: Yeah. So it was then, it was not before that.

GS: Yeah I had been out there years ago and I didn't recall the signs.

HL: Right.

GS: But like I said, I'd gone out there a couple of months ago.

HL: And, and –

GS: And people always said "Oh is it easy to find? Is it hard to find?" And I didn't remember it being hard to find, but I don't remember the signs either. Now it's very obvious. And again this was on the 24th of July,

HL: Sure.

GS: And there was quite the mob out there of people.

HL: I was there the day before.

GS: Really?

HL: When there was not the mob.

GS: Well, the holiday, so...

HL: But it was a holiday, exactly.

GS: And they're doing the reenactment at the Golden Spike at the same time, so there's a lot of people right there in that vicinity and I think they add that to a tour going to the Golden Spike's monument and they head down there.

HL: Sure. Again, that's the changed perception about the Spiral Jetty, and that's really fascinating to me. That now it's more of a destination site. It's more destination art instead of thinking it's in the middle of nowhere. This is been written a lot about Spiral Jetty, it's in the middle of nowhere. It's hard to get to. It takes days; your car can break down. You will see almost sort of lunar, you know, there are rocket ships. And all of this when in fact there's a certain mythology that goes along with that. There can be that feeling, but more and more, as people are out there, there are more signs, because the reality is people are driving on a graded road through private property.

GS: Yes.

HL: I had written a book chapter on the stewardship of the Spiral Jetty and land use around it, because there is that mythology and maybe romanticism, believing "nobody's ever done this trip and I'm doing this trip and it's the first time, and look at this landscape" then – it's disconcerting when they see these signs "if you stop on this road, you can't step on my property right next to this road."

GS: Right, private property on both sides of the road.

HL: It is private property. And it's owned – The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owns that property of Rozel Hill. It's part of their tax package. There different

entities who own all of this different land around Spiral Jetty, which is sitting on ten acres of leased land through the Department of Natural Resources, owned by Dia Art Foundation in New York. So it's fascinating to me thinking about culture –

GS: Could you talk a little but about that, the Dia Art Foundation and that relationship and how do they hold that lease?

HL: Sure. Nancy Holt was the widow of Robert Smithson. When he died all of his property, through their marriage, everything of his was hers. When he obtained the lease in 1970 for the Spiral Jetty, it was through the state. Now we know it as the Department of Natural Resources, and then it was called something very slightly different. He obtained the lease for the ten acres for a ten-year period. He wanted that lease in perpetuity. He went back and he worked with Mark Tuttle, who was the main contact at the time, and they [DNR] determined that they weren't going to do that. Nobody who obtained leases could get them in perpetuity. In 1980 they would revisit it again and see what they were going to do about the lease. Well, he dies in '73, everything reverts to Nancy Holt, and then in 1980 they say "Okay now, it's time to determine what we're going to do and you have the lease for twenty years." The Spiral Jetty is hers; after Smithson dies they set up the estate of Robert Smithson. And it is through a lineage of people working in galleries wherein the estate is at the John Weber Gallery in New York, and then Elyse Goldberg who's been administrating it, it's now the James Cohan Gallery, C-O-H-A-N, Gallery in New York and Elyse Goldberg is still administering the estate of Robert Smithson. So in '99, Nancy Holt who owns Spiral Jetty, and the estate of Robert Smithson, gift the Spiral Jetty to Dia Art Foundation. That means the lease then is rewritten and to Dia. Dia has had an interest in art of that time period, and an interest in

land art. This has been part of their mission. Dia is the right non-profit art organization for it to be administered through. Recently, Dia has been partnering with Utah Museum of Fine Arts and the Great Salt Lake Institute at Westminster College to do more local representation as far as stewardship and awareness of Spiral Jetty. I started working with Dia very casually, not in – hmm I don't know how to put this – not in a publically recognized fashion, but more on the side, I was the local person who was working with Dia, keeping them informed – because I go out to Spiral Jetty all the time.

GS: Right.

HL: So keeping them informed. As Spiral Jetty was visible they started sending different people to me to take them out there for trips. I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of very interesting people so that they have the experience at Spiral Jetty. I've always maintained that it was sort of a private situation. Some of these folks, it's their private time, their private interests, that they want to see the Spiral Jetty. So I've never been the person to say "well I took this gallery owner, or this museum director, or this rock star, out to Spiral Jetty." But I did get to do all of those things and that was actually really a lot of fun (both laugh). Because I could always maintain – the first trip was actually really intimidating to me. I had not had that experience of meeting people in the art world on that level. To be the person who's going to say "ok, let's turn left here, let's go there." But I really warmed up to the idea that I had an expertise in being able to talk about this art work, and I'd learned enough by, I think, 2003, it was my first trip that I did. I've been doing those trips ever since for Dia and for James Cohan Gallery, for CLUI, and then on my own. So you had mentioned being out there on Pioneer Day. I was with four people from New York who came to me through James Cohan Galley. Two days before Pioneer

Day we spent the day at Sun Tunnels, the day before Pioneer Day we spent the day at Spiral Jetty. And so through these different connections I have another life wherein I get to meet really fun, interesting people who come here, I get to be a very off the record ambassador for Spiral Jetty and Great Salt Lake.

GS: At the risk of being a gawker, who are some of those, you know you don't have to tell me, but famous folks who've expressed an interested who've gone on these tours?

HL: Well, um –

GS: Who it might be surprising to know these people have an interest in landscape art?

HL: Well, I think I can talk about Lee because Lee has a public interest in being very interested in art work. So Lee Ranaldo is one of the band members of Sonic Youth, and they broke up a couple of years ago, but for however many decades, twenty, thirty years, there was Sonic Youth. He has been interested in land art, and I didn't know that he had that interest. At the time that Sonic Youth was going to be in Salt Lake City in 2004 I was still married. My former husband was a Sonic Youth fan, knew enough about them that he knew that one of the band members, he didn't know which one, but one of them cared about land art. Sonic Youth was, you know, sort of off the beaten track in lots of different ways, that you could just email them and they would write back to you. My former husband says to me "what if when they were in town we say we'll take them to Spiral Jetty?" And I'm like "whatever dude. If you think" –

GS: "You think they're going to respond, okay, try."

HL: "And they're going to respond to this." And it absolutely totally worked out. Because my former husband was able to write and say "my wife has done this work, she has done these trips, and when you're in town, whichever one of you it is who's

interested in land art wants to go to Spiral Jetty, let me know." Lee writes right back, it's him, we meet him at the airport, we take him out to Spiral Jetty. I am scared to death the whole entire day we were going to get a flat tire (GS laughs) in my Honda Odyssey. Because you know, he's performing that night in town. We get back into town, we meet the rest of the band members, we get to see the concert, it's all good. That trip, then – I also believe one of the things that's incredible about art, and I think that we're talking about the Lake because of art, and the broader sort of idea is that one thing leads to another. Because of getting to know Lee, who I'm still in touch with, and knowing about him and his travels: he travels internationally through his music. He's also deeply involved in art. He and his wife are really interested in art and these different aspects of art. He had been to Robert Smithson's 1971 earthwork that he created in Emmen [the Netherlands], Broken Circle/Spiral Hill. He had taken photographs there, he had written a whole piece about it. When there's the celebration that goes on a couple years ago, the forty year anniversary of Broken Circle/Spiral Hill, I'm able to connect Lee and Nancy Holt so that his publications are in the publications that come out [on BC/SH]. So that's one example wherein one thing leads to another. And it's fascinating. One of the brothers of one of the Beastie Boys, he and his family and I spent the day together out there. There're folks who just know about land art. Maybe sometimes it's a bucket list. But a lot of times it's "how are these different ways we can think about art from that time period but within this landscape?" And that's fascinating.

GS: It is. It really is. Maybe we should follow that theme for just a few minutes and talk about the earth work art movement and where it came from, and then maybe you can address the Great Salt Lake and the characteristics of landscapes like that, that draw art.

We know that Smithson had some very specific ideas in mind that brought him to the Great Salt Lake. But, um – "surreal" is often one of the words that are thrown around when people go out there, and it affects people in various ways. And then maybe relate that to some other places where landscape or land artists have worked globally.

HL: Well absolutely. The land art movement here in the United States emerged in the 1960s. This comes from the rupture that happened as, within art, we break away from modernism and go into postmodernism. The rupture follows what's going on politically and socially and culturally in this country in the 1960s. A lot happens that I don't have to go into, but it really starts to affect artists. "How can we imbue our own personal identity into art? How can we look at art differently? How can we use different materials, different spaces? Why do we have to answer to the man?" Which means, "why do we have to stay within the gallery space, stay with the museum space? Why do we have to be limited to that white cube?" And so it's often called that white cube, that space of doing it. Robert Smithson, along with a few other artists, Nancy Holt is certainly one of them, Michael Heizer, Walter De Maria, who just passed away, Dennis Oppenheim, who passed away a couple years ago. There are a core group of artists in this country, but they also knew of other artists, particularly in England, because England has a tradition of going back to romanticism. The idea of landscape, the idea of the walk, perception, the picturesque, the sublime, things start to be correlated. And so Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, and other artists from England start to work with natural materials. Part of what happens in the sixties, of course, is these artists can realize these actions out west. These actions can take place out west because of the factors of landownership and rights, and the way that we're thinking about the landscape out here. Nancy said very famously, "it

was very easy to slide in, do an earth work, and slide out again." You go, you get the permit – there wasn't any sort of trickery involved, but these artists were also very savvy, they knew how to – they were within gallery museum systems already. They had the backings. Smithson had the backing of Virginia Dwan, his gallerist, to create Spiral Jetty. There's a lot they knew they had to do, it wasn't just go somewhere, but if it was going to be an ephemeral act, they could go somewhere. And so creating the zig-zag line trench out on a playa in Nevada, as Heizer had done, or putting a line, or putting rocks, or building a trench and putting a rock into it. Artists start to then address the idea of scale and space and perception. When we are in these landscapes out here, getting back to that idea of when I was flying over the Lake, and landing and thinking I was coming to hell; quite frankly, when I stepped out of that plane and stepped into this landscape, I developed agoraphobia. I was used to small spaces. Agoraphobia, that fear of the – you know, the Greek, that marketplace – of wide open spaces. And it took me years to get over that. It really did. It was – it's a different way of perceiving space. I now cherish that because it changed my internal way of thinking about the space around me. I want to have that openness, I want to have that freedom, I want to have that jagged mountain that's off there in the distance. I want to be able to see the sky and how it's interacting with the land. And all of those considerations, back to the idea that Smithson wanted a natural artistic palette to be able to manipulate, to be able to highlight his work of art, I think is one of those beautiful things about living out west. And once people adjust, or they fall in love with it, either immediate, or over a course of years, there's no going back. I would never back east. (laughs)

GS: You know, I feel that – people – I feel the same way. You know, like I said, I was born and raised in Florida and it's fine to go back and visit –

HL: It's lovely.

GS: But I don't want to live there.

HL: Right, exactly, it's lovely. There was a really fabulous piece; Alex Ross is a music critic, and he wrote a book about the music of the twentieth century called *The Rest is Noise*. And there's a paragraph in there that talks about how the minimalists musicians, and trust me I'm really getting back to everything we're talking about.

GS: Mm-hmm, Oh no, I –

HL: There's a paragraph in there, wherein the American minimalist musicians, Phillip Glass, John Adams, this quote is related to that rhythm of music that the minimalists are using, and it's equated to being in the car and being in the landscape out west, and traveling through and seeing the mountains and the storm in the distance, and having that rhythm. All of a sudden it's bigger then. It's – it's the music and the sound and the space. And it comes through to us through our own perception, but they're acknowledging that through music. And it certainly gets acknowledged through art. And so the land arts movement comes out of that rupture in the 1960s. It comes out of minimalism and taking forms then to their essential objects, a spiral in the landscape. Sun Tunnels out near Lucin in the West Desert off of Great Salt Lake, four concrete round tubes. This idea that these forms are simple yet they're powerful then through what they're saying because they're connecting us to space and environment. And in the case of Sun Tunnels, to the solar system, to the way the planets, the constellations are moving, to how we are perceiving sunrise, sunset, the different times of year. And now I'm going to go back to Stonehenge

in England. People in Europe have been dealing with land art since the Neolithic time period. So there's a whole confluence of all of that. It's really interesting to me.

GS: And since you've brought up Sun Tunnels, you've also done a good deal of work there. And our oral history project is not just about the Lake itself, but its ecosystem, and certainly the West Desert and the Great Salt Lake Desert, the Salt Flats, Newfoundland Basin, all those places out there are part of that.

HL: Sure, absolutely.

GS: So maybe if you could talk for a little bit about your relationship with Nancy Holt and how you've worked with her over the years, and a little bit more about Sun Tunnels? Because obviously you also take people out there for tours and it has of course morphed into something different with the Burning Man movement, I know that people go out there all the time –

HL: Which makes it –

GS: And it took on a new life.

HL: Yes. And it has taken on a new life. One of the questions that Nancy Holt is asked, a lot because there is that solar aspect to Sun Tunnels. It's correlated to the rise and set of the sun at the summer and the winter solstice, then people are going to say "oh, were you thinking of Stonehenge?" There is that consciousness. I got to know Nancy, again, through my work on Spiral Jetty and writing my master's thesis, so I interviewed her for that. A couple years later she came back to me, as we took my thesis for Wally's book on Great Salt Lake. I don't remember how now, but I'm assuming it was either through she and I coming up with the idea, or her coming up with the idea, that I would do an interview with her on Sun Tunnels. Honestly, Sun Tunnels, I think in the last couple

years, has gotten a lot more, not traction, but I think acknowledgement. It really was about Spiral Jetty for a very long time period. But these days if you pick up a book on land art you are more likely going to see Sun Tunnels on the cover of that book.

GS: Really?

HL: There's a book that Taschen published a couple years ago called *Land Art*, Sun Tunnels was on the cover. There's a book Amy Dempsey did called *Destination Art*, Sun Tunnels was on the cover. Nancy Holt in the first weekend of October is getting a lifetime achievement award from the International Sculpture Center because of her work, because of her long body of work. That acknowledgement I think is really powerful for a woman artist who has also been maintaining the legacy of her husband, who possibly has eclipsed her in a lot of ways, to have that recognition during her lifetime I think is a really powerful statement. So I did start with Sun Tunnels then, in 2002 with that publication that came out. I write frequently for *15 Bytes*, it's the online magazine for Artists of Utah, it's artistsofutah.org. I have written about the Tree of Utah. But several times I've written about Sun Tunnels, and Nancy had asked me as I was giving – taking these various groups of people out to Spiral Jetty, if I would consider also offering to take them to Sun Tunnels. Well, it was a really interesting experience, and I got to see sort of first hand then, how artists work and create and work with contracts, and all of that, to get their work done. There was a trip that was sponsored by Dia Art Foundation in 2010. They wanted to bring some of their donors and see Spiral Jetty and see Sun Tunnels. And again it was a group of people in town and I was with them the first day going out to Spiral Jetty and then the second day going to Sun Tunnels. And it's a little tricky, and I've explained this before to Nancy, that the spaces out here are big. The air is thin, it's also

salty. People get dehydrated, people don't understand these effects that all going into making these rather big monumental days. There's anticipation, there's art, there's lots of talking. And to do these two days back to back sometimes is exhausting to people. On that particular trip, on that second day when we went out to Sun Tunnels, it was a confluence of being tired, getting a – one of the cars got a flat tire. They had to sit there waiting for the tow truck to come from Wendover. They were surrounded by snakes. (GS laughs) There were weird things that happ – it was so weird that day, it was so strange. But what was disturbing to me was when the rest of us, the group of us got to Sun Tunnels, I hadn't been there in a while, and Nancy hadn't been there longer. What I saw that day then, at Sun Tunnels, was really disturbing to me. You could see the landscape there in the basin; that landscape is alkaline, it's alkaline soil, pickle weed grows out there. There's a lot of – it's very windy, there's erosion that goes on out there. It's the perfect environment for a work such as Sun Tunnels. But the natural erosion along with the destruction that humans had brought at that site, partially people taking their Jeeps or their four wheel drives and literally gutting the interior of the space. Sun Tunnels are the four concrete tubes, nine feet in diameter each, sixteen feet long that are in that X shape as they're marking the solstice. She has marked the center of that work with two of the holes that were drilled out of the tunnels. Each tunnel has a different constellation that is represented by an absence of space, these round holes that were drilled into this. So we've got Perseus, Draco, Columba, and Capricorn, these four different constellations. She had taken two of the ten inch cores that were drilled and marked the center of the work. Well by the time I went out there in 2010, somebody has taken that marker out, thrown it off out into the field, and there's nothing there but a big hole.

GS: Yeah.

HL: So I took a lot of photographs and I contacted Nancy that night when I got home and I said "I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this, but you need to know that this is what your work looks like right now."

GS: Now she purchased that land though, right? She's –

HL: That's her own private land.

GS: Still the landowner?

GS: Yeah.

HL: Absolutely, this is not a leased situation. This is purchased land. She owns four different plots of land out there in the West Desert. One of them is a long term use situation she has with CLUI, Center for Land Use Interpretation. The plot of land they use because they have their international artists in residence in Wendover. A lot of them have that ability to go out there and to do investigations and art with the land. And so she does own that land. It's private property. But she very graciously – and she's very gracious about a lot of aspects in her life, which a lot of us really acknowledge – people can go out there any time. There isn't a fence around it. People can camp there, I take my students out, I'm going next weekend with them. We go out there. We use that as a teaching opportunity. It's fabulous to be able to do that, but that work was just, there was destruction that had gone on. I did not want to bring that core home with me. I left it there. She gave me permission, I hired a student who drove out the next day, got the core, brought it to me. And it started a series of events wherein she said "now the year I lived

with Lee Deffebach in Salt Lake – who was a painter, a great painter, who passed away a couple years ago, I lived in her studio and a bunch of those cores are in her basement."

GS: Wow.

HL: I was able, then, to go to that studio, which had been turned into a yoga studio in the Avenues to say "here's who I am. Here's this information, and I believe that in your basement are some concrete round objects."

GS: (laughs) Some concrete plugs. Yeah.

HL: "Could I go check?" And she was like "Whatever you want to do is fine, just take your shoes off." There they were. Eleven of them were in the basement. I was able to take them. They were on display at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts, because again, 2010, Nancy Holt is working with Alena Williams, who was working through Columbia University and organized an international touring exhibit of Nancy's work up to Sun Tunnels, because Nancy's done a lot of work since then. But this was an early retrospective of Nancy's work. So we got the cores. She gave me permission to hire a local construction company to go out there. We spent Pioneer weekend in 2010 out there and moved sixty tons of dirt. And again, it's this fine alkaline soil, right?

GS: Right.

HL: Nancy owns these four plots. Five miles away at the base of Pigeon Mountain to the east of Sun Tunnels she owns this property and there's a berm that's there. The sixty tons of dirt was taken off of that berm, and then moved systematically for two days and put at Sun Tunnels. Put on either side of each tunnel, because again wind erosion –

GS: Oh, right, right.

HL: All of these truckloads of dirt then were brought in. Placed, tamped down, watered down. We recreated the – we took one of the cores that was down in the basement. Put it into the center hole. I want to acknowledge, I worked with Paul Stout, who's a friend of mine who teaches here at the University of Utah. He is in the art department and teaches sculpture. So he came and worked on this as we also have the construction crew. And it was fascinating. It was a really interesting experience to see that, to negotiate, because I was the main negotiator between the artist and the construction company, to get that done, to then be out there, what Paul and I thought that we would do is we would photograph the whole project. We would create a balloon system. Dia Art Foundation had worked for two years with the Getty Institute in Los Angeles to have aerial photography of Spiral Jetty and they were using a balloon system, and we thought "Well we can do that, that's easy." You just use helium and big balloons and you send it up. It is easy, except that the wind out there –

GS: Right.

HL: Is so persistent that we couldn't do that. We couldn't even keep a tent up it was so windy that weekend. We had to sleep inside the tunnels. We couldn't have the tent, we couldn't have the balloon. I'd just switched carriers from Verizon to AT&T. AT&T doesn't cover Sun Tunnels, Verizon does.

GS: (GS laughs) that's good to know.

HL: I've switched back since. It's important to me.

GS: It is.

HL: You know, it's not like I live out there, but I'm out there enough that I want to know that if I'm at Sun Tunnels I can call Nancy. It was a fascinating weekend then. We

didn't get the aerial shots, but we have a ton of documentation that then went into "what is that angle of it?" And the work still looks good. I'm really happy that in the last couple years it's maintained itself and it still looks good. There's a lot of discussion about Robert Smithson and his ideas of entropy, the idea that second law of thermodynamics that was related to dissipation, of order moving into disorder. That you can't – it is a linear trajectory wherein you can't go backwards. That you're always going to move and so there ends up being a lot of very sort of philosophical discussion. "What would Smithson do? Would you add more rocks to it? Would you build it up? What would you do with Spiral Jetty, or is it entropy, and you let that natural environment –

GS: Right, just play out.

HL: Just play out. People have asked me about the work we did at Sun Tunnels and how was that different? It's different in a lot of ways. The artist is alive. The artist wanted this to happen. This is to prevent further erosion to the footings. This was to help, not a stopgap measure, but certainly just to be able to have another literal level playing field to see how erosion continues on. So there isn't that inherent – there wasn't an inherent philosophical idea that was disrupted in what we did. And that would certainly be the case if Dia, whomever, decides they want to add more rocks out at Spiral Jetty. That would be – it's a different kind of –

GS: And Spiral Jetty itself though seems to be a living artwork, because the salt has made – it has become part of the artwork –

HL: It absolutely –

GS: and it changes from year to year –

HL: It changes from season to season –

GS: I don't see that's really much sign that it's going anywhere. But it's just –

HL: Right.

GS: Just being transformed by that.

HL: Right. And I think transformed is a really good word for that. People often assume, well, salt. He chanted "mud, salt crystals, rocks water," within his essay that he wrote and the film that he did. People assume that there's going to be salt out there all the time. Well there's a certain type of salt that forms in the spring. There's a different type of salt that forms in the fall. There are many months that you can be out there and see no salt at all. But the Lake is going down. We know that. The Jetty is more and more visible. I've been tracking the Lake's levels since 2010. Now I have my own personal website, it's my name. I have a tab there for Spiral Jetty. I correlate lake levels. I am asked by enough people "is the Jetty visible?" I can say "Well just go to my website and take a look." I've got it linked to, of course, Dia Art Foundation, the estate of Robert Smithson, and James Cohan Gallery, but also to the USGS lake level. So I put the photographs I've taken, or permission from other people, and people love to send me photographs.

GS: Yeah. I bet.

HL: Mary Dickson from KUED was a recent person who, she's a friend of mine, who sent me a photograph. I still have to get that up, put the photograph there and correlate to the lake levels. So at a certain point, we're going to know. There's going to be a full enough circle and cycle of seeing when the Lake is at this level, this is what Spiral Jetty looks like. This is what the work is going to look like. And so that's been fun.

GS: Yeah. The interesting thing is that with the natural processes you won't know exactly what it will look like.

HL: No.

GS: You know what sort of what level it will be out of the water, but – .

HL: Right. Right. It's always – and that ends up being one of those big huge take away messages from land art, from the Spiral Jetty, that I think allows people to start thinking differently. That if every time I go out to Spiral Jetty it's different, and people – and I haven't thought about this until people started reflecting back to me, these strangers that I'm with, that I take out there. When they say "You're so enthusiastic. How are you still so enthusiastic? You've studied this work for eighteen years. You've been out there you can't even count any more times. You've been out here – how can you be so enthusiastic?" It's like "well, because every time's different. I've never been out here with you. I've never seen the sky this particular color. Look, I've never seen that water look like that. Look at those birds" – all of the sudden everything is new again and different. And one of these days, I'm going to integrate that feeling, and that idea, and those thoughts and emotions into the rest of my life. Because that's when I get that sense of "this is what I'm here to think about." It's because it's in Great Salt Lake. And I don't think it's hell anymore. I just, I love the Lake.

GS: Well, let's talk about the Lake, and –

HL: Okay.

GS: We've talked about Sun Tunnels, we've talked about Spiral Jetty, but do you have other favorite places on the Lake that you think are beautiful, that are inspirational, that you have returned to over the years?

HL: Oooh.

GS: Probably not in the same extent as, you know, multiple times in the year like Spiral Jetty, but places that you… that really speak to you?

HL: You know, I do have a place. And I've thought about it umpteen times but I haven't returned yet. And that's a really good question that you're posing to me, because now I think I'll really try to make a point of going out there sooner rather than later. Only once have I driven the loop from Sun Tunnels to Spiral Jetty around the north end of the Lake. But it's always on the surface roads, it's always on the highway. There's Snowville. There's only one time I've ever driven on the graded road going from Spiral Jetty, instead of going back towards Golden Spike National Historic Site, we went the other way to the town of Rozel, which is a sign that BLM has put up. And if you follow that road and continue on and skirt the northern end of the Lake, what is that rock called out there, Monument?

GS: I think it's called, is it Lone Rock? But we did on the twenty-fourth, just to let you know, I did the loop, it's the second time I've done it, just did the complete circle around the Lake, and also –

HL: Right.

GS: Went across the Union Pacific causeway –

HL: Oooh.

GS: And snuck out there and –

HL: And you snuck out there.

GS: Came back through Lakeside. So, we went past, and I know the rock you mean. And I… why can't I think of it? It's –

HL: I want to call it…

GS: It's before Locomotive Springs.

HL: It is before Locomotive Springs and I didn't know at the time, I hadn't seen this at the time, there's a photograph which is a famous photograph that was taken I think by Alfred Hart. See all of that – okay. So let's just pause for a second. All of the things I've learned about the Lake and the environment and the cultural history is because of Spiral Jetty. So as the transcontinental railroad is being built, it's like being able to go up and around the Lake. We then veered off and went to Kelton. I want to go back out there. Because I was out there and I thought "I'm at home." I – it was remarkable to be out there. But there is a photograph – I want to say it's Alfred Hart and I'll come back to you if this is wrong – took that is the last pioneer wagon trip, across the north end of the Lake as the rail – as the train is coming across. And it's – he called the photograph *Poetry in Prose*. I'm not sure –

GS: Wow. We'll have to find that one –

HL: – which one it is. It is quite remarkable. Because I think it speaks to obviously transportation, people moving. How did they move? What was that, that shift? And then that rock is right there. So it looks like Black Rock, except it's not. It's at the north end of the Lake. It's sort of like that north-south, like that parallel, that's where I want to go back.

GS: Okay.

HL: I want to go back out there because it does have this cultural history that you don't see. And sometimes we think we have to see it in order for it to be true. This is the great thing about history that can draw you back in. I want to go there. A place that I have never been, that is very, very difficult to go to – have you been to Gunnison Island?

GS: I have never been to the other islands, and strangely enough when I first moved to Salt Lake I had some friends with a boat. So I've water skied on the Great Salt Lake.

HL: Oh! That's exciting!

GS: I've watered skied from Antelope Island all the way back to the marina. And we'd gone out there and we snuck out there and camped because it was the years that the high water level had flooded the causeway –

HL: Sure.

GS: And so you weren't to be out there but we camped in the south end of Antelope Island and we never went out to some of the other islands. I wish we had, to Fremont Island, to Gunnison Island.

HL: You can't go to Gunnison Island.

GS: Yeah. It's a wildlife –

HL: The thing that –

GS: DNR owns it?

HL: It is the DNR. John Luft, and they do an amazingly good job at making sure it's a highly controlled situation, because Gunnison Island connects us through the ecosystem to North and South America – Canada, South America. Because it is a rookery, because this is where the Great American White Pelican is roosting. It's a very limited group of people who can go out there.

Robert Smithson has led me to Alfred Lambourne. Alfred Lambourne was an artist who was British by birth, and his family converted to being Mormon and came out and settled here in Utah. There were a lot of British immigrants who were here. He was an artist. He started doing set design, and then started to get to know the other artists in

the region. He knows J.D. Harwood, the painter, and Charles Savage, the photographer – he starts to work with these different artists and he's taken out on the Lake in a boat, on a sailboat. He's also reading the 1850 Stansbury Expedition report, and expedition reports for this region. Fremont of course is one of them, and then Stansbury does his triangulation of Great Salt Lake, captures Lambourne's imagination. Lambourne takes off from there, and writes a serial account of living on Gunnison Island for fourteen months. It's in the *Deseret News*. He takes that and turns it into *Pictures of an Inland Sea*. And he publishes this book three times. It's called *Our Inland Sea*, wherein he has homesteaded on Gunnison Island for fourteen months because he wants to have property out there because he's so enchanted with the Lake. He's a writer, he's an artist, he's British, he's bringing that sensibility to that –

GS: Right, the landscape art.

HL: Picturesque, the sublime, the way that landscape is talked about, that terminology, that idea, out onto a barren rock where there are a bunch of animals called birds screaming at him all the time. Come to discover, maybe he didn't really live out there the whole fourteen months. He goes to court and he isn't able to get the homesteading rights, the company – the people who are gathering the guano, which is bird poop, to use as fertilizer – end up getting that instead. But, his imagination, his writing is absolutely incredible. I have this new layer that it interests – I really want to go to Gunnison Island. I haven't been there, but I know it through, of course, photographs. I know it in seeing it from Spiral Jetty. I know it through the drawings, the prints that were done in the 1800's. And my next body of work is going to be about Alfred Lambourne, and this idea of "how do we think about the Lake, and where did that start, and what kind of language did we

use then, as opposed to now. Are we still using that same language? Is that same language appropriate? Oh look, the sunset is so pretty, it's so picturesque, it's so sublime." There's a new consciousness of the Lake that's growing through eco-poetry that looks back to people like Alfred Lambourne, but I think takes us into a new direction. And I think that's really exciting.

GS: Wow. Yeah.

HL: So, I want to go back up to the north end, and I want to spend time out there. I don't want to just drive through it.

GS: Right, yeah.

HL: I want to go to Gunnison Island and see that. I think that's fascinating. If one person could be so captivated by 500 acres of a barren rock and want to grow a vineyard, and you know, he (quote end quote) took his piano and his two dogs and his whole book collection and lived there for fourteen months. What is that vantage point from there, what do you get to see? I think that would be remarkable.

GS: Wow. Now if we move away from art, what other engagement have you had with the Lake? I know that you've been involved with Friends of Great Salt Lake –

HL: Mm-hmm. Sure.

GS: And in terms of conservation or in the scientific understand anything like that, places you've also worked?

HL: You know, a lot of it does come through the art, and that's a good question. Because I have an orientation that comes from art doesn't mean that all of these other aspects of the Lake haven't been important. And I think what ended up being important was in 2008. Steve Bloch is a lawyer for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. His

work through SUWA is to track what goes on with the state and goes on with the permits that they are giving to people for leases on the Lake and how they're using the Lake. And what Steve notices is that there is a permit that's being fast-tracked through Department of Natural Resources for a Canadian oil exploration company called Pearl Montana, to go ahead and start drilling in Great Salt Lake.

GS: And there was oil development on the North End of the Lake in previous decades?

HL: There has been oil drilling for many decades, right at Rozel Point. Smithson is interested in that region because of the oil development out there. But in 2008 there's a different consciousness of oil development and what does that mean? It's the end of the Bush era. He promotes and encourages a lot of oil development and exploration in the west. The state wants to fast-track what Pearl Montana's going to do off of the shores of Gunnison Island, five miles away from Spiral Jetty. Steve gets in touch with Lynn de Freitas, Friends of Great Salt Lake. I've been giving lectures for her group by then. She contacts me, she contacts Nancy Holt. Really quickly, through the internet, it's like wildfire; everybody starts saying "we must protect Spiral Jetty from big bad oil. We can't have drilling because Spiral Jetty's right there." Now we're not really conscious or paying attention to the fact that Amoco, in the seventies, when Spiral Jetty was under water, drilled right next to it. (GS laughs) They're right there with all their rigs at Rozel Point. That will be an article I write at some point. But it's fascinating; again it's about perception and what we're paying attention to. But what I start to notice is, what's the language, again, and how are we thinking about the Lake? Spiral Jetty, it's really ok. It's not going anywhere. It will go somewhere when there's the earthquake. It's on a fault line, I mean, that will happen. And even then it's not going to go anywhere. It's too

embedded in too many different ways culturally. But what does that mean to drill for oil? Let's look at, and so I start becoming a vocal activist, let's look at what is the – what has been the success of oil drilling in that region of Great Salt Lake. Historically, we've got people interested in the late 1800's, early 1900's. You know, if we get to the point at Rozel Point, where ten thousand barrels of oil have been excavated in all of these decades and that we're getting crude sulfurous oil, really? Do we need to be drilling there? Amoco drilled in the seventies, not successful. It then came down to looking historically at the success and is there going to be product that's going to work? But then looking at what's the cost benefit ratio – and I'm an art historian and I can't believe I can use that phrase – to the wildlife that's right there on Gunnison Island. And that ends up being the sticking point to me. That ends up, we have to look at the Lake and we've got to look at it. Again, Spiral Jetty can come and – a lot of things can come and go. But if we have wildlife that is literally linking us to other parts of the world and if we disrupt that, that ripple effect of water, of life, of land, that then goes out into other places, is too huge to start to ignore. I really developed a different way of thinking about the Lake, that it does connect us. And it connects us to a lot of different people. It connects us to the wildlife. It isn't a big sewage pond. It's a lot of things, it's a lot of people. It's a lot of usage. There are a lot of companies who are engaged and embedded in the Lake, literally. There's a lot of extraction that goes on in the Lake. And that extraction, interestingly, as we are extracting potash, or magnesium, or sodium chloride, all of these different aspects of it, the Lake is replenishing itself in a certain sort of a way. The Lake is that remnant of Lake Bonneville. We're always going to have this really interesting soup of stuff that's going to be in the Lake. I'm not pro or con industry. I appreciate that holistically we have to

look at everything, that this is just our modern way that we live. But those birds really got to me. And that was an interesting way to think about it. I really moved off of thinking, because initially it really was, my gut reaction was "save Spiral Jetty" and then it was "let's look at the bigger picture, and that bigger picture takes us out further."

GS: Did the same Spiral Jetty message have a lot of traction? Because generally when we talk about environmental concerns or stopping drilling, or now recently we have this issue with the Book Cliffs, and State Trust Lands' decision to allow permits there, it does come down to a while, it comes down to natural features, and here we're talking about a man-made feature.

HL: Yes, exactly.

GS: But it had a lot of traction?

HL: It had internationally a huge amount of traction. Over thirty-five hundred different complaints were filed to the Department of Natural Resources. Jonathon Jennings was the person who was in charge of tracking them. All of a sudden his day job at DNR changes [snaps fingers] like that. Because then he's in charge of tracking everything because they are inundated. They changed their system so that anytime there was a protest related to, I think, DNR within the meandering zone of the Lake deals with, you had to also pay them fifteen dollars. Which I complained about because then that's, you know, freedom of speech, and not everybody can afford that, and then you are – you know, I went off on a different sort of tangent. But yeah, it really did gain traction, because Friends of Great Salt Lake, of course, were protesting it. Dia Art Foundation were protesting it. That meant that a lot of different art agencies globally started protesting the drilling because they saw that model. There were different entities. All the newspapers came out against

the drilling and they all had to do with Spiral Jetty. It was fascinating, it really was fascinating. But I think, again, that take away message ends up being, we can use art, that's one way of doing this, but again looking at the bigger picture of it. And yeah absolutely with Book Cliffs. I mean we don't have land artwork at the Book Cliffs, that is the Spiral Jetty. We don't have something down there. But maybe that has allowed us, in the ensuing years, to think about these considerations differently.

GS: To return to art, you are also an artist. I was looking at your photography on your website, and the Lake is obviously a major inspiration for your photography. And, you know, I hope you talk a little bit about that, but just as a way to jump into that, you mentioned using balloons out at Sun Tunnels, and I'm wondering how you got some of the aerial photos [unclear] or were those –

HL: No, they were from a helicopter.

GS: Okay. Yeah.

HL: Yes. So anytime I have the opportunity, which is very rare so I really like to take advantage of it, being over the Lake in a helicopter or a plane, I just don't stop clicking. So I consider myself to be an accidental photographer. I don't have a background in photography, I use either my phone or my digital camera. I'm not high-tech in any sort of way, but I do know art and composition, and color, and so –

GS: And the Lake offers amazing opportunities for that.

HL: It's amazing. And, quite frankly, back to industry –

GS: Right, exactly.

HL: It offers that because of the industry, because of the way that the land, you know if we think about Spiral Jetty as a curved line on Great Salt Lake, well we have a lot of

human-created installed lines on the Lake. We have the causeway leading us to Antelope Island, we have the evaporation ponds, all of these different – and these different lines started to be created on the Lake in the 1800's. As soon as we could start extracting salt from the Lake and then get that salt onto trains and get it out to other places and other mines, that's what we started to do. The way we interact with the Lake, when you're over it during certain times of year, boy you get to see those pretty colors.

GS: You do.

HL: You really do. And I think that every, with every ten, twenty, fifty clicks of my camera I can get one image that speaks to me. And that's been a lot of fun. So accidental photographer. But still, they're very pretty, aren't they? (laughs)

GS: Well, I think, the point you raise there is really important. Is that intersection between industry and art, and maybe use this as a segue, I know we've been here for quite a while, but use this segue to talk a little bit about CLUI and what you've done with them, because you know, looking at their website, they've got aerial photographs on there, and not to return to Book Cliffs, but they have that aerial photograph of that tailings construction where they moved the Atlas Mill tailings from Moab north up to Crescent Junction. And that itself, again, is another example from the air of what looks like land art in some ways. It's not that –

HL: Absolutely.

GS: Somebody might be very upset with me to talk about uranium towns as land art. But the patterns, the lines on that landscape, and then juxtaposed with the natural lines of the cliffs really very nearby…

HL: Sure, absolutely. No, you have absolutely nailed what the mission and the statement and the purpose of the Center for Land Use Interpretation is about. What they've always maintained is that they are not pointing their camera or their documentation or the information that they gathered. They are that clearinghouse of gathering of information. They have a database, they create books. There's a book that just came out about the Bay Area. They do land scans, and they are going to do a land scan of Great Salt Lake that's going to be on exhibit coming up in a couple months at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. This is what they do. And to them, land use is of course, it is accumulative as our interaction with the land, but we – I just think they're second generation Robert Smithson. The idea of travel, the idea of industry, that intersection with land, and it being somehow, sometimes it's beautiful. Sometimes it can be a protest. They would never say that there is protest involved, they're not photographing to say "big industry is bad." This is just a reflection of how we are using the land. There was a trip that we did in 2004. The Robert Smithson Retrospective opens in Los Angeles at the Museum of Contemporary Art. They've got close connections with CLUI who's got their center of operation in Los Angeles. Matthew Coolidge, Sarah Simmons, the director, assistant director, the team of them, organized with MOCA to come to Salt Lake City. They come into Salt Lake, pick me up, we get the bus, and we spend two days together going counter-clockwise around the Lake. Because it's not going to be Robert Smithson and Great Salt Lake, it is everything of Great Salt Lake. The first day is going around to see Spiral Jetty, but of course we talk on the way about "what is land use around the Lake." It is Hill Air Force. It is ATK, Thiokol and what they do out on the Lake, it is the railroad. And I'm just giving you the brief synopsis. We go to Sun Tunnels, we spend the night in Wendover.

The next day it is Energy Solutions. What were they called before they were Energy Solutions?

GS: Um, Envirocare? Is that the name?

HL: That's it. It was Envirocare. We stop at all the industries and Matt was brilliant. He's made appointments for us the whole way. We stop at Morton. We stop at Saltair. We go up to Bingham Copper Pit. All of that is land use and art is one way that we can see that, is one way that we can understand how we use the land. And that's what they are pointing us towards. And so I think the work that they do – and Matt certainly has been acknowledged. He received an award, the Smithsonian Institution gives out an award every year to an artist under fifty, I don't know how old Matt is, but a couple years ago he received this national award for the work that CLUI does because art, again back to the 1960's, that rupture, and the way that we think about it, the materials we use, the space that it can inhabit and embody, all of that changed. And so CLUI is, they are artists, they are giving us a new language and a new way to think about art. So, and I think that's important. And of…there's the Great Salt Lake. I've written about them for *15 Bytes* but recently, Lynn had Matt and I in an interview conversation for the Friends of Great Salt Lake newsletter to talk about how they ended up in Wendover and how they think and see the Lake and it was a really interesting interview to be able to do.

GS: Well, um, how – I'll just leave it up to you, if there's anything else that you think we could talk about with your interaction with the Lake, or we can always do a follow-up interview, that's always a possibility. If you think of something down the road that you'd like to talk about. But I think this has been a great first interview for this project, and wide ranging and –

HL: I appreciate the opportunity, I am happy to. It's hard for me, I'm writing right now a one hundred and fifty word paragraph about my book. And it's easier for me to write fifteen hundred or –

GS: It always is.

HL: fifteen thousand more words – (laughs)

GS: Abstracts are the worst.

HL: Instead of a hundred and fifty. First of all, I just want to thank you. I didn't know this was the first interview of your project. I think it's really important. It's important to have the history, I'm an historian, right, art historian, so I think that's important. But to be able to change perception and to have people see maybe some of the lineage of people within this environment. And as I continue on in doing deeper research into Alfred Lambourne and what the 1850's, you know, sort of looking at the viewpoint of the Lake from the 1850's, certainly that will help me to get – I don't know about the Shoshone. I don't know about the tribes and the first peoples who were around the Lake and what kind of language they used for the Lake. And so I look forward to, you know, how your project continues because I think that will be a really fascinating way. There are different words, there are different –

GS: Right, we certainly hope to, and you know, part of the origin stories of the Goshute people and the Shoshone people involve the Lake.

HL: Sure, absolutely. So I'll look forward to coming back in whichever way that is. Thanks.

GS: Alright. Well, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW