Drs. Marjorie and Brent Wilson - Student Panel Transcription
John Michael Autobiographical Lecture Series – April 5, 2011

Dr. Julie Lindsey: I'd like to welcome everyone this morning, and we're delighted to be able to continue in the tradition of the series, which is that we culminate the visit of the distinguished lecturers by convening a panel of our students and giving them an opportunity to interact with the art educators that we have with us today.

And we're delighted for the Drs. Marjorie and Brent Wilson. We heard a wonderful story last night of their lives, so we hope to continue that. We have young people here who are going to, I'm sure, build on our archive of information based on questions that occurred to them last night as they were listening to what they had to say. So I think you were sort of arranging a sort of segue into their introduction and finding out who they are, so I want to turn it over to Dr. Brent.

Dr. Brent Wilson: So just tell us a tiny bit of your background, so we know who our questioners are.

Student: My name is Laura Clarkson. I'm a junior. I'm an Art Education and Studio Art major. Umm… I'm from Oxford… Both of my parents work here.

Dr. Brent Wilson: And what do your parents do?

Student: My father teaches Western History and my mother teaches Russian and Russian Literature.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Aha! So are you thinking of following in their academic footsteps?

Student: Well, umm… maybe. I think I'd like to teach at the college level… studio classes and art education theory classes.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Ahh, okay!

Student: Hi, I'm Marcy Ellen, and I'm a senior Studio Art major and Art Ed major…

Dr. Brent Wilson: And what do your parents do?

Student: My mother is a preschool teacher, and my father is a retired chemical engineer.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Aha!

Student: Okay, my name is Candace Murnin (2:33 spelling?), and I'm a freshman Studio Art major.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Freshmen!

Student: Ha, yes. Umm… and I'm also from Cincinnati. Uhh… I dunno…

Dr. Brent Wilson: And your parents?

Student: My mother is a special ed teacher at an elementary school, and my father is an athletic director at a middle school.

Dr. Brent Wilson: And, you know, when we say, "What do your parents do?" it's sort of a way to get your context. It's a context you might be trying to escape in some ways, or at least to establish a new tradition. But still, it tells us where you're coming from. Well, now it's your turn, isn't it?

Dr. Julie Lindsey: Do you have any questions that you'd like to direct to them? And who would like to ask our first question?

Student: I will. Umm… Marjorie, I was wondering if you could tell us more about the use of film in your curriculum and why you found new, permanent documentation so much…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Film. Well, I did say that my mother took me to the movies at four. And did you understand why she took me?

Student: I think so… to experience popular culture.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No.

Student: No?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No, she took me, because if you went to the movies at that time—it was during the Depression—you could get dishes.

Student: Ooh, okay.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And so, I guess, four was old enough for me to be counted as a person and pay the 8 cents that it cost to get into the movies. And so I got the dish. And so she got two dishes.

But… umm… film, of course… And this is something that we practice even today, or, I would probably say, every night. We probably see a movie every night… almost every night.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Not every night. Once and awhile... But it's a critical...

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Wait a minute! Wait a minute! I'm answering the question!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Look, do you think this is your question?

Group laughter

Lapse in video

Dr. Brent Wilson: So… it is, still… If you ever want history, there it is.

Dr. Julie Lindsey: Did you ever watch *Iron Jawed Angels*?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Yes, definitely!

Dr. Julie Lindsey: Okay!

Student: How did you… Film is so important in criticizing and evaluating our culture and history. How do you bring fine art into that, as well? I know that film is considered fine art in your perspective, but also major works can be very politically charged. So how do you introduce that?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: You just answered your own question!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yes, but…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Because… I was gonna say to you, "Okay, so then if this film were perhaps at the center, where would you go from there? What would you do? Instead of asking me?"

Dr. Brent Wilson: But, you see… but with your teaching… as a person looking in on it, you were continually documenting, but there was almost no line between the film and the performances that we… Marge didn't have an opportunity to do exploring at all last night. But each of those student performances… They were documented on film… but they were marvelous performance pieces that raised issues of feminism, of gender… of all sorts of things.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right. Brent very quickly went through the slides, but there was the one with the jars and then the apples and the milk. And that was all about feminism and… uhh… menstruation and things like that.

There was another one where… I don't know if could see it very clearly… where the student was breaking her bonds. She was tied up with white, torn sheets, and she was breaking bonds. So we had the performances. And then they would… umm… video their performances, and then they would create a video, which wasn't just a documentation, but was a video that explained the performance.

So her video, which I had the screenshots from, was the performance, and then the text, which ran through it, was the stories of three women who were abused. Umm… the one… I think at the very beginning that Julie was talking about… umm… was one of my students who is now a teacher at Ohio State. And all through the performance, there was the voice-over that said, "Have you ever felt invisible?" repeated over and over and over again. "Have you ever felt invisible?"

Dr. Brent Wilson: That was taking off from *Invisible Man*, the novel. And so it's a network of literature, of film, of social issues. And so after the students' performances, then you would spend the rest of the morning or afternoon—whichever it was—with a discussion, and following a critique, as a discussion of issues.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: It was both.

Dr. Brent Wilson: But they were real… sometimes studio critiques are absolutely painful—I hate them—but these…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: This was not… this was not in that…

Dr. Brent Wilson: These were dealing with the issues of meaning in all of the things that were raised, so it was another level of discussion. It was the very discussion that we actually pulled that art education centers on. Because what Marge was doing was saying, "Look, these are new art forms that are emerging, and art teachers ought to be using them."

But there is always the question of what happens when new teachers go out and start having students in high school, or middle school, or elementary school doing performances, and people… you know… principals, and other teachers, and theater teachers… are saying, "Well, that's our territory."

So there is always the question of what happens, because there is a tension between the old—what people expect—and what is emerging, so we always wonder what happens when our students go out. But it was interesting…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well, I never asked Chris if he were teaching performances, per se…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, this was one of the questions I wondered about.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right.

Dr. Brent Wilson: So there's still the question of what happens. There's a kind of critical attitude that's being developed having to do with artworks.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And it isn't necessarily that I want them to go out and teach performance. It was sensitizing them to the issues, and it was… It's not about them or somebody out there… It's about 'me.'

Dr. Brent Wilson: You know, I think that is… Marge's genius is in getting students in the small settings to sort of come together as a group… bond… and do things that they could not have done individually.

I'm not saying it well, but I can't do this. My best work is probably with individual students, who will come to me and, well… the very thing that you were describing. I sensed immediately what Marge was talking about after the Second World War, with the returning veterans who were given the GI Bill. They had come back…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: In droves! They all wanted to go to college!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, because they were given the money to go to college. But their parents—their families—had not gone to college. This was just amazing. They didn't have to die. I mean, they survived this thing, and they were given money to go to college, which they had probably not thought of before. And so the kind of spirit that was at Mass College of Art at that time…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: The School of Art at that time.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yes, well, this was the very sort of thing that Victor Turner was talking about in the ritual process that he saw in villages of…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right. He wanted to talk about genius—and this is not a 'mutual admiration society' all the time—and Brent's genius is just that. Somebody will say to him, "Well, I was thinking about…" And he'd say, "I've got it! Why don't you look at this, and this, and this…" So that was his genius with graduate students… umm… I'd say his weakness was that he wanted to do the work himself after he had got them started!

Dr. Brent Wilson: *Laughter* And sometimes I did! *Laughter*

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Yes, and sometimes you did! A couple of Egyptian dissertations… **Laughter**

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, other times, I was taken for a joyous ride, so…where students go beyond the vision of the teacher, and as I said… starting in the fourth grade, when Tony Knutz did a much better horse than I did, even though I was the teacher! And so the best students… and you know, we both have students who have gone way beyond what we were doing...

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Which is what you want!

Dr. Brent Wilson: And we couldn't be more pleased.

Dr. Julie Lindsey: Standing on the shoulders of giants.

Student: Taking from that… you taking over for your students… you mentioned that… umm…

Dr. Brent Wilson: **Laughter**

Student: You mentioned how it should be called 'adult-child work.' I thought that was really interesting, because you do hear, oftentimes, children will be where their project is halfway done, and so the teacher will go in…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Because they don't care about it.

Student: And finish it for them, so they can put it on display. And, in a way, that's horrible. But they're just trying to get the work shown… and so I didn't know… I wanted to hear more about that.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yeah… umm… we have… and this is in the introduction of… the new introduction… of *Teaching Children to Draw*… We talk about three pedagogical sides… three sides in which individuals make art, and, in effect, learn to make art.

And the first pedagogical side in the self-initiated work of an individual child who sees what others around them—slightly older adults—are doing, and says, "I want to do that!" And so, I mean, when kids draw, they don't know that in this society, we draw, because drawing is a social and cultural activity.

And so there are kids… and in our first publication, which we didn't know was in "Gifted Child Quarterly," we published the interviews of the lives of two of Marge's students, who I had started working with. And we were talking about their narrative that was driving their desire to make art, and they're telling stories. But stories are telling about 'me' and the context of what happens… and what happens, whether it's good or bad—How do you get out of this… so it's a kind of concentrated life, with how to deal with who 'I am,' and how do I deal with what I might confirm in my life? So that is the self-initiated learner: I'm doing it, because I want to do it.

Then, we move to the second pedagogical side, which is the one we know so well. It's the teaching, but when you think about it, there's probably some point at which… either high school or in college or in graduate school, working on an MFA… where the student really does break away from the teacher and say, "Whatever you want me to do, I don't care. I'm going to do what I need to do, where the individual becomes an artist in his or her own way. Now it can actually happen way down in elementary school, but that would be highly unusual. In most cases, as you have already seen or experienced, either in your own teacher or having been a student, that the teacher comes in, typically, to a class of about thirty kids and gives a motivation, which is verbal, describing a situation.

And (37_5, 2:24), and Lowenfeld, and some of the others that you have had in the series that have… Natalie Robinson Cole… were absolutely geniuses at painting pictures with their words, so much so that they were creating visual pictures in the minds of kids. And then the kids illustrate these things… I oversimplify… but the kids illustrate—in either drawing or painting clay or whatever—the pictures that the teacher has painted.

So who decides? Even though there is some degree of freedom to decide just how I'll do it, typically, it's a topic or a theme that has been presented, and even if you listen, I have studied the transcripts of Cheesick's (spelling) teaching, because the cycle, (37_5, 3:18) transcribed his teaching in the year… I think it's something like 1936… where you heard everything that Cheesick was saying to the students.

And he was… continually admonishing kids—"The top of the head has to touch the top of the paper! The feet have to go to the bottom." Well, just making things big and expressive and free and what have you, but he was telling them everything to do, and whose work is this? Well, he had a bunch of little… they were programmed, and they were just doing everything that he wanted them to do. And they looked brilliant, and this is where we got the notion of 'child art.'

But then I began to say… I've written papers on this… that say, "Whose is this?" At best, you said, "It's an adult-child collaboration, if they are both, indeed, contributing about equivalent amounts. In many cases—and in most cases—it is coercion. The adult is telling the child everything to do. Well… and even in the best situations… I think all you can claim is that it's some sort of collaboration, and it is—I want to think—a nice collaboration between the adult and the child. It is work that is produced jointly by the two of them, even though the teacher may never touch it, but as you said, finishes it for them. And I am guilt of that! Because we want that.

Once at Penn State Saturday School, Lowenfeld said to the teachers doing the teaching, "This may be 'child art,' but it's not good child art!" In other words, I want it to look spontaneous and free and creative expression… Okay, so that's the second side, which is 'adult-child.'

And then the third one, which is much more complicated, is where at the edge of schooling, you say, "Hey, do you know… can I see some more?" And you get really interested in what the kid is doing, and you become… sort of… colleagues.

Or it was like me, when I played at that little studio that I had made for myself… I was the only person, faculty or student, who had a studio at Utah State University, because I needed a place to work, and I was doing big things, and so my professors came to me, and it was on my site, you see, and I was doing my things.

And one of my professors said to me—this is Harrison (37_6, 0:58)—"Let me tell you what I am trying to do. We need to do something that really shows this culture what you're working on." And then I may have the sketch—"I'm trying to do this and this and this"—and it had to do with morbid rituals in that case, and he said, "What a good idea. That's what I should do in my work."

Well, you see, at this point, he was a teacher, but we had become colleagues, like two painters talking about what we wanted to do, like Braque and Picasso inventing cubism, where they were going back and forth between one another's studios. That was a kind of third side to where, yes, it was at the edge of school… It was in the context of a class—I was taking an independent study with him—but it had become something more, because we were at the edge, and it was my territory in which he was working.

There was much more. I view the (37_6, 1:56) in Japan as third side, as well. And the third side is the closest to how you're going to live your life. In fact, the writing I've been doing most recently is, I think, the biggest goal for art education… It's to teach students how to live in the art

world. "Ahh… what art world?" Then I began to say, "the digital art world," that has all the components. Ralph and I were talking about this.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: You've gone way beyond me!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Ahh, I always do. *Laughter* I'm giving a lecture—Be quiet! *Laughter*

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: I wanted to add something…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, just keep your mouth closed for a second.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Aaaahh!

Group laughter

Dr. Brent Wilson: I'm almost finished! Now, I don't remember what I was going to say! The digital art world in which I live has all of the components of the New York art world, except I'm a central player in it, where I do art criticism and have won awards. I've already published two works today online.

Marge will say, "Can't you leave it alone for a day!" But I have an audience out there who's waiting to see what I'm going to do today! So they will write about it, and here I am presenting works that quite literally before the end of the day, will be looked at by individuals all the way from architects, and professors, and graphic designers to schoolchildren, who are responding to my words. I am absolutely embedded in an art world that is totally digital, and yet I am doing everything that I want the students in school to do.

I want them to know what it is like to live in an art world, and that you don't have to be an artist to live in it. Because some of the most interesting stuff that is being done online in this realm that I work in, is not by trained artists, even though there are architects and designers and what have you and painters who are on it, but there are also housewives and whomever, who have a lot of talent, who are doing amazing things.

But we're all sort of equal in this case. It is absolutely… The terrain is leveled, and we can all play an important role at whatever level we wish to play. That's what I want for everybody… is to know what it's like to be there, and if you really like it, to live a lot of your life there, or if not, live a little bit of your life there. You question was… uhhh… about child-adult collaboration… and that's where we went from there… **Laughter**

Marge had something she wanted to say, but she's forgotten about it.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No, I… an illustration. Umm… when I was student teaching—of course, I was much older than everybody else, so I was much more aware of what was going on—the art supervisor in this particular school district that I was student teaching in came once a week to each school. And all of the third graders, say—I think it every week it was a different class—would gather in the auditorium, and she would stand up in front, and she would say, "Okay, today, we are going to draw cold trees, because it's winter. So we're going to draw the cold trees. Now, what colors are the cold colors?" Blue and purple. "Right! We're going to draw blue and purple trees, because it's cold. Now, Paul, you draw a tree."

And she would do the tree that he would generally draw, which is the lollipop tree with the trunk like that. "That's not a tree!" And then she would draw. "Now, you draw in the branches--Come up like this, and then the other branches come up from the other branches, and *that's* how you draw a tree. Now, what I want you to do is I want you to take your chalk and I want you to put the snow on the branches." But every single school in that school district had all of those blue and purple trees with the white snow on them in the auditorium to display. Why? It was the same thing in every single school!

Dr. Brent Wilson: And that's the worst kind of example!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Exactly!

Dr. Brent Wilson: And you could say, "What did the children have to do with that? This is 'adult-adult-adult-child' art."

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right, right! And I went into the school, and there was a kid who had drawn a little man sitting in the tree.

Dr. Brent Wilson: He didn't!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And I said, "Look! Wow! That is so great!" And he said, "Teacher didn't like it."

Dr. Brent Wilson: **Laughter**

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: So, the worst example. And as Brent said, you can learn—and I think probably—more from bad examples. "Oooh, I'm not ever gonna do that!"

Student: That's actually what I was gonna ask about… if you wanted to elaborate a little bit more on this, or what good examples do you have, as teachers, from other teachers that you've observed or worked with?

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh my!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: That's a tough one! **Laughter**

Dr. Brent Wilson: I don't know where to start. Did you notice last night that the implicit thing when I was presenting about my education is that I was pretty much left on my own… to my own things… sorta from the beginning. Uhh… I had to work it out myself. And this is sorta just the opposite from Marge, where it was the formal academic training and figure drawing and plaster casts…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No, but that wasn't college!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Ah, but you started at the Mass… I mean Boston Museum School, and what did you do there?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Mass School of Art…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh, so it was the Mass School of Art at age 14. And what did they have you doing?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well, they had us do plaster molds…

Dr. Brent Wilson: **Laughter** Right, okay. Now, what really counted for me in my education is that in one way or another, my teachers sort of permitted third side activities, always gave me entry to the world beyond.

Yeah, so let's go… I'm not answering your question, but maybe in a way I am… My school art teacher was the music teacher and really knew nothing much about art, but he was encouraging. He taught a couple of art classes, and he did the choirs and high school operettas, and one of the reasons why he took me under his wing was because I was to paint the backdrops for the year operetta.

We did "The Desert Song," and this was before Broadway shows became… Well, those were Broadway shows in a way but from another angle. And he let me set up my studio in the storage room, which was really quite large, with a nice big window and so on, so it was a bright, lighted

place with a lot of room. And [he] just let me… I had my oil paints and canvas boards, and I was just painting up a storm.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: But that doesn't help teachers, Brent.

Dr. Brent Wilson: I think…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Just let 'em go. Say, "Do whatever you want!"

Dr. Brent Wilson: No. I had an agenda, and I knew what I wanted to do.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: But you were a very different kind of individual…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yes, but you see, this is how irregular it was. So this same teacher takes me down to a contact he had at Utah State, (37_8, 1:14), who was in charge of student employment, and says, "Look out for something for this kid." A couple of weeks later, I get a call from (37_8, 1:25). They need a window display man at the (37_8, 1:30). It was part of the allied department store chain. And I knew absolutely nothing about window display. I mean, I knew how to milk cows!

And… uhh… but you see all the different ways he… This is what teachers do, if you think about it… is they help students… They facilitate what students want to do, and in some cases, what the students don't know that they want to do. But they provide opportunities.

And so it is what you do in class. And so when you see… and what did you ask? And what is good teaching that you have seen? When I evaluated for the Getty Center for eight years, which meant that I worked at summer institutes that were held in museums, much… all the instruction in those summer institutes was conducted by a team of art historians, critics, philosophers of art, artists, and art education counterparts—art supervisors—and high school and classroom teachers.

And so we lived in art museums, interacting with artworks for two or three weeks or whatever it was in the summer. Then, there were to go back into their classrooms and to begin to create things. But what DBAE did was to do just the very thing that we were attempting to do in teaching drawing from art, which is to say, in effect, art comes from art. And it so the good teaching that I was seeing in literally hundreds of the school districts, schools, and classrooms where DBAE was adopted. There was an intense study of works of art that were worth looking at and then saying, How do we take, not the superficial look of this art but the ideas that teachers are working on… excuse me… that artists are working on… and take if from that time and that place to our time and our place. And are there similar kinds of issues?

So in Picasso's *Guernica*, you might look at the mother who is holding this dead child, who's been hit by shrapnel. And maybe a student will jump from that to having—this is where it gets very close to what Marge was teaching—where a student might print out literally hundreds of copies of the dead child. And then have us sit and crumple these 'dead child' into little balls and discard them, and say, "This is what happens in China where female fetuses are aborted, because they're female."

I mean, and there you are doing this… This is a powerful use of going from that work and the issue of the Massacre of the Innocents, carrying that notion further to the massacre of the innocents in wombs, which was a combination of 'One Child,' which is the way the Chinese decided they would control population. But, yet, because females were seen to be as less valuable than males, then many more females were aborted than males, and talk about becoming aware of social policy and cultural traditions—but through an artwork.

It's a pretty big jump. But why, you say? It's absolutely being true to the original work. In other words, the good classroom teacher… and I think this is an example of good second side teaching… should say, "What issues are being raised in this work?" And this is what Marge was doing. "And how do I play them out in my own way? It's still a collaboration.

I know Marge would probably admit that what your students did, even though they were taking… they were absolutely their [own] artists—you were continually surprised—but you knew that if you didn't set up the conditions and lay all of the groundwork… They understood everything, so even though we say her students were brilliant, they were brilliant because of what you had, first of all, established for them, and permitted them to do, or encouraged them.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right. Both.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Now, I have an answer to your question really directly, but I'm giving you just some illustrations.

Student: I wanted to ask…

Dr. Julie Lindsey: Did you want to direct that to Dr. Marjorie?

Student: Yes, I would!

Group laughter

Dr. Julie Lindsey: I can't hear.

Muffled sounds, lapse in audio

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: My student teachers were great. So… umm… I guess you've got to be a good teacher in order to create…

Dr. Brent Wilson: But look… The adult… the teacher-student collaboration is not a bad thing. I think in principle…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No, definitely not a bad thing!

Dr. Brent Wilson: It is a good thing, but what we want to do is look at the degree of collaboration and the degrees of freedom that the students have, as opposed to looking at a continuum. The greatest degrees of freedom for a student to function within the kind of parameters that some do, and on the other hand, we have this coercion that you are doing what I tell you to do, because I tell you to do it, because I know it's good for you.

And, you see, there are societal goals. I mean, the educational objectives, whether in art or any other subject, are established because we think it is good for us collectively as a society, as well as you as individuals… for both the society and the individual to progress to meet these goals. And so there has to be some sort of shared production between the student and the teacher, or the school system and the student body.

So as we talk about first side and third side, we say, "Second side is tremendously important." And the third side sort of exists, because there is a first and a second side, but it is that third side that is the nicest… provides the greatest number of transitions between the school content and what we want students to do for the rest of their lives. "How do you live your life?" And it is, so we need to pay a great deal more attention to the transitions: "What will you do with this? Why am I having you do this, and how might you use it?" I mean, we need to continually explain why we have students do things, rather than just "Do it, because I tell you to."

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: I had a supervisor. He had been an elementary school teacher, and I was teaching in high school. And they couldn't make *me* the art supervisor, because I was a woman, so we had this guy come up from the elementary school. Kids would say, "Well, why are we doing it?" High school! And he said to them, "Because I said so."

And I was appalled. And maybe he said that to his elementary school students—He shouldn't have—but it would have been more appropriate. But to say that to high school students, "Because I said so!" And they wanted to know why they were doing it, and they should know why they were doing that particular thing.

And one of the slides that we went over quickly last night was a Saturday morning art school project where the kids had walked into the room, and I had students working all night to set up the room for the next morning at the Saturday school.

And they came in, everything in the room was wrapped—the chairs were wrapped, the table was wrapped, there were odd packages wrapped—all over the room. So immediately, they were into the lesson. And they would sit down… and what would be the first question that you, as a teacher, would ask? You have to ask the kids a question at this time in the lesson. What would you ask them?

Dr. Brent Wilson: Why is everything wrapped? **Laughter**

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No. That's what kids ask.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh, well, what would the teacher…? Ah, okay. What would the teacher...

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Why would somebody wrap something? It was a Christo lesson, of course. The newspaper and television… people out there… and it was a big thing, but the kids didn't think it was 'just fun.' They knew why they were wrapping.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Why were they wrapping…?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Because there wasn't enough attention paid to the news! They had to make it important!

Dr. Brent Wilson: (37_10, 2:55) And you have to obscure it to see it!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And at the end of the lesson, the kids got a little pamphlet with pictures and a piece of the pink fabric that it was wrapped with, and a piece of the cord, just as Christo did those things. The only thing that was missing was Christo's sketches, but we couldn't get Christo over there, so…

Student: Umm… can you tell us more about your process of deconstructing kimonos?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Oh, that's easy! Just take them apart! Very meticulously stitch by stitch by stitch, because some of them are very old, and if you do it a little bit hard, then it won't hold, and then you can't do (37_10 3:47)

Student: How do you decide which portion of the kimono to use?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well, kimonos are made from a bolt of fabric that's 14.2 inches wide... so put this together with the seams, and it's 14.2 inches wide… and they use the entire bolt. So if the kimono is made in a particular way, I can deconstruct it and have a bolt.

So I can't… I don't decide... I can use any piece of it, except where I've gotten a hole or where they've cut a little mark. Sometimes, they'll split it in half, and I generally can't use those pieces unless he says, "Oh, I want a scarf and I don't care how narrow it is." And probably every bolt that I get… every kimono I get… he says, "I want one of those!"

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, not the ones that are pink with flowers.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: When do I ever get pink with flowers?

Dr. Brent Wilson: No, there are some that are very feminine. What you were wearing last night, I wouldn't wear.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: I don't know why! But… umm… it's fascinating! And the most fascinating part is that site in Japan where I get the things, and they have photographs, and their photographs are generally… Brent talked about over-interpretation… under-interpretation. They're generally under-interpretations…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, they're under-approximated.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: **Laughter** Approximated. So I never know what I'm getting. I just know, approximately, what I'm getting. And these packages come from Japan. The post office is very funny, because they'll say, "Hi, Marge! Another package!" Because I have to sign for it, because it comes from express from Japan.

And… umm… I'm surprised, and it's fantastic, because, you know, "Wow! I've never seen anything like that before in my life!" And we just got two bolts before I left and brought them downstairs, as I said, "See! Look!" And he said, "Wow, that's really good." And it looked terrible in the photograph. But I had an idea of what it would probably be, and it was beautiful.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, one of the most subtle. It was a kind of bow… kind of yellow-green or something. But part of the joy is simply the Japanese textile designers—There's nothing like them. You look at this and the contrasts in that one piece… and it is just so amazing.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And this is… umm.. (37_11, 2:09) and that what they do… see these little pieces here that are raised?

Dr. Brent Wilson: Why don't you take it off?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: That's all… that's all… umm… tied with these little knots. It's tie-dye, but… so it's tied here, and here, and here, and here. When I got the fabric, it was much more crinkly. It was all crinkly. You can't sew it that way, especially since the edges, so I had to iron it, and I hate doing that, because it's the crinkly that makes it so unique. And so each one of these is tied.

Dr. Brent Wilson: So it's a little knot that resists… that makes it resist the fabric. The dye…

Students: Wow! **Murmuring**

Dr. Brent Wilson: This is a pretty good example. So you've got the texture of the cloth. You've got the 'shibori,' with the black and white and the kind of linear pattern. And then you get these patches of the… like crimson, or whatever it is… and more shibori. And… so just look at the variety of these. And, like, every week, practically, you're getting a new shipment that she's carefully gone through hundreds of examples to pick out the two or three that she wants, whether it's an old kimono or a bolt, and so it's a continual delivery of aesthetic joy.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And there are three ways that I get them. One is the complete kimono, which is so meticulously… little, teeny stitches…

Student: Yeah.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: It'll take me a day, just sitting there and taking out the stitches and then taking a tweezer and pulling out the threads.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Some—the old ones—are hand-sewn.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And they have linings! And sometimes, the lining is completely sewn in, and those are awful! But they second kind is called 'karinui,' which is simply basted, so it's been cut and basted in the shape of the kimono for display, so that somebody walking into a shop will be able to say, "Oh, that's what… when I buy this bolt… that's what the kimono is gonna look like." Those are *really* easy to take apart! Just take the one end of the sewing, and go "swoosh!" Go like that and…

Group laughter

And it comes out. And, very often, I can lay out the lengths of fabric on the floor, from one end of my living room to the other, and have that complete. So that's the next desirable thing. The most desirable is the bolt. And then, you don't have to decide anything.

Kimonos, of course, come in different lengths. So there's a 'karinui,' and if the bolt is made for karinui, you get much less fabric than if it were made for a kimono. And then there are different kinds of kimonos. So, there's the 'furisode,' which is the one that's worn by unmarried women, and it has the very long, flowing sleeves, you know, like John Singer Sergant's painting of the women in kimonos. But when they're married, for some reason, they have to cut the sleeves off, and I don't ever understand what that's about. I guess they're not ever supposed to be flamboyant. I would assume that that's what it is.

And so I get less fabric from the ones that are not furisode, and then there are kimonos that are simply all black and only patterned on the bottom. I've done those, but it's very difficult to get, you know, many scarfs out of that. So I try to figure how many scarves I can get out of these things. But as Brent was saying earlier—just to Jean, I guess—some of these kimonos sell for thousands and thousands of dollars, and I have…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Like $25,000 and $50,000, because of how rare the textiles are…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And I have, on my wall… because that's what I have decorating my walls is… umm… kimonos. I have a beautiful, beautiful kimono that's called a 'dounuki,' which is an undergarment and had a matching kimono, but I assumed that was for very rich people. So the dounuki itself is exquisite. And the fabric is… umm… like a woodblock print. And it is absolutely magnificent.

Then it has kind of a deep blue-gray for the rest of the kimono, and on the bottom of it, there are birds that have… umm… embroidery on their heads… just little pieces of embroidery… and pine trees with pinecones that have the embroidery. I paid $78 for it. It is magnificent, so…

Dr. Brent Wilson: But, you see, that's because most people would see it as undesirable. Well, because Japanese people don't wear used kimonos. People wear new ones, and once it's used, and they're not going to wear it again. then they sell it, so you're paying maybe a tenth of what it might have cost.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Right. Well, I've seen the dounuki on mine—and not even as beautiful as mine—for $1,500, so I get bargains.

Dr. Brent Wilson: But that could be a tenth of what it might have cost originally.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Oh, sure! Absolutely! But these are…

Student: To segue from that… umm… you mentioned that if you stop doing art, then you need to get out of the art education field, and...

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: No, he didn't say that. He said he had said that to *himself.*

Student: Oh, to yourself, okay.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: It was a promise he made to himself. It was not a blanket statement to anybody else.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yeah, it was a promise to myself. But then, last night, I forgot to… Well, finish your question, and I'll give you the answer I want…

Student: Well, I just thought that was really inspiring, because all of us are dual majors in art ed and studio…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, you see, typically, most art teachers go into the field, not necessarily because of their love for… not first because of their love for teaching, but rather, their love for art… their desire to make art.

Probably, my life's work in producing images is actually in these eighty-seven journals. When I show the one from the Japanese journal, I… the whole journal is like that one page that I showed… the Max Ernst and manga images interspersed on gold background on handmade Nepal paper, but stitched like this book, so really open flat, and so what I have to do…

I don't know yet whether the journals will go to Penn State or Utah State University. Utah State University would like to have them. Yet they still think probably Penn State would be the better place, because that's where I spent much of my career, and that's where my collections of children's drawings are… Our collections of children's story drawings are in the archives. So I have to make that decision. This is not a very good example, but you see, here, I was at the…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well, show them! Don't just sit there…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, uhh… you can't see upside down.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Take off the scarf… Pass that around. **Laughter** Pass it around! You don't have to describe everything. Just pass it around so they can see it!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Okay, but I will tell you. So this tells you that I was at the Pace Gallery looking at the Jim Dine exhibition and making a brief little criticism of his hard paintings… and then encountering another painting at another gallery, and so on. So it is a record. Oh, take that! But, in this case, it is a transform book. It's Ellen Gallagher's… a book of her works.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: But she is destroyed and…

Dr. Brent Wilson: But I have another one… a pristine book that I don't want to destroy…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Hi, there! Hi, there!

Dr. Brent Wilson: So here is Andy Warhol… the exhibition that Marge and I saw a couple of weeks ago. This is the movie… uhh… with Kit. But if you look at others before we get through, it will be… Oh, this is a dream that I was telling Ralph about—that we had a tsunami, and I mean, it was one wave of tsunami after another that took up pages of my journal! So…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Goodness!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Yes. So that's today, and so your questions… they're not our answers, but your questions.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: We have time for one very short one. And, well, if you ask him a question, it's not a very good answer!

Dr. Brent Wilson: What is your short question with a long answer?

Student: I guess this can go to either one of you, but… umm… the idea of you, like, carrying around these portable sketchbooks seems very… It's something that you would take with you wherever you go. So either what ideas have you always carried with you throughout your life, or what, essentially, words of wisdom do you have for us as we become these teachers… the next generation of teachers?

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: What ideas have I always carried around? Ask him that one, because he's the one who carries around the ideas, and I think that I can't point to any one thing.

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, so… My quick answer to what you're saying is, in one sense, what we have been saying all along. And that is that we want you to be creators of ideas. In other words… Now, this is me. This isn't Marge. Uhh… when you leave this world, I want you to leave a record… a record of artworks, a record of writing, a record of thinking. A record that is played out in the lives of your students, where they are carrying on and creating more ideas.

In other words, what's important… uhh… is the expansion of human intellect, information, ideas, knowledge, caring… all of those good things. The expansion of good in the form of knowledge and good works… That's what I want for you, but I see artworks as playing an important part of the role, and there are artworks… The visual realm adds something to humankind. I mean, visual work adds something to humankind, and I want there to be a greater accumulation of that. I mean, we look at the great artists, and we say, "They have contributed immensely to our notions of what it means to be human, as the human race and as individuals." And I want to expand that. I want you to expand that. Get out there and do it!

Group laughter

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well, the only thing that… uhh… To follow up on my saying that I could do all that stuff very well, but that, I really never knew… was never taught… that art was about ideas. My first art history class was strictly history. It was "that old stuff out there." And it was taught by a woman who thought she was a reincarnation of Princess Nefertiti. Do you know that figurine with the long neck? She used to walk around this. You know, it wasn't a far cry! I think she probably was Nefertiti, but…

Dr. Brent Wilson: That's Yoko Ono.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Yes, she saw Yoko Ono.

Dr. Brent Wilson: I was at one of the art…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: I was talking!

Group laughter

Dr. Brent Wilson: I know you were, but Yoko Ono just walked by! *Laughter*

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And it wasn't until I really, really understood how much we really need to deal with ideas, and, as you see, that was so much a part of my teaching, and I think that was my art. So it's *ideas*, and I think that's the important thing.

Dr. Brent Wilson: But you were passing on your vision.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: But that was afterwards. What I was saying is that I didn't understand that, and when I did, that became my vision, and that was what I was carrying on to my students…

Dr. Brent Wilson: And so you transformed yourself from a technician. That was when you started working with performance and installation… when you did deepen and broaden enormously what you were doing.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Well…

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh! I'm sorry… You can't stop now!

Group laughter

Dr. Brent Wilson: Uhh… here is… We'll pass this around. This is a part of my… several pieces I have made of my great grandmother's visions, and that's a brochure from my New York show.

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: And who designed the brochure?

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh, who designed the brochure? Yes, Marge is a superb graphic designer. Although as we were doing the slides, I… We would never be able to design (37_15 3:15). It was… I was tempted to say, "No, move it over there!" And we had such different notions of where the things ought to settle, because that's what I do all day… is move things around… make them bigger and smaller, as I'm making digital collages. And so I'm creating six pieces a day, or what have you, and so I have gotten my abilities to design…

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Nobody said it's good though!

Dr. Brent Wilson: Oh, I think they're much better than yours!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Ahhh! **Laughter**

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, I'm sorry. You were going to stop!

Dr. Julie Lindsey: For the sake of the record, all good things have to come to an end. Fortunately, on our side of it, they don't have to come to an end, because we can continue our discussion over our lunch. But for the archive, again, on behalf of the art department and the John A. and Betty J. Michael Autobiographical Series in Art Education, and this year's distinguished lecturers, the Drs. Marjorie and Brent Wilson, again, we thank you so much for your careful reflections.

And how those came together about the idea and the story… and the other things… and the titles we give ourselves, and the things that we worry about actually are in service in continuing that

idea of the profound functioning of humanity, both individually and collectively. So, with that… and we would also like to thank Dr. Ralph Raunft, who has been our producer and videographer, and… uhh… so thank you very much… And that concludes.... Do we adjourn sine die?

Dr. Brent Wilson: Well, for both of us, thank you so much for your questions, your hospitality, and for the opportunity for us to reflect, and with a few more probes, we might even get Marge to get her life's story down, because it needs to be gotten down. And she made a start on it! Let's just keep her going. Tell her you want to reach about it someday!

Dr. Marjorie Wilson: Thanks!

Clapping