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Oral history interview with Jean
Boghossian, 2024 June 25-27

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jean Boghossian on 2024 June 25 and 27. The interview took place over Zoom at Boghossian's studio in Brussels, Belgium, and was conducted by Katie Larson for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Katie Larson has reviewed the transcript. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

[00:18:38.96] KATIE LARSON: So we'll begin our recording now. My name is Katie Larson, and I'm here with Jean Boghossian on June 25 for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art oral history program. And thank you so much, Jean, for having this conversation with me.

[00:18:51.05] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Thank you.

[00:18:51.25] KATIE LARSON: So let's start off by talking a little bit about your family history, if you are willing.

[00:18:58.32] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Well, we are Armenians, as the name says it. We come from Eastern Turkey, where the genocide happened early in the last century. And my grandfather had to run away and to come to Aleppo.

[00:19:13.41] So I was born in Aleppo, to make the past story short, and grew up in Lebanon. In Aleppo, I was there until the age of 12. And this is where I had a teacher, because we are in a family of jewelers that is six generations old and my father didn't know how to draw or how to design.

[00:19:39.07] And he put for me, when I was six years old, a teacher, who was coming once a week to teach me how to design and how to draw. Because he thought a son of a jeweler must know how to create for his customer. And he didn't know; he was a businessman, but he didn't know how to design or to draw.

[00:19:57.58] And so I was—I started, of course, from the from the beginning. And I didn't start making jewelry in the beginning. I just started with the simple lines, parallel lines, and all that.

[00:20:08.89] And then, gradually, I evolved until the age of 12. Left to Lebanon at 12 years old, because the system in Syria was very hostile for business people. And we left because it was a better—Lebanon was more of a free country, more open to the West. And at the same time Christians were better respected. The president is Christian.

[00:20:36.10] So I came to Lebanon, and I studied until the age of—I got my degree, my baccalaureate. And meanwhile, every summer, I was also learning the jewelry skills—so cutting diamonds, setting rings, making rings, working on metal.

[00:20:57.68] And so I was involved in the jewelry since I was very young, until I finished my studies and I had to go to study English—of course, to get a diploma in English—and then a diploma in accounting because my father always said, It's no use to fill a bag if there is a hole underneath. So you have to know where the money goes. So it's very important that I am also very cautious about money.

[00:21:27.51] And I started traveling the world, to make it short again, at the age of 20, going to Antwerp to buy diamonds because—and to learn the diamond business. Because we are in the diamond business from father to son. And this is how I started making my business. I started going to the Far East just after that. India.

[00:21:50.55] It was the time of the maharajahs, where we could buy jewelry, where the government were after the jewelry of the maharajahs and the properties. And we had the

good opportunity to buy and sell. And unfortunately we sold them too quickly. And tried to buy again, but they were again more expensive, more and more expensive.

[00:22:09.35] But we were not able to hold onto the goods. We had to turn it so we can continue our business. And so I worked with Iran during the time of—the time of the shah of Iran, which was a good period, until '79, when there were the American hostages, and Carter was trapped by that.

[00:22:30.29] And at the same time, the shah of Iran was overturned by the by the revolution which happened today. So I stopped going to Iran.

[00:22:40.18] But meanwhile—Iran was '79. Meanwhile I, in 1972, '73, started working with the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, Dubai. And those were the oil countries that were coming up. So I benefited from this period and then came to Belgium, 1975, because of the Civil War in Lebanon.

[00:23:05.18] The Civil War in Lebanon is the worst war, because—I witnessed three Israeli-Arab wars—

[00:23:10.17] but the war in Lebanon was a civil war, where the brother shoots on his brother and the next day he makes peace. And civil war is a horrible thing.

[00:23:22.49] Anyway, I left Lebanon to come to Belgium and open my office in Belgium. And this is where I, of course, made money before. I went—we had, of course, an international business; before, I opened an office in Geneva. And my brother was 10 years younger. I installed him in Geneva, and we started doing business together, through Geneva, also from Belgium, but also all over the world.

[00:23:51.37] Also from Lebanon, because there were some peaceful periods in Lebanon, where we could do business. But, like today is not the right time, like many periods in Lebanon, it was a terrible time.

[00:24:03.28] So I should come, maybe, quickly to the art, which is what is interesting for you, I think. No?

[00:24:10.36] KATIE LARSON: I think it's all interesting, and I really—I'm fascinated by how perhaps your background in jewelry has maybe informed some of your artistic practice. So were you, in all this time, very actively still producing the jewelry or really taking on more of the business end of the—

[00:24:31.43] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No. I finished the jewelry, because I did produce a lot of jewelry until maybe 15 years ago. But parallel to that, I wanted to—I was very eager to know art. And I thought—I thought, I need to—I started going to museums.

[00:24:51.14] Because normally, in Lebanon, we didn't have, uh, history of art. We didn't know what art was. And of course contemporary art was not considered art in those days, 1970s—while in the West, there was so much—I mean, abstraction was on full track. For us, in Lebanon, abstraction was a problem.

[00:25:15.95] So I decided—how did it happen? On a Christmas, I tried to buy for my son—he was nine years old, so I'm talking 35 years ago. He was nine years old. And I bought for him all the tools of the painter—in order that he start painting—because I started, also, at the age of six, doing art. So I thought he would catch up, or he could be able to do it.

[00:25:45.92] But that same evening I was on top of it. So it was not his present. It was his present to me, not my present to him. And since then, I'm always with [laughs] this—of course, I developed many—many other disciplines in art, which was painting, but it became sculptures, and it became ceramic—drawing, of course, is very important. Although I created, also, always jewelry for my customers. At the same time I was very interested in art and going to museums all over the world.

[00:26:19.43] So after starting this first test on art, I started painting from my home. Then I started going to the Academy. I did 15 years of Académie des Beaux-Arts, in evening courses because I had to work, because I was a businessman. So I was traveling a lot, and at the same time I was able to make a deal with the teachers that if I don't come this week, I'll come two times next week or five times next week, because I had to travel also.

[00:26:54.05] And so this is how I developed the taste for art. And I painted all history of art through my painting, actually, because I studied the history of art, and I painted from the representation, to Impressionism, to Cubism, to Surrealism. And all this was along with my—and I kept all those periods of mine—until I jumped into abstraction.

[00:27:21.13] Abstraction for me was the big leap to change totally my convictions about art and to go into a different thing, which was the art of today, which was the art that questions much more than it tells.

[00:27:37.56] And so I started abstraction. And then, in abstractions—before abstraction, Turner and Monet were, let's say, my inspiration. Then—of course, all the history of art is important.

[00:27:55.41] In abstraction was Richter, Gerhard Richter, who was one of my mentors, Burri, and also Hantai. You mentioned, in your text, Hantai. Yes, Hantai is very important in my work also.

[00:28:13.92] Until I reached fire.

[00:28:15.48] So I did many disciplines, the *coulage*, the collage, the dripping, the—in the —*raclage*. Many, many disciplines in contemporary art. I needed to know what is happening, how an artist can do this, and how he can do that. And everything was interesting for me.

[00:28:36.33] So I don't know. This is not the traditional way of reaching your own writing, or your own image, or your own message, but I did do all history of art, in art—in painting and even sculpture or ceramic—until I arrived to fire.

[00:28:56.89] And fire is something I was with when I was young, because I did use a blowtorch to make rings. And so that blowtorch, I tried to use it on color to see how it how it turns—the yellow turns brown, and when it turns black, and when there is a hole. So this was fascinating, more and more, and starting to discover more and more through various tools in fire.

[00:29:21.74] And I was stuck, because I thought I would do fire six months and go to something else. But here I was stuck, and I couldn't move from there. And I'm there since 2010, so we are already 15 years later. And I'm really—something that is catching me and that I'm very happy to do.

[00:29:46.22] I dialogue well through fire; I control. It's about hazard, also, because—it's about control and hazard. And I try to tame fire. And I always say, Fire has chosen me to reveal it.

[00:30:04.20] KATIE LARSON: I love that.

[00:30:05.17] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: [Laughs.] Okay.

[00:30:09.70] KATIE LARSON: I'm curious, to go back just for a second—because we'll talk a lot about fire. I think that that's obviously a central part of your practice. But just to back up—so you went to the Académie des Beaux-Arts for 15 years.

[00:30:22.66] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Mm-hmm.

[00:30:22.96] KATIE LARSON: Was there any teacher or class in particular that really stood out to you or felt important in your development as an artist?

[00:30:33.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I started with painting, of course, and of course I used to carry my material. And I didn't pull a fork in my—my table at home, because the maid was taking it. But I was washing my brushes. And I was [laughs], I was putting all my installation on the Academy's—horrible, because they take your place the next day, so you have to pack everything. And the next day—the next week, or one day—you have to unfold.

[00:30:57.86] So unfolding the material is half an hour. Packing all the things is another half an hour. [Laughs.] So it's horrible. But at the same time, I did it. I

[00:31:07.69] KATIE LARSON: See a little bit of a pack horse situation there.

[00:31:10.11] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah, because you have to close the tubes. You have to—

[Laughs.]

[00:31:16.13] KATIE LARSON: Well, it makes you appreciate, I'm sure, the beautiful studio you have now in that space, in which you don't have to do that.

[00:31:21.35] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Maybe you see in the back what is my studio now.

[00:31:24.71] KATIE LARSON: It looks stunning. So you were working as a jeweler, conducting your business, and going—

[00:31:34.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I worked as a jeweler. And at the same time, in the evening, I was doing evening courses. And in the Academy you finish after seven years. And I did every discipline in the Academy, because I'm interested in everything. And I loved ceramic, I loved sculpture, and I loved this tactile thing in the ceramic, which I like, and the colors that—

[00:31:54.23] Also, it's about hazard. Because, you put the color, you don't know what comes out. And this is the beauty of it. And when you realize what comes out [laughs], most of the time you're satisfied, sometimes you're disappointed, also, because you don't expect it. [Laughs.]

[00:32:08.60] But anyway, art is always like that. Sometimes I burn, also, a canvas, and I destroy it.

[00:32:14.09] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. So the kiln has that same kind of experience of [laughs] not knowing exactly what's going to come out. And sometimes it's good. Sometimes—

[00:32:21.00] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And I work with an assistant—ceramist, who is a teacher—because I cannot handle the time of ceramics. Ceramic takes so much time to—temperature, wet, not wet, breaks, that breaks—so I let all this to my assistant, who is a teacher also. And I only come to the important moment: sculpting—designing first—conceiving, sculpting, and putting the color.

[00:32:50.07] But of course putting in the kiln, removing from there, it takes a lot of time. And many—many other things take too much time. Preparing the oxide, the—all the—enamels—preparing the enamels, the mixing: all this I don't do.

[00:33:05.84] Sometimes you buy it, but we prepare it here in my studio. So we buy all the ingredients and the chemicals, but we make it here.

[00:33:16.79] KATIE LARSON: No, I totally understand that, because it is a very complex, time-consuming process. Have you kept any of the work that you were making as a student?

[00:33:26.96] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Uh, yeah. Yes. At the Academy, yes. Unfortunately, when I was young, I think I threw away everything when I was starting my business, and we moved from Lebanon to here. And I saw all these papers piling up, piling up and never finishing. And I think, in one shot, I threw everything, because I never thought I would become an artist.

[00:33:49.79] I always thought, I'm a businessman and that's it. But then later on became—came gradually the drug of the art. The addiction to art, that came later. [Laughs.]

[00:34:04.43] KATIE LARSON: So when would you say you had your big breakthrough as an artist?

[00:34:09.35] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Breakthrough? I think there was—the real breakthrough was the Venice Biennale, because I was invited by the Armenian government to represent, and I'm Armenian. And at the same time I'm Lebanese and Belgian.

[00:34:25.42] And Belgians—I had to be either Flemish or French. And they have, every four years: two years, this; two years, that. So it was taking a long time. So I didn't apply for Belgium. I applied for Armenia, and I was selected. So this is—

[00:34:41.26] But one day, I don't disregard the fact that I might apply in Belgium and represent Belgium at the Venice Biennale.

[00:34:49.81] KATIE LARSON: Well, let's talk—I mean, that was a major exhibition of your

work in two different venues, curated by Bruno Corà, titled *Inextinguishable Flame*. So tell, yeah, tell us a little bit how that came about, because that seems like it was a really important—

[00:35:07.63] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:

[00:35:07.93] So it's about, first, the flame of my torch that doesn't end, because it's inextinguishable; I'm always with my blowtorch. But it's also my flame for art because I'm stuck with art, also; it's an addiction. It became a drug, And I need, really—it's a kind of—at the end it's become some kind of therapy, also, because the world is so—sometimes, black—and art brings you a different dimension. If you are a creator already, but if you are, also, visiting a museum or seeing beauty, it gives you another dimension to the world.

[00:35:43.63] So *Fiamma Inestinguibile* was—because my love for art, because of my blowtorch—but also because of the flame of the Armenian people that never ends. Because we are Armenians, and we are 3,000 years old. We have a language. We are as old as the Jews. Maybe older—because Jews talk of 2,000 years. But we have 3,000 years. And we have, even, food that is also—

[00:36:14.12] And we were very old, like Georgia. And we have wine production that goes back to 3[000], 4,000 years ago. Georgia is the oldest, apparently. 6,000 years B.C. [laughs], they started making wine.

[00:36:31.49] So the *Inextinguishable Flame*, the title came from these three points.

[00:36:39.52] Again, I showed all of what I had at that time, what I was doing, which was already quite a—quite a variety of, uh—families, I call them. Because I'm always in research. And in research, I always find. And when I find, I want to stand by it, and I want to make a body of work that stands before I go to the next find that I do. I always search.

[00:37:11.41] KATIE LARSON: So you see the different families or series that you're making as being interconnected, but also deeply embedded in distinct research projects?

[00:37:22.33] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, because I'm somebody who doesn't, uh—does not—is not satisfied if I find one thing and I do this all my life. I really like to make the declination of all what I find till an accident happens, or till another medium comes, or till—I try to be in transition until the next family appears.

[00:37:50.85] And the other day I saw a work being sold, at *Gazette Drouot*, in an auction, and—about Nicolas de Staël. And they said this is a transition work. And I thought, Oh, I have full of transition work between one period and another. So it's normal to be in transition. [Laughs.]

[00:38:10.65] KATIE LARSON: That means you're always evolving, right? [Laughs.]

[00:38:13.66] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, yes. [Laughs.]

[00:38:15.09] KATIE LARSON: So tell me a little bit more about—so did you apply to represent the Armenian Pavilion, or was that something that Bruno Corà suggested to you? How did that come about?

[00:38:25.90] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah. Of course, he suggested, because I could not apply to Belgium. As I—as I told you, I had to wait four years.

[00:38:38.87] But why did I go to the Venice Biennale? It's because I had an exhibition with Bruno Corà in Beirut months before Biennale. And in Beirut—he went to Tehran.

[00:38:54.20] At that time, Iran was a fantastic place, because it was the royal families and the glamour and all—you know, the magazines were all after the shah. And he was only emperor, actually. And he named himself emperor. Unfortunately, he didn't last.

[00:39:14.86] He went to Iran, and he had to do a conference at the gallery, where there was one big Iranian artist who that gallery had. And he, with the gallerist, he said he was in Beirut. She showed—she saw my catalog. And she said, Oh—she liked very much my work. So she came to Beirut, with him, back, because there was a conference, also for Bruno, on his way back in Beirut.

[00:39:41.33] So he came back, and she came with him. And she saw the exhibition. And she told me, Jean, I like your work. I would like to exhibit you. I said, Wow, what a—thank you—what great news. So I said, Okay.

[00:39:52.72] So the exhibition was meant to be the year later. And the year later—so I said, I'm coming to Iran, I want to indulge in the culture. Of course, I was a businessman going to Iran, but now I want to go and see the history, the ruins, and all that—and all the history, the museums—and take a guide, which I did.

[00:40:16.75] I take a guide. I took a guide, and I had a rendezvous with a—with this Afarin Neyssari. She was a—she's—one of them is American, the other is not. But they were put in jail later on. Like, I follow up with the story.

[00:40:32.16] I went to Iran, met her, met with a guide who took me all around Iran for six days. I was intensively learning about the country, but also seeing the art of the country and the history of the country.

[00:40:46.80] And then going to the museum, they gave me—actually, Wim Delvoye, who is a major Belgian artist, was the first—they opened the museum for him as the first foreign artist. Because, with the revolution, they didn't want any more foreign art. And the *shahbanu*, the wife of the shah, had collected a lot of top artists, all the big ones, from Warhol to de Kooning to Pollock and to all the French—Monet and all that.

[00:41:15.49] And they put that in a basement, and they never showed it. So I was able to see it because I went there, and because my wife is head of the foundation that we have. And she organized trips. And so this is why she was able to visit the basement.

[00:41:32.92] So anyway, I went to visit there, the museum. And I was so overwhelmed by this museum. And they gave me, nearly, a solo exhibition, nearly 45—75 percent of the space. And there was another artist. We will be two artists, separately.

[00:41:53.91] And I did work about—a dialogue with Bacon, because that work—I know they have a three-painting triptych of Bacon, which is of homosexuals in bed. And they put it, of course, in the basement. And luckily they didn't destroy it.

[00:42:10.87] So I thought we could suggest that they show it and I will bring my paintings in dialogue with Bacon in Iran. So I worked a lot on Iran, and I was in contact with my gallerist. And until she went—she said, I'm going to Italy for holiday. When are you back? In September. That was July.

[00:42:28.39] I said, Okay, come and visit me in Belgium. She said, If I can, I will come. I'll call you. And she never called until August. And I call in August. I'm starting to call—nobody answers, nobody answers.

[00:42:39.35] And in September—I was supposed to exhibit in November in Iran. In September—what happened? [Laughs.] In September I was in—with the—I was coming to exhibit. In September I realized they were in jail.

[00:43:01.82] Because somebody called me to tell me, Jean, you are calling all the time; what is it?

[00:43:05.52] I said, Yeah, I have an exhibition, and she's not answering. He said, We cannot speak; let me call you from another phone. And she called me to say she's in jail. Why? They don't know. They don't know.

[00:43:16.71] So I said, She's in jail.

[00:43:21.23] I called the director of the museum. He said, This is none of your business, but you're always welcome if you'd like to come. I said, No, I will not come. I cancelled my trip. So I cancelled my exhibition there, but I was so sad.

[00:43:35.34] And I was with Bruno Corà that day, when I canceled. He told me, Why don't you check if you can do the Venice Biennale? I said, but Venice Biennale is very soon. So he said, Do you know the director? I said, I know the director.

[00:43:55.29] So I called the director, and she told me, Don't say it, but it's about Biennale. I said, I'll see you for a meal. She came. And then, at the meal, I spoke to her. She said, But

for which year are you coming? I said, Now, for 2017, next year. She said, No, not 2017. Jean, you have to come for 2021 if you want to apply your work. Because, what are you, are you Flemish or are you French?

[00:44:17.79] I said, I'm originally Lebanese, but I have a Belgian passport, but I don't know if—I don't speak Flemish, but my wife is Flemish. Anyway. She said, No, it doesn't go. She said, It doesn't go like that; you have really to put your candidacy, and there are many artists who apply, and then the committee selects from whoever applies.

[00:44:39.63] So this is how—she asked me if I had another passport. I said, Yes, I have Lebanon, but we just subsidized a Lebanese artist. I supported him for \$25,000 to be in the Biennale instead of me.

[00:44:55.24] And I said, I cannot, again, appear.

[00:44:59.32] So she said, And what other passport do you have? I said, I have an Armenian passport. I have a Syrian passport, but I really don't want to apply for Syria, because, for me, I don't even want to be Syrian. So I forgot my Syrian story, and I never came back. And since I had to do military service in Syria, so I never came back.

[00:45:23.48] So I went—so I applied—I contacted the Ministry of Culture. And, yes, they have a stand. They have, actually, Armenia, they have an island in Venice. Maybe you know the San Lazzaro island. It was donated by a donor to the Armenian priest. And this island serves also to preserve the religion. But also in San Lazzaro island—if you go to Venice, worthwhile visiting—they have a small museum.

[00:45:50.48] And so, anyway, I contacted the Armenian, also, Ministry of Culture. And they invited me, and I went—with Bruno, I went—and explained my project. And of course they had some other artists by sel—they selected me.

[00:46:07.62] And there was another artist that I had to also support, and he came and was also present in an annex of the pavilion. But, anyway, I was able to represent Armenia this way.

[00:46:21.51] KATIE LARSON: Wow. And so you put together this exhibition very quickly then, in less than a year. But it was very large. 14—

[00:46:29.55] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But the work was already there. My work is behind me, not in front of me. But of course, I did some work in the few months before the Biennale. Like, now I have an exhibition in Monaco, at the Hotel Hermitage. This year I have 12 exhibitions, one in Monaco at Hotel Hermitage.

[00:46:49.15] And I have two to tell you—I'm working now, on the last minute, because we are just one month before. But every minute I have a new idea that I want to put forward. And of course, until we transport on the 12th of July, I think there will be new things that I will still do before I [laughs], before put them on the truck to go to Monaco.

[00:47:11.26] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. So just always creating, so lots of things to draw from.

[00:47:14.64] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And the exhibition is about the *1,001 Lives of Jean Boghossian*. There'll be a talk about how I came to art and how I arrived—and how I arrived to the many facets of art. So what you are asking me today is the kind of exercise to what I will have in a few [laughs], in a few weeks.

[00:47:36.61] KATIE LARSON: Good. Well, we'll have this as the practice run for the *1,001 Lives*. [Laughs.] That's wonderful.

[00:47:42.56] Well, so then Bruno Corà seems to have been someone very important for you in terms of creating exhibitions and collaborating with you. How did you meet Bruno Corà?

[00:47:55.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Bruno Corà. Actually, I was a friend with a gallerist who was at Tornabuoni. Maybe you know—

[00:48:03.52] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[00:48:03.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:—this gallery. One of the big galleries.

[00:48:05.82] And he came one time to my studio and—I invited him to my studio. And he looked at my art. He said, Jean, but you're really an artist. I said, Yes, if you say so. [Laughs.] I said, Why don't you exhibit me?

[00:48:22.69] He said, Jean, I have so many Italian artists; I'm only with Italians, and my father handles this, and I don't—it's difficult, you know, to take new artists now—and this and that.

[00:48:31.90] But I have somebody for you. Give me your catalogs.

[00:48:37.19] So I gave him three of my catalogs, and he took them to Italy. And it stayed a few months, I didn't have any answer, and then I called him back. I said, You took the catalog, what happened?

[00:48:49.12] Oh, I forgot to call him back. He gave it, but he didn't call him back. And Bruno doesn't call back.

[00:48:56.78] So he called him. And after two weeks he sent me a message that, Jean, we're coming to Basel, and he likes very much your work, and he would like to meet you and discuss with you.

[00:49:10.55] So I went to Basel; I was anyway going, and he was anyway going. So we went. And we had—and he had dinner, actually—he had a lot of commitments—but he gave me time after dinner, where we met, and we started talking. And it went until 2 o'clock—

[00:49:27.30] KATIE LARSON: Wow.

[00:49:27.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:—in the morning. And he was suspicious. He was curious: How can a businessman do this work? How can a businessman work in that? So he asked, asked, asked. I said, Okay, [laughs] this is me, I cannot change. And so we decided—

[00:49:48.29] This is how I met Bruno Corà. And this is how came the idea to exhibit in Iran—to—this is how came the idea that he comes to my studio, see my studio—this—

[00:49:58.92] When I met him, I had an exhibition in Beirut. And I told him, I would like you to be my curator, if you are interested. He said, Okay, I'll come to see your studio. And he came and saw my studio. He said the same thing as Michele.

[00:50:12.72] And so I said, Then let us—okay, come with me to Beirut. And from Beirut, came Iran. But Iran, I knew very well; it's just that I didn't have the connection with the art area.

[00:50:24.42] And so in Iran I was supposed to—but Iran, I stopped going since '79, since—while with Bruno it was 2015 that he came to Beirut—'14, actually. '14 was my exhibition. So that's it. What can I tell you more?

[00:50:45.10] KATIE LARSON: No, that's great. So let's talk about, then, this important process of burning. So when was the first time that you took the blowtorch and started using it in—

[00:50:55.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: As I told you, 2010. In 2010 I was in my experiment, because for me, as I tell you, life is not static and art is not static, and I need to go forward. I need to bring something new, even for myself.

[00:51:12.37] But—I need to discover. And when I discover something, as I told you, it becomes a body of work that I leave for the next thing I discover. Many things are in drawer, that I discovered but I have not taken out yet because I need time to make a body of work.

[00:51:31.51] And so, I don't know why, art is something that is *intarissable*: a never-ending story. Because—okay, some artists, they have their own thing. And Warhol was his—how you call his—the processor—uh, the—the machine that could print. It was the prints. Warhol was in the prints.

[00:51:58.74] KATIE LARSON: The screen printing. Right.

[00:52:00.18] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Screen printing. Okay, he had some paintings, but his most well-known was the screen printing. Anyway, so for me—and I did, even at the

Academy, I did screen printing. Except that I thought, I don't want to go into multiples—also the gravure, also the—

[00:52:19.68] Although I learned that. I thought I want to go in—maybe drawing or maybe work on paper or maybe—original works. I don't want the multiples. Okay, sometimes something is important, and I use it to—I print it on something to work on it, also, but very rare. It's my work is really on paint or on—various materials that I use with paint, also.

[00:52:45.74] Well, how came the blowtorch? It came because I was experimenting. And one day I was with this blowtorch to use for my chimney, to heat my chimney and—to heat my studio.

[00:52:59.35] And I thought, Let me see what I can do with the blowtorch on the yellow.

[00:53:04.35] And then I put—on the yellow paint, on the canvas—I start putting it on the yellow, and it became slightly brown. Then it becomes more brown. Then, if it's wet, it starts bubbling under the fire, under the blowtorch.

[00:53:21.82] Then it there's a hole happening. And the hole was interesting for me, because I was thinking, Wow, you can see through. And through the hole, you can you can discover something. And then I burned-in multiple holes, and then I went with—millions of holes. I don't know. [Laughs.]

[00:53:36.93] So anyway, this is how I started working in fire and from blowtorch to various instruments in fire. I ended up being stuck. And so I end up doing fire with paint, doing fire with other materials, with liquids, mixed media on fire, because—fire can come first, fire can come after, paint can come before.

[00:54:08.46] I try to mix many, many liquids to see what effect I can get and if this effect has a meaning. Because everything ultimately has to have a meaning for me first, to what to what I'm doing and to—justification to myself first.

[00:54:28.83] KATIE LARSON: Do you see the blowtorch as a replacement of a paintbrush, or is it a totally different process than painting?

[00:54:36.54] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: In one of my writings I said I would like to die with my blowtorch in hand. So [laughs], so the blowtorch is like a brush. [Laughs.] Exactly the same. [Laughs.]

[00:54:47.07] KATIE LARSON: Well, because it strikes me that so many of your works do feel very painterly.

[00:54:51.81] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah. I do. I do, still, because the brush is important for me. The paint is important. The one color on top of the other is important. The on-lay, the inlay—I mean, all this is important. But—yes, I think everything is—every discovery leads to a new body of work.

[00:55:16.21] KATIE LARSON: So you start working with a blowtorch, and you're kind of experimenting with it in relation to paint and pigment. When do you start thinking about the effects of the smoke on the canvas?

[00:55:33.37] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Um, much later. Later, but before the Venice Biennale. So it should be maybe in, uh—the blowtorch—say, later, maybe one year later, one or two years later.

[00:55:46.05] KATIE LARSON: And what draws you to that effect of the char or soot on the canvas?

[00:55:51.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Smoke is, uh—is, uh—poetic. Smoke is, uh—it has to do with the—smoke is in nature. Like fire is in nature. Like, you see also the clouds are a different kind of smoke. And smoke is covering without covering. Smoke is telling without telling. It's a kind of silent media, not very violent. But I like it because of its poetry.

[00:56:19.19] KATIE LARSON: And so if we're thinking about process, how does the process differ when you're trying to create smoke versus create a torch mark?

[00:56:29.16] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I create—I use various instruments to use fire, but also to

use smoke and to play with smoke and to create smoke. Smoke, you can create it with a fire, with wood that is burning. You can create it with a paper that is burning. But I have various ways of creating smoke, which I use on on the painting or on what you see.

[00:57:00.38] And the Hantai influence, also, you see in the smoke. But Hantai is—I love his paintings also. But I think I would have done it even if Hantai didn't exist. I think, in my process of experimenting so much, I would have found it without finding—without seeing Hantai's painting. But I tried—

[00:57:25.78] You know Steven Parrino, for instance?

[00:57:27.52] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm.

[00:57:28.68] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: He is also pleating, no?

[00:57:30.49] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm.

[00:57:31.06] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But not Pareno: Parrino.

[00:57:33.19] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. I think that's right. Yeah.

[00:57:35.46] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: He's in pleats, also.

[00:57:36.83] KATIE LARSON: Right.

[00:57:37.42] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I started pleating without knowing he existed, because I was still experimenting through the history of art. And of course, I realized that there was somebody who has done the pleats also.

[00:57:48.50] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm. Well, there are so many moments of—

[00:57:53.38] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Dadaism. The Dadaists also have done pleats a lot. Kurt Schwitters's paper—the pleats—I mean, yeah. The history of art helped me a lot to understand and to learn and to look and to see what I can do with what I know and with what I see. And how can this influence bring me to something new?

[00:58:21.83] I always tend to be in something new. I don't know if you have seen a little bit of my paintings, you will find that it's some—even the books that I call *Phoenix*—maybe you have seen those—that are burned books, but I call them saved books because, for me, they are not burned. I preserve the knowledge inside, because books are losing their importance today to the video and the televisions and to all the media.

[00:58:57.66] And rarely people take a book and read. I still take a book and read. And I still have a pencil in my book, because I underline and I write in the book that I'm reading, and so on and so forth. Yeah, unfortunately, books are not anymore the way you learn. It's unfortunate, but I love books. I love them as a media. I love them.

[00:59:21.91] I love the book that burns quicker than others, because the new paper disintegrates and you don't have the ashes. But like the ashes to stay, and I like it to be part of the work, the ashes.

[00:59:36.00] KATIE LARSON: No. It's a very evocative series, and it draws up so many moments in history that are both very dark and poignant. But also, I think your meditation on the act of reading today is really apt.

[00:59:49.95] But when you're picking the books to burn, are you very purposely picking books that you relate to, or do you want them at all to be recognizable? What is the relationship with the act of using a specific found object there?

[01:00:06.56] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: The books actually, of course, I use books that I buy in the flea market that I check well that I don't want to keep them. Because if I want to keep them, I don't burn them. Sometimes it's a dictionary. Sometimes it's an old medical dictionary that's no more valid. Sometimes it's a dictionary between languages that I don't need, because it's between Korean and Japanese, so I use it.

[01:00:33.43] So it's mostly these books. Otherwise, if—I mean, on the books I buy, I don't think there's one percent that I burn, because I have tons of books that are here and that

are—

[01:00:50.78] KATIE LARSON:—important. Good, wonderful. And so do you view those objects more as sculptural objects? Because they do have this wonderful three-dimensionality when you finish them. Or do you still view them as book-arts objects?

[01:01:06.06] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I use them as three-dimensional objects. I put them on a table, but also I hang them on the wall, so they become sculpture.

[01:01:14.46] And lately we have an exhibition where we have put a book on the wall. And it was so out of line because—actually, today's art is changing the—it's like the Surrealists, changing the function of an object to give it another meaning or another dimension. So the book that's supposed to be on the table is now on a wall also.

[01:01:43.23] KATIE LARSON: No, I love this idea of taking an object and giving it new life, making someone think about it in a new way.

[01:01:50.97] I wonder also, in relation to the surrealists, if when you're burning, do you see that as a kind of chance process? Are you willing to let the fire take over, or does it feel like you're still very much in control when you're using fire?

[01:02:08.20] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It's both. It's both. I let him do until I control. And sometime I control, and he surprises me, and I am stuck, or the piece is destroyed. Because I did burn, one time, one painting that I had to throw from the window of the balcony of my studio. Otherwise, I was burning the whole studio.

[01:02:30.22] KATIE LARSON: So you walk a fine line between destruction and creation here.

[01:02:33.80] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: [Laughs.] A risky business. Fire is a risky business. [Laughs.]

[01:02:39.25] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. Another series that I find to be really evocative, speaking of the books, is the series of—kind of poems or books of writing in which you are imitating the look of text, but it's in fact these burned or charred marks.

[01:02:57.22] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes. I call them—

[01:02:57.68] KATIE LARSON: Could you talk a little bit about those?

[01:02:58.26] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I call them abstract writing. Because I was invited to exhibit in Dubai. And the theme of that exhibition, which I was with this series of work, was *Unpredictable Horizons*. Because the line of the writing looked like a horizon. And you don't know what it says, but you can imagine, uh, whatever you want—good things, bad things. So it was a successful exhibition I had in Dubai, in a gallery. And I liked very much this work.

[01:03:30.79] Again, it's always a moment that brings a body of work. Sometimes it's the technique that helps the body of work. Sometimes I don't know if, three years later, five years later, I end up with an old work or an old technique, saying to myself, Oh, but this, I should do this with that, to mix this with that, to be able to obtain that. That has a meaning for me. And I do it.

[01:03:58.76] KATIE LARSON: Do you have an example of a recent series where that happened?

[01:04:02.23] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It happens all the time. But not an exact, precise example. But I think I explained you—like the abstract writing I presented in Dubai: I have recent works again, because I realized that I can do, with this burned—way of burning, a better way of arriving to my work.

[01:04:21.40] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. And when someone looks at a work like that, where you have this abstract or asemic writing, are you comfortable with the idea that a viewer is projecting their own idea of what that writing might encompass or mean? Is that freedom of interpretation something that you want to facilitate?

[01:04:42.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, I would like the viewer to see whatever he wants. Because I may present a tree, and he might see, all of a sudden, uh, smoke or a cloud. Or I

may represent the smoke, and he might see a tree—and why not?

[01:05:00.13] No, the idea is the dialogue between the artist and the viewer, and not necessarily the same vision on the same—of the same painting.

[01:05:11.79] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful.

[01:05:12.32] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Not the same vision of the same painting.

[01:05:13.56] KATIE LARSON: So it's almost a collaborative creative experience.

[01:05:16.27] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: That impressed me a lot, when I was in MoMa, when I was young—28, 30 years, and I was visiting MoMA—and there was this American guy with his shorts and *baskets* [basketball shoes -Ed]—at that time, Europe was not too much into that.

[01:05:33.07] But he was with his child—and he was three, four years old; he hardly could say Daddy and Mommy. But he was telling him, This is Malevich. And the child repeated, Malevich.

[01:05:46.15] And then he passed in front, and I'm looking from the back like this, and I'm thinking, Is he teaching him Malevich?

[01:05:52.12] And he goes to the next painting. And the son says, Malevich, in his broken words. And he says, No, this is Makovsky. Ah, I say, he's teaching him Makovsky. [Laughs.] I don't even know who is Malevich and who's Mayakovsky [laughs]—this young boy is already learning! I have to do something about it. [Laughs.] So this is how it goes.

[01:06:16.67] KATIE LARSON: I love that. We all have our own ways of learning, right?

[01:06:21.61] So, visiting museums, you talk a little bit about Hantai and the *pliage* as being something that you were really interested in and transforming that and creating it into a new form of expression in your own folded paintings.

[01:06:41.68] Are there other artists that you think, Oh, it was really important for me to see their work in order to be inspired or to think more deeply about what I'm doing?

[01:06:52.09] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Of course, Burri is a giant in art. Not many—not many artists—Parmiggiani is in art. Kounellis has done some. Apparently, Miró has painted—has burned. And Klein. Yves Klein and Miró. Klein has gone to the fire station. Those are the first ones who burned.

[01:07:12.86] Of course, Jérôme Bosch [Hieronymus Bosch -Ed] has represented fires, but this is 15th century. And at that time, houses were in wood, and they were burning, and—the artist of that period had to have an event and could paint on that.

[01:07:28.49] So fire, yes. Not many artists stick with fire. Not many artists—because of the toxic thing, because you have to wear a mask. Because of the *aléatoire*, of the no-control. Because of the risk. Because of many things. Not many people have decided to go with fire.

[01:07:51.77] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, it's very difficult. I mean, it's a really, um, temperamental process.

[01:07:58.10] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Otto Piene, alike, is a good artist of fire also, the German artist. There are many. I think Kounellis, as I told you, also—metal. Yeah.

[01:08:08.54] But even, for me, ceramic is something that had to do with fire because it changes, it transforms. I think the important thing about fire is: it transforms my painting. It transforms the color, the tonality of the color. And it creates a texture, it creates holes, it creates—

[01:08:29.13] It's dangerous. But it's an asset to deal with and to tame and to control and to let it express what I have to express, what I want to express.

[01:08:45.06] KATIE LARSON: It also seems like the intersection between Eastern and Western cultures is something that you're interested in. Would you talk a little bit more about that?

[01:08:54.26] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes. I don't know if there is in the Far East—there must be some—there is some artists, yes, who burn. I forgot the name. Yes, there is Wang Keping. There is—they burn wood. There is the other guy who burn—Lee Bae. Maybe you know Lee Bae. He charred—like carbon. And he makes sculptures with that, or compilations.

[01:09:24.50] East and West, yes, it's part of my life, because I come from the East. And I discovered the Far East when I was a buyer of precious stones.

[01:09:33.36] Stones, by the way, come from the volcano. So this is why I use them in my ceramic. And actually it's a challenge for me to reproduce in the oven, in the kiln, stones made by man and mix them with the stones, real stones.

[01:09:49.37] So ceramic stones and volcano stones, sometimes they are so similar, but sometimes are so different; because man cannot copy nature. And I believe nature is still the biggest artist in the world. This present that we have is the world, the planet, the cosmos, and this is the biggest artist. So man can be humble and can say, I'm doing my best.
[Laughs.]

[01:10:15.46] KATIE LARSON: Well, you have a beautiful series entitled Cosmos. Is that in some way an homage to this kind of—

[01:10:22.12] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Also, of course. Because everything is an inspiration. And then everything—the title comes, sometime before and sometime after. Sometime after I do things, I say, Ah, it looks like Cosmos.

[01:10:34.21] And sometimes I think about it—I have a lot of intuition, actually, that this will be good—afterward comes the meaning. And sometimes the meaning comes before, because it's a decision to do this with that to obtain that. So it's really a give-and-take between the decision I want and the hazard that I discover.

[01:10:59.28] KATIE LARSON: Sure.

[01:11:00.14] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And one brings the other.

[01:11:02.28] KATIE LARSON: Sure. Well those, I really love that series in particular. It's very evocative.

[01:11:07.53] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah.

[01:11:07.74] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:11:08.77] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah.

[01:11:09.38] KATIE LARSON: Another series that is really interesting are your steles, which have kind of imaginative glyphs and also have this kind of evocation of written language.

[01:11:25.70] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: The abstract writing that we just spoke about.

[01:11:28.35] But stela—which stela, Lisa? *Que c'est quoi*—

[01:11:31.19] KATIE LARSON: They're the polystyrene canvases that are kind of—

[01:11:34.03] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Ah, stelae. Yeah, these ruins actually were presented—were the ruins I wanted to present in Iran that I could never present. And now they will be presented in Belgium with another artist who works metal. And as I don't have time to work—I did some work with him beforehand. But I'm working on some exhibitions. I have 12 exhibitions.

[01:11:56.36] So I did the work on the polystyrene, and he's going to do the work on the metal. We decided together on how to do it and the colors of the metal and all that. But we're going to work at four hands.

[01:12:09.92] So you'll see it exhibited in a major place in Belgium. It's an old abbey. Abbey is an old church, monastery and all that. Beautiful. Lisa will send you a photo of that monastery. You can discover what it is. *Abbaye de—comment elle s'appelle?*

[01:12:28.80] LISA DE BOECK: Villers-la-Ville.

[01:12:30.19] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Villers-la-Ville. Anyway, she will send you. Very well known. And there will be 20 artists. One of them will be me. And Gilles. And that is the polystyrene. That is present in the ruins that—the Iranian ruins that are no more in Iran. They are here with the dialogue with the ruins of the cathedral.

[01:12:51.16] But polystyrene is also one medium that I like, although I don't like plastics. But sometimes I burn it in order to destroy it somehow, and it gives me some result in art.

[01:13:06.61] Polystyrene is something that I made a very important work in Venice that was also about language. And it's one of the—it was a work with 11 meters by seven. And it was in the main room of the Armenian Pavilion, which is in the—not in the Isola this time. It's Palazzo Zenobio, it's called. Did you come to Venice or never?

[01:13:30.32] KATIE LARSON: No, I've been. Yes.

[01:13:31.96] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: You've been. You've been to the Venice Biennale?

[01:13:33.38] KATIE LARSON: Yes. Yep. It's amazing.

[01:13:35.93] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Which year?

[01:13:37.60] KATIE LARSON: Uh, I was there in 2022, 2021, and 2019.

[01:13:45.02] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: After COVID.

[01:13:46.29] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. Yeah.

[01:13:47.90] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah. This year I'm going to go. I didn't go at the opening. Last year I presented a work in Venice that I was invited by the Compagnia della Vela. And it's a work that's called *Melencolia Contemporanea*.

[01:14:01.73] This work is about my melancholy. *Melencolia* is about Dürer. And actually, Dürer is—1452, I think he made this engraving. And he's well known for *Melencolia I*.

[01:14:17.15] I called it *Melencolia Contemporanea*. And my melancholy is the same volume, but on the top of the building, that was visible by one million people on—the ferry—the vaporetto and all that. Everybody sees it, because in top—you know where is Harry's Bar?

[01:14:36.35] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:14:37.25] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It's on the Grand Canal. So it's just on the—you can see from my—my—work, the Piazza San Marco. And it's just behind this piazza. It's on the—Piazza San Marco in the back, and I'm on the canal just this side. I'm on the canal.

[01:14:57.55] KATIE LARSON: Wow.

[01:14:58.09] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So it was a top space, and I was invited to exhibit there. Okay, it was not in the Biennale, but it was this organization—because I'm a member of the yacht club in Monaco also. And I exhibited also in the yacht club in Palermo, because I had an exhibition lately in Palermo, last year.

[01:15:20.12] And I was in five places—two museums, one church, one library of 16th century. And my books were lying there with their books that—I don't know which is older. [Laughs.] Their books are 14th, 18th century, I don't know what. From Gutenberg. And anyway, I—

[01:15:42.07] And I was also in one important hotel, Villa Igiea, in Palermo. Do you know Palermo?

[01:15:47.59] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm. Yes.

[01:15:48.70] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So I was in—in Palermo. Villa Igiea—

[01:15:51.57] KATIE LARSON: So—

[01:15:52.24] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah.

[01:15:52.92] KATIE LARSON: Why this idea of *Melencolia*? What was appealing to you about

that? What struck you about that?

[01:15:59.77] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Because Dürer I studied it at the—I studied him at the Academy. It was in my mind.

[01:16:04.25] And I discussed with Bruno, who was also my curator in this project.

[01:16:08.56] And we elaborated together the concept. But of course, it was—it was one facet that was painted with three cities—Beirut, Aleppo, and Yerevan. Aleppo is where I'm born, Beirut where I grew up, and Yerevan is the genocide—land of the genocide, actually.

[01:16:26.81] And these three are my melancholy because I have—our people have only known wars after wars after wars. The worst of all was the civil war. And so I printed—I burned one facet of the *Melencolia*; so it was war. And I wrote "Aleppo"—in words of fire—uh, smoke—"Aleppo," "Beirut," and "Yerevan."

[01:16:54.03] The other facets were representing the world, because I made them into mirrors. And so they reflected all Venice—so it means all the world—except one facet that reflected my melancholy, which was—that didn't reflect, because it was opaque. All the others were transparent.

[01:17:15.41] KATIE LARSON: And Venice being such a crossroads for East and West makes it all the more meaningful. Sounds like it was a really impactful installation.

[01:17:25.73] So another really kind of fascinating exhibition you took part in was *Cease Fire!* and *Double World* at the United Nations Office.

[01:17:40.30] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah.

[01:17:41.17] KATIE LARSON: I mean, maybe you could start by talking about *Double World*, because that sounds like it was a really interesting kind of collaborative group exhibition.

[01:17:49.84] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Where was *Double World*?

[01:17:51.58] KATIE LARSON: So that was the one where—or that's the work you made for the United Nations where they offered you a piece of wood and you transformed it.

[01:18:00.13] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Ah yes, *Double Monde*. Okay. This was in the Reichstag, actually. This I was asked by a curator from Germany—because they had they had some wood, and they cut 40 piec—80 artists, I think, are in this exhibition. And all the big ones are there, from Anish Kapoor to—I mean, Sean Scully, Tony Cragg—all the artists are there.

[01:18:27.24] And—they gave a piece of wood to each artist. And I took it, and I had two, three months to make the work and send it to the Reichstag. It was exhibited in the Reichstag at the—

[01:18:44.31] Actually—1919 was the *traité de Versailles*, or the *traité de* something, where they made peace with Germany.

[01:18:57.42] So it was the 100 years of the peace of the First World War that they're commemorating. And of course, Schäuble was there, the president. And what was her name, the lady who was the prime minister in Germany?

[01:19:19.86] KATIE LARSON: Oh—

[01:19:20.31] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Merkel.

[01:19:20.79] KATIE LARSON: Angela Merkel.

[01:19:22.02] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: She was there also. She was there for 10, 20 years. Anyway, she was there at this exhibition.

[01:19:27.49] And so I did—I did—I was thinking what to do with this wood. I made a design, like a diamond facet, but I needed to cut one facet down in the wood, but the other facet, I had to cut it in another way to make it [joins hands] embody.

[01:19:48.48] So it became a double world that I could split [separates hands]. And when

they are split a little bit, they are aggressive and they are, like, [holds hands apart] pointing at each other, they're going to shoot.

[01:19:59.07] When they are closer [draws hands closer], they are starting to hold each other. And when they are [joins hands] tied together, they are one world.

[01:20:06.30] And so when you put it back to back, they are—they are—indifferent. When they are side by side, they are friends. So it's all these significations that you can have by the two faces of my *Double World*.

[01:20:22.26] And of course, I presented it there. We presented it again in Belgium in our foundation—this whole exhibition. And that's the meaning of this exhibition, which I think was a strong statement.

[01:20:40.65] KATIE LARSON: Do you have a way that you prefer for it to be shown, or do you leave that up to the curator?

[01:20:45.87] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Now, that's still with them, because they have shown it other places. But I asked for my work, and they decided to send it, because they stopped showing the whole exhibition. So I will take back my work.

[01:20:57.75] And the other—

[01:20:58.83] [Speaking to Lisa:] By the way, remind me that you have to get in touch with him to get me my work back because—the curator.

[01:21:08.67] And the rest is—the other work that you asked me about, the other exhibition, was a—

[01:21:17.31] KATIE LARSON:—*Cease Fire!*, which was at the United Nations Office. And that was also one curated by Corá, right?

[01:21:22.90] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:

[01:21:23.26] Yeah, also Corá.

[01:21:24.18] Corá is following me. And we are really good friends—because he's somebody that you cannot even call, because—you have to call 20 times because he never answers.

[01:21:34.02] But at the same time, we built up a friendship. And he likes my personality, and also my work, and the fact that I'm open to the world and to the art of fire. And he is in the—fully in the art of fire.

[01:21:48.87] And so he—I called him, one day.

[01:21:52.65] I met an ambassador who heard that I was an artist. And he said, We're planning to do in the United Nations some art functions, because it brings an added value, and it's not only politics and not only conferences, and would you participate?

[01:22:08.94] I said, Yes, and I have good news for you, that I have already a title. He said, What? I said *Cease Fire!* But how? I said, I work with fire, and I'm going to show my work. You work with fire?

[01:22:23.67] But the title of the exhibition and the meaning of the exhibition would be *Cease Fire!*

[01:22:27.84] And so I presented one major work of 10 meters, where there was canvases with a hole: the bigger, and smaller, smaller, smaller, smaller, on 10 meters. You had 10 canvases. It's like the bullet hole that becomes smaller and smaller. But for me, I made it really big to be able to enter into the canvas, and I called it *Entrée dans la toile*: entering in the canvas.

[01:22:54.45] But actually, it's burnt. It's even blown up or burned to represent this horror of war, and at the same time, what you can do with fire. Because my message is, You can not only shoot with fire or kill, you can also create beauty with fire. And this is what I try to do.

[01:23:17.82] KATIE LARSON: I do love—I mean, you've spoken about how your artistic

process is something that is profoundly personal. But, you know, it seems like, with these exhibitions, you do have this kind of broader political or social message that you're trying to communicate with your art. Do you think that's a fair evaluation of your process and your practice?

[01:23:42.01] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I think my art, my art process, is purely art. But of course, fire comes from my subconscious, comes from the wars I have witnessed, comes from my readings, from—from the beauty of fire.

[01:23:56.95] Because I used to sit in front of the fire and spend an hour looking at this crackling and looking at this fire. And it was fascinating for me.

[01:24:09.15] And we used to go to ski in Lebanon. We had a chalet. And of course, we light up the wood, and we sit in front of the wood. And this is, of course, when we were young and later.

[01:24:19.62] Fire has always been with me; in a negative way, but also in a positive way.

[01:24:26.70]—So put me back on the track.

[01:24:29.40] KATIE LARSON: That's perfect. That's great.

[01:24:30.85] [They laugh.]

[01:24:33.27] And so recently you were saying that you have started—that you do a lot with these kind of auto clubs, and you've recently started working with kind of found automobile parts. Is that right?

[01:24:47.92] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, I had—I was invited to exhibit for Bentley. They had customized two Bentleys, which they took from my paintings.

[01:24:58.36] I have bought one car, that became my art car, that I made my collage on the car, and my burning on the car. And it's just—because it's not working anymore—it was a kind of *carcasse*. But it's a Studebaker.

[01:25:13.09] And the year was 1934, which, I love the Art Deco period. And it was a kind of Al Capone car, which now is a car that is static in my garage. It doesn't move. But I would love to show it somewhere, but I didn't yet think where and how to show it. Because, if I have 12 exhibitions, I'm really giving my time to these exhibitions one after the other.

[01:25:39.59] And of course, another part was Ferrari that I'm exhibiting now in Monaco, because I am friends with the pilot of Ferrari and the president of the Ferrari Club—somewhere in Italy, maybe Torino or something like that. And he gave me some pieces of work that I'm going to give him instead of a painting. And he said—he payed pieces of Ferrari to ask me to do some—Do what you want with it. So I said, Wow. So I did really—worked also on them.

[01:26:11.48] And now I'm exhibiting in Monaco these cars. Monaco, they love—you know, they have a big collection. The Prince of Monaco has a big collection of cars, and he loves antique cars as much as there is the Grand Prix in Monaco. And there is a lot of—you know Monaco?

[01:26:27.58] KATIE LARSON: I've never been, but I know that there is a very important car culture there. [Laughs.]

[01:26:33.60] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: You know that your American princess was the wife of Prince Rainier.

[01:26:40.26] KATIE LARSON: Grace Kelly, yes. [Laughs.] And so what are you—in what way are you transforming these car parts? Is it a collage that you're putting on top of them?

[01:26:53.85] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I'm not destroying them, because I'm not in the hard metal. I don't—I can't—I don't have all the—I really need a studio for that. But I think I will—so I'm trying just to use them as a medium to put my work on, instead of destroying them, crashing them, because it needs big tools to make a torsion of metal and all that.

[01:27:24.94] I work on torsion, but smaller, not that big metal. And ceramic, I work with

metals now. I'm buying some antique works that are not usable, but I use them in my ceramic to give them another life. And sometimes they are not only—they look like weapons, but actually they are not. There are oysters. There are some antique pieces. There are some fossils. Everything I see is a way to think what I can do with it and how I can do art with it.

[01:28:04.25] KATIE LARSON: And so you are kind of using these antique found objects and kind of wrapping the ceramic around them and incorporating them into a sculpture?

[01:28:14.33] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Like, I buy an antique Lorestan, eighth century BC—a piece of a sword. And then I make the sword the way I imagine it—it becomes a big sword, it becomes a small, it becomes—and I play with this.

[01:28:31.16] And I play also with stones that I don't use anymore. As I told you, I produce some stones in my kiln. But at the same time, I have stones that I don't use anymore in jewelry—because I stopped totally jewelry—and now I use them in ceramic, and I put them on my ceramic.

[01:28:49.45] Of course, it's much less work than to make the jewelry. Jewelry needs a setting. It needs a lot of precision. While in art I'm more free to do what I want, and to think, it goes well here and I think it should be here.

[01:29:09.03] KATIE LARSON: I love that you're kind of incorporating this other facet of your life into—

[01:29:13.64] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: My previous life is incorporated in my ceramic, for instance. Even, I did two paintings in 2015, when I exhibited in Beirut, with holes, burn holes, that—I had a font in the back—some stones were real, some were made by me. But the real stones sometimes were on top, and sometimes the man-made stones were on top.

[01:29:39.66] And sometimes, in the holes there was real stones or man-made stones. And the viewer can just ask himself, Which is the real one, which is the fake one? And nine out of ten, he can be wrong, [laughs] because the real stone and the fake stone is the same thing.

[01:30:00.99] Except I don't polish stone. I just put them in the oven, get them out. And I don't polish my own stones, because that's another business. Polishing is in jewelry, and I'm more now in art, and—

[01:30:16.38] Of course, I want to develop my ceramic part in art.

[01:30:18.99] I want to print a book on my ceramic, because I produced quite a lot. I produced quite a lot. I don't know if Lisa posted something on my site. You can see something maybe.

[01:30:31.68] KATIE LARSON: There are some of them, and they look really fascinating. And I really like that you're thinking about—and it's also interesting to think about the ceramic, the clay is this mineral thing from the Earth that you're manipulating, but then you're also thinking about its own kind of personal history with the gemstones. It's really evocative.

[01:30:50.25] You've also—you've touched on this a little bit—but have been creating these large-scale installations. What's appealing to you about a large-scale, immersive installation?

[01:31:02.25] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: You mean of the big—the Venice Biennale, or you mean the cars also, or what?

[01:31:07.80] KATIE LARSON: I mean all of them, just kind of that specific genre.

[01:31:11.53] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, monumental is my cup of tea. When I first started exhibiting, my gallerist told me, Why are you doing so big painting? People don't have walls. I said, Exactly for that: I don't want them to have walls. I want to keep it for myself. Are you crazy? I want to make money. How can I make money if you want to keep it for—nobody has walls for your paintings! [Laughs.]

[01:31:35.61] But this I learned in America. When I was not an artist and nothing, I went one time to a museum with somebody, Pousette-Dart. I don't know his first name.

[01:31:47.69] KATIE LARSON: Richard Pousette-Dart. Yep.

[01:31:49.31] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And his wife also is an artist, I think. I went to that exhibition. Every painting, 10 meters, 5 meters. And I thought, How, why they make it so big? There is no space in this museum to handle more than so many. Anyway, it was a shock for me.

[01:32:10.85] Later on, when I started painting myself, I saw myself gradually going to bigger and bigger and bigger. And that's when my gallerist, the first exhibition of my gallerist, he told me. And it was not so big; it was two by two, or one and a half by two meters. I tell him, But I don't care if it doesn't sell. I want to keep it for myself. So this was the argument.

[01:32:35.69] KATIE LARSON: Are you planning on creating a space for your art for the public, at some point? I mean, we should talk about it at some point, your Boghossian Foundation.

[01:32:49.91] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: In the second session when we speak again, because that's another whole story again.

[01:32:54.22] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:32:54.53] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But let's talk about art, and maybe next time I'll tell you all about the foundation.

[01:33:00.23] KATIE LARSON: Excellent.

[01:33:01.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But if you want to ask me more about art, go ahead, so we can—because they are intertwined, of course. Interconnected. Because for me art is the answer. Although art is the question for everyone, for me art is the answer. And when I met Mark Bradford, I asked him, All artists say art is the question, but I say art is the answer. What do you say? He said, Art is a conversation. It's a good way to get out of it. [Laughs.]

[01:33:28.35] KATIE LARSON: I love that. Well, and you guys, the two of you share some really kind of interesting points of contact with your abstractions.

[01:33:35.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Plus, we are both in fire, because he burns oak.

[01:33:38.26] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:33:39.01] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And Anselm Kiefer also is—I think my work is getting—[sighs] they are too big. I mean, they are very important artists. I'm not yet in that level. But I'm working hard, and—who knows.

[01:33:55.79] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. Well, I love this kind of feeling of almost the sedimentary layers that your art evokes. And I feel like, Mark Bradford—we also find that also with Anselm Kiefer a little bit. They're very tactile and very, very evocative. And what really strikes me is that your works are all really beautiful. Like, you're really thinking about your work from a design perspective.

[01:34:20.58] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Interesting what you're saying, although smoke is really flat. So smoke, if you have the pleats, it goes inside. But it goes inside in a fantastic way that it's also a painting. The way it goes in that, you think there is somebody who put a brush. And it's actually—it's the smoke itself.

[01:34:40.92] So smoke is flat, but I love it. And I—I don't like to say I love it, because I'm never satisfied. I always want to do better. But I love the effect of smoke.

[01:34:54.55] And what I—I don't know. Have you seen, now that you saw—you know, have you seen somebody who has used smoke in my way, for instance? Or who—can you tell me whom you have seen, who—in smoke? There is—

[01:35:12.16] KATIE LARSON: Not on the same scale. Right, so Alberto Burri, I think, is doing something very different.

[01:35:16.96] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah,

[01:35:17.50] Burri is in the—is in plastics also.

[01:35:19.22] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:35:19.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But, uh, in smoke, I think—this is why I say art has—smoke has chosen me to reveal him—him: not it, because he's a person [laughs]—because I think I am a good ambassador to him.

[01:35:36.59] [Laughs.]

[01:35:38.86] KATIE LARSON: I like that. [Laughs.] I guess the only other thing I'm—or not the only other thing—but another thing I'm interested in is just talking a little bit about your studio. You have established what looks like a really impressive studio space. And you work with a number of studio assistants. Would you talk a little bit about when you first kind of established the studio and what the process is like, working with your assistants?

[01:36:06.51] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: My first studio was in my basement. Because when I took the brushes and paints off my son, I went to my basement. So I was painting in my basement. And just painting the house. Painting, just painting. I took a postcard, painted this.

[01:36:21.38] And then I started going out—like Monet carries his *chevalet*. I started going to my garden. But establishing the *chevalet* and all that took another 20 minutes—to put the paints, the brushes. All of a sudden it rains. [Laughs.] So you have to bring everything back. So I decided [laughs], I'm not Monet and Matisse, I'm not going to sit outside, paint under the rain.

[01:36:45.71] But I painted some. I did some paintings outside before I decided that it's not for me. Because I cannot all of a sudden be disturbed by something and stop my inspiration, stop my work.

[01:36:58.59] So first studio was my basement. Second studio was my guest room. It turned into a studio, so no more guests sleeping in our house. [Laughs.]

[01:37:11.51] Third studio, when my ex-wife wanted to use the studio for—for friends and all that, family—I started going out. Because: going out, where?

[01:37:26.12] To courses.

[01:37:28.46] There was a lady who came, whom I met. She was an artist, an old lady. I was young at that time. And I told her—we spoke about art—and told her, I want you to come and see my work.

[01:37:40.26] And she came. She saw where I paint, and my paintings hanging all around in the—and she said, This is not a place to paint. I have about 10 businessmen like you who come—it's on Tuesday and Friday—bring your things and come.

[01:37:58.87] So again: pack everything, bring your things and come, and open everything. So this is another one, two hours till you start painting, and another one, two hours till you pack and go back, because I want to paint at home.

[01:38:10.78] It was a good experience, but the first thing she put was a banana and an apple on the plate. And we are 10 people standing. Nobody is sitting, because painting is an active thing. You cannot sit—then, you sleep. If you paint, you must be standing. And I'm always moving from place to place. I never sit.

[01:38:32.09] She put this banana and apple. I said, you're joking. You want us to paint this? Yes: it is not about what you see, it is about how you see it and how you present it on a canvas.

[01:38:47.93] And this is the first lesson in painting I had. It's not about what you paint, it's how you see it. [Laughs.]

[01:38:54.80] Anyway, after that was the Académie des Beaux-Arts, which was one year later. And Académie des Beaux-Arts was a fantastic experience again, because I learned everything in the Académie, building relation with the teachers but also with people who are—I used to buy from the artists, because they needed to pay a sandwich. So I was buying a lot of—[laughs], a lot of paintings. I have them here.

[01:39:21.77] KATIE LARSON: And then so you finally said, Okay, I need to have my own studio, my dedicated studio space?

[01:39:27.28] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No; after the Académie, let me tell you where I moved. Ah, where I moved. Yeah. We have a house, out of Brussels, that has a stable that we used to use for horses. That was my first studio, because we bought the house but never used the horse—never had horses.

[01:39:47.16] And so I went into those stables, and I started painting from there. That was my first studio—that I started—it started at the same time with abstraction. At the same time. Because I painted everything, before, at home.

[01:40:06.56] And what I painted at home—although I was going to the Académie, I painted also at home. But at home I painted things I liked to paint, while at the Académie I had to paint what is presented—*modèle vivant*, this, that. Sometimes in five minutes, you had to sketch a paint with—an oil painting—and make it in five minutes. And this was something very strong, very interesting.

[01:40:29.97] So my first studio was in that house, till my wife put me out of the house and I went to the hotel. And in the hotel, there we had another—I had an apartment in the hotel. And that apartment—next to my apartment was a free apartment. So I rented it, and I made it my studio. So this was a studio when I'm in the city. And the studio when I'm out of Brussels, I could paint longer in that space, out of Brussels. So this is the second studio.

[01:41:05.07] Then I moved to this studio [points downward]. But this was three rooms first. Then I took a bigger space in that area, in this same area. Then I took all the space—gradually.

[01:41:18.93] And this studio, I think, is about 15 years that I have. And the smaller spaces is—again, 15 years is the fire. Five years was moving from place to place and coincided with my beginning of painting also.

[01:41:38.29] KATIE LARSON: And then your studio assistants, how would you kind of describe your relationship with them? Are they offering—

[01:41:43.10] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So they think I am a *despote*—how to say?

[01:41:47.59] KATIE LARSON: A tyrant?

[01:41:48.03] [They laugh.]

[01:41:50.38] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Because I believe in working all the time. I don't believe in resting. I don't rest, myself. So they should be like me. And they're doing their effort. They're doing their best. And—*voilà*.

[01:42:05.95] I go from—even, I go from studio to studio, because in every studio I do something. Like, out of the city, I do the smoke. The ceramic, I do in one small room here. And here I do another work in another studio. I have four studios, and I have one in Monaco also. So expensive, to have a studio.

[01:42:24.35] And I changed three places before I ended up in my studio that is next to my home. But I paid every time double the price to move, because it was not possible to have the right thing. Monaco is not easy to live in. You have to pay.

[01:42:42.24] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. Well, it does seem like you have a beautiful studio space now, very large, enough to fit all these big works that you're making.

[01:42:49.19] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I miss very much this studio, but I have to be six months in Monaco, which I'm doing. And another six months I'm here in my studio or my studios—my studios.

[01:43:02.00] KATIE LARSON: Good. Well, I just want to check in, because we've been going for about an hour and a half.

[01:43:06.42] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Perfect.

[01:43:07.55] KATIE LARSON: Is that good?

[01:43:08.75] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It's good. We can we can stop. Maybe you compile some new questions about art, and we will speak about my foundation. And then you will send us the transcription.

[01:43:20.78] KATIE LARSON: Exactly. Wonderful. Well, do you still want to meet on Thursday at this same time? Does that work for you?

[01:43:26.39] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, I think it's good. This way we can we can put something behind us. And then you come to Belgium. You're welcome to say hello, to come and—

[01:43:34.43] KATIE LARSON: I would love that. I would love that. Wonderful. Well, then, I'll look forward to seeing you on Thursday. We'll have some new questions to think about. If there's anything that you want to address as well, please let me know, and we'll make sure —

[01:43:47.75] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: We'll think with Lisa. If there is something that must be put in your file, we can send it to you or we can—

[01:43:54.04] KATIE LARSON: Perfect.

[01:43:54.86] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And then she can always connect with you before you close the matter, actually. When do you think you'll close the—after the second meeting, you'll put everything in shape, and that's it? That's how it is?

[01:44:08.63] KATIE LARSON: So it's very flexible. So, you know, what we'll do, this transcript, or this video will be sent automatically to Ben at the Smithsonian. And once you feel like we're in a place where we've had a few conversations and you feel good about the interview, we'll tell Ben that that's ready to be sent off to be transcribed.

[01:44:29.63] But if at any time you feel like, Oh, you know, there's something that we didn't address that I do want to come back to, I'm more than happy to meet with you again, and we can continue our conversation. So, very flexible and fluid, very much want this to be something that you are happy with. So we can we can kind of play it by ear.

[01:44:48.72] Usually it takes about, in my experience, six months after our conversation completes for the transcription to be sent to us for review and editing. So it is a little bit of a slower process.

[01:45:03.14] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Who is doing the transcription, you or somebody else will do?

[01:45:05.84] KATIE LARSON: No, they have a professional that they send the videos to.

[01:45:11.06] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And if we want to consult—for instance, the people you have—can we consult this somewhere on the internet? Or we can see at least your writing about this or that person? Maybe you can mention one or two names that you have interviewed that are worthwhile looking at.

[01:45:33.17] KATIE LARSON: Sure. You mean in terms of my own personal work?

[01:45:35.77] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: You or the Smithsonian, who has—or maybe you know, like Warhol they interviewed, and you have the file from him or—

[01:45:43.88] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, I'll send you all the link to the website where you can see. There are hundreds of these oral history interviews going back to the 1950s. So I'll send that to Lisa to share with you so you can see.

[01:45:57.28] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Does it end up with a conference, for instance, in New York, in the Smithsonian or something like that, or not necessarily?

[01:46:04.72] KATIE LARSON: I'm sorry, say that one more time?

[01:46:07.12] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Does this kind of talk end up somehow with an invitation somehow—some time for a conversation or for a conference or—I don't know. I'm just asking like this.

[01:46:18.18] KATIE LARSON: No, it's a good question. No, usually this is really more about kind of creating a historical record that will be kept in the archive. What's significant—

[01:46:27.58] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Like the museum in New York.

[01:46:30.07] KATIE LARSON: Exactly, in DC.

[01:46:32.73] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: They consult your thing.

[01:46:34.23] KATIE LARSON: Right. So what is really kind of significant about it is that future art historians like myself can look at this transcript and learn more about you and your work as an artist. And so it's really an important primary-source document about who you are.

[01:46:52.82] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I'm very glad to have met you, and thank you for this interview. And it helped me put my ideas in shape also. And so we'll have—we'll be able to read it when you finish it. In six months, I suppose, no?

[01:47:07.22] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, it'll take a little bit of time. So yeah.

[01:47:10.01] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But then meet again in two days so you have the full information.

[01:47:13.43] KATIE LARSON: Perfect. They're going to send you, or they'll send Lisa, the Zoom link probably sometime tomorrow, so she can be on the lookout for that.

[01:47:22.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Okay. Thank you.

[01:47:24.17] KATIE LARSON: All right. Have a good evening.

[01:47:25.64] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Bye. Thank you so much.

[01:47:26.71] LISA DE BOECK: Bye-bye.

[01:47:26.98] KATIE LARSON: Bye-bye.

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[00:00:48.87] JENNIFER SNYDER: Hi, Katie.

[00:00:49.86] KATIE LARSON: Hi, Jennifer. Thanks for helping out with this.

[00:00:53.19] JENNIFER SNYDER: Yeah, no problem at all. All set to go. [Laughs.]

[00:01:00.45] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, great. So don't feel like you've got to stick around if—once you've made me the co-host, feel free to go on to your actual work.

[00:01:08.46] JENNIFER SNYDER: Yes, I'm going to do that. I'm on my phone right now because I'm out and about. But let me make you the co-host. It might take me a second to find.

[00:01:17.43] KATIE LARSON: No rush. Thank you so much again for doing this for me.

[00:01:20.65] JENNIFER SNYDER: Oh my god, it's no problem at all.

[00:01:39.49] You should see here that you are the co-host.

[00:01:41.86] KATIE LARSON: Yep, just popped up.

[00:01:44.32] JENNIFER SNYDER: Okay, awesome. Okay, great. Feel free to ping me if you need anything at all during your session. I'm on my way to the office right now. I'm just out. [Laughs.] But I'll be back at my desk, and I can troubleshoot from there too.

[00:02:01.12] KATIE LARSON: Okay. Well, fingers crossed, we won't have any issues. We didn't have any on Tuesday. But thank you. I appreciate that.

[00:02:05.92] JENNIFER SNYDER: Yeah, good. Okay, well, have a great session. And I look forward to seeing the interview later.

[00:02:12.67] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, wonderful. And have a good afternoon.

[00:02:15.28] JENNIFER SNYDER: Okay, thanks. You too.

[00:02:16.51] KATIE LARSON: Bye.

[00:02:17.32] JENNIFER SNYDER: Bye.

[00:02:25.85] [Video out.]

[00:04:33.78] LISA DE BOECK: Hi, Katie. Can you hear me?

[00:04:35.50] KATIE LARSON: Hi, Lisa. Yes, I can hear you.

[00:04:37.95] LISA DE BOECK: Okay, so Jean has a five-minute delay.

[00:04:40.75] KATIE LARSON: No rush. He can take his time.

[00:04:44.80] LISA DE BOECK: Okay, I'm checking now. Though, for some reason, the video won't do it. Ah, now, there we are. There we are.

[00:04:50.49] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful.

[00:04:52.45] LISA DE BOECK: Nice, because I know Jean. I've been working with him for a year and a half now. And so I noticed when he gets interviewed and the way he tells and what he tells, because sometimes he can repeat stories, which is good because they're strong stories.

[00:05:08.90] But I noticed that he went off the beaten path. So it was [inaudible]. So it's—and he's happy to do it, which is also very—

[00:05:19.46] KATIE LARSON: Good.

[00:05:19.78] LISA DE BOECK: Yeah.

[00:05:20.32] KATIE LARSON: Good, I'm glad to hear that. I thought it was a nice conversation. And do you have anything that you think would be interesting for us to bring up in our conversation today?

[00:05:31.02] LISA DE BOECK: [Sighs.] So much. Well, a tip. A lot of what I understood when I spoke to a very good friend of his—oh, he's right there. His wife, Cathy, she brought the big change actually, also. She was part of—when he became the artist he is now, that was when he got married to Cathy. So that's a tip.

[00:05:55.10] KATIE LARSON: Okay, great. Thank you. [Laughs.]

[00:05:57.25] LISA DE BOECK: So it doesn't get included in the transcript, I suppose.

[00:06:00.06] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. No, that's good. I wasn't sure. Sometimes people have different living situations. But I'm glad to hear that. I'll ask.

[00:06:07.28] LISA DE BOECK: And he just arrived. And now you get to see him. You have a chair here, so—

[00:06:12.44] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Okay, hello.

[00:06:14.27] KATIE LARSON: Hello, good evening.

[00:06:16.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Good evening.

[00:06:17.89] KATIE LARSON: I hope you had a good day.

[00:06:20.45] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah, great day, as usual.

[00:06:22.25] KATIE LARSON: Good. You look very chic.

[00:06:24.32] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: As long as I'm work—

[00:06:25.65] Oh, you have to see me. Because I go out from my studio, and then I have to meet some bankers, some businessmen, some collectors, some—so I have to be dressed properly.

[00:06:35.90] KATIE LARSON: Of course.

[00:06:36.82] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I come to my studio, and then I'm totally a different person.

[00:06:41.57] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, you can't be painting in that.

[00:06:44.21] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: That, no.

[00:06:45.00] [They laugh.]

[00:06:46.70] KATIE LARSON: Well, Jean, before we begin, I just wanted to check in and see how you felt Tuesday went.

[00:06:52.43] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I think I felt well. And I hope you felt well. Maybe I should ask you also, what did you feel? And how did you think the—did you—were you short of some answers, or were you happy with what you heard?

[00:07:04.39] KATIE LARSON: No, I thought it was wonderful. I really enjoyed our conversation. And I thought it flowed really nicely.

[00:07:10.08] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Okay, perfect. So we have now the second stage.

[00:07:13.56] KATIE LARSON: Yes. So today, we'll—

[00:07:15.21] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: [Holds bottle of water.] I'll drink to your health some water. [

[00:07:17.88] KATIE LARSON: Oh, good.

[00:07:18.66] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I'm still thirsty.

[00:07:20.85] KATIE LARSON: I know. I do make you do a lot of talking, so—

[00:07:23.27] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It's not a glass of champagne, but maybe [laughs] later on, one day, in America or here in Belgium.

[00:07:29.49] KATIE LARSON: I would love that. [Laughs.]

[00:07:31.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: [Drinks.]

[00:07:33.68] KATIE LARSON: Um, Was there anything in particular today—I would like for us to talk about your Boghossian Foundation, and maybe we could talk a little bit about your family and some artists' circle that you're in—but anything in particular that you would like to make sure that we address today?

[00:07:53.58] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Everything needs to be addressed. And sometimes there's too much to be addressed. So, of course, the Foundation is part of my life, and it will be the important part of today's conversation. But if you feel you're missing some things that I haven't said on the art, you can ask me. And if, while talking to you, I think of something, then I'll tell you.

[00:08:14.37] KATIE LARSON: Perfect. Okay. I just want to make sure that if there's anything that you're like, Oh, I really would like to address this, please let me know, and we absolutely can.

[00:08:22.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: All right.

[00:08:23.37] KATIE LARSON: All right? Good. Okay. Well, then we can go ahead and get started if you're ready.

[00:08:27.94] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So why the Foundation? It's—

[00:08:30.06] KATIE LARSON: Well, hang on. Before we get started, just so they know where

we're doing it, let me just give my little preamble here.

[00:08:36.84] Okay, so my name's Katie Larson. And I'm here with Jean Boghossian. It is Thursday, June 27. And thank you so much, Jean, again for having this conversation with me.

[00:08:49.42] So, yeah, let's talk about the Foundation, the Boghossian Foundation. Why did you establish that? And what does it look like today?

[00:08:57.82] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Well, we have to first hear about the history of our family. Maybe I say just a few words.

[00:09:03.76] My grandfather was born in Turkey and had to escape the genocide to come to Aleppo clears throat—to cut short the part of the tragedy that was with his parents and all that and tell you that he was a young boy and he had to work in a café in the beginning to start a new life.

[00:09:27.31] And in that café, one of the customers of his father recognized him—and recognized the name—and told him, Come with me; I bought a lot from your father, and I have to put you back on your business because your business is jewelry, it's not to work in a café.

[00:09:45.67] So he opened—first, he worked for that jeweler, before he opened his own shop and started working by himself, till he started becoming more in the selling part. And he had started to hire workers; Armenians mostly, because Armenians are very skilled. And [clears throat]—so it became a team that was working.

[00:10:15.14] Then my father was born. He had nine children: four boys and five girls. Of course, the boys ended up with the father. And the girls, in our traditional—that tradition at that time was like this—girls had to be married and the boys were working with the father. So my father worked a lot with my grandfather. But they moved to Beirut in '54, while I was five years old. And we stayed in the house with my grandfather.

[00:10:48.68] One of my souvenirs was that at—I was four years old. And I was distributing bags of sugar and wheat to the poor people lining up on Christmas and Easter to get that kilo of sugar. So it really struck my mind that there are poor people in the—in the—in the world. I was very young.

[00:11:12.32] And then I used to go with my father to—*Société de Bienfaisance Arménienne*—I don't know how to call it in English. The place where they were helping poor people, but mostly poor Armenians because Armenians were coming to Aleppo and living in Aleppo.

[00:11:32.00] And it was a good life at that time. Aleppo was really—had a French education, along with Arabic, because we were occupied by the French people in Syria and Lebanon.

[00:11:44.65] And then I was going to—I was going to—with my father also, to go to a *colonie de vacances*, where we handled the young—young little boys. Like, I was eight, nine years, or 10 years, and they were four or five years—that we were taking them for holiday because their parents couldn't afford and all that. We were going to a convent.

[00:12:08.46] So I was taking care of children.

[00:12:10.72] And then at the age of 15, when I was—so I used to go to the meetings with my father when they were discussing about the poor people. And I listened to what it was happening.

[00:12:22.09] Then, at the age of 15, I took care of a family. And I was going to give—to teach these children—once a week—because they were really about five children and the parents living in one room. And so I felt that people can be unfavored by life,

[00:12:44.95] and so—

[00:12:45.87] Anyway, then, at the age of 18, we were going to summer camps with these—other poor boys. And we were young. Young boys and girls. We were the monitors. And so there was some love stories that were happening and guitar playing until the morning and all that. And at the same time, we were doing some kind of humanitarian work at a young age.

[00:13:11.14] Then I became a businessman, and I traveled the world. I don't know if I told you about my business life. So we spoke about art. But did we speak about India and the world that I traveled to—I don't know if we said it.

[00:13:26.32] KATIE LARSON: You touched on it very briefly. But I'd love to hear more if you want to share.

[00:13:29.80] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So I was—immediately, I—first, I was very successful in school and university. But my father said, We don't have time to—we have to make money.

[00:13:41.24] And he was right because civil war started five years later: I would have finished my diploma but didn't have a job, like many other friends of mine who were doctors and all that. Doctors had work but couldn't make money. And other businesses did not work because there was war. And so people were more concerned about—

[00:14:00.80] And civil war is the worst of all because people shoot on—brothers even shoot on each other. And you don't know why you die, because there are snipers shooting in the right and shooting on the left to create the civil war. Everybody thinks it's the other side that is killing the other side, but actually some manipulation is happening also.

[00:14:20.26] So I traveled the world. And luckily, I was able to make money with our business, which was precious stones. I was specialist in ruby, sapphire, and emerald. And I was—I was—

[00:14:36.65] So I did make money. I refused to join the business—uh, the business family—because there were four brothers, my brother and his brothers, and there was my grandfather. And I was coming with a new mentality. And even my father didn't want me to join the group of the family, because he thought there is too many visions and too many talk. And he thought I would do better—and he was right again—to go on my own.

[00:15:07.31] So he gave me \$60,000. That was in 1970. And I was able to travel with this money and buy stones. And those times, I was really a pioneer in that field because few people knew about the far East and few people knew the sources where to buy. And luckily enough, I met people who introduced me to offices and all that, to sources that I was able to buy and sell in Beirut.

[00:15:39.87] At that time Beirut was very active because it was a door to all the Middle East, but also to Iran. Iran was under the shah of Iran at that time. And so it was really the—emperor, who was ruling. And there was a lot of luxury. And the *shahbanu* was really glamorous. There was a lot of glamour also in Iran.

[00:16:01.89] And he—actually he did a lot for the country, until the revolution was in 1979, where the American hostages were kept and where there was problems happening with Iran.

[00:16:17.63] But Iran was one of my places where I could make money. And four years later I was able to make a dinner with my parents and my brother and sisters and gave back to my father a check of \$120,000. And I had made on top of that a lot of money where I could travel the world and build a new business.

[00:16:42.35] So when in '75—that was in '74. In '75 I had to leave the country because of the civil war. I came to Belgium and opened an office and started from Belgium, also because the diamond world is here. And I was happy to live in Belgium, got married and had three boys. I always wanted boys because I thought I never understood anything about women. But [laughs]—and I—to tell the god, I want three boys. I want boys. So he gave me—one, two, three—three boys. After I realized I never understood anything about boys, I told him I want a girl. He said, Too late.

[00:17:21.41] [They laugh.]

[00:17:21.74] So I had to end up with three boys. [Laughs.]

[00:17:25.10] So—anyway, just to tell you that I did a lot of business through Belgium—from Belgium—but never to the Belgium market, because Belgians don't believe in jewelry. They like good food and a good house. That is the important thing for them—and holiday—and resting sometimes. [Laughs.]

[00:17:47.09] KATIE LARSON: Did your entire family move from Syria with you?

[00:17:51.51] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No, only myself. My sister went to Paris. But she was a student, and she wanted to open a pharmacy because she was a pharmacist. She had to suffer a lot because she works for a pharmacy and she couldn't make it as a pharmacist. And my other sister—but we were helping our sisters a lot, me and my brother, later on.

[00:18:10.08] I brought my brother in the '79, '80, to put him in Geneva. Because he was 20 and I was 30, and I thought, He's wasting his time in Beirut and just doing nothing. So I brought him to Geneva. And we opened an office first. And now we have a shop, but it's much later.

[00:18:29.52] And so I—my parents refused to leave Lebanon because they always said there is nothing. They refuse to see that there is something: there is a problem. And always when I—we spent some holiday when there was some quiet times. But one time, I was with my two boys and going to the airport to go to Beirut, and on the news, on the radio, they say there is shooting between the areas, East and West Beirut and all that.

[00:19:00.26] So I called my father from the airport to tell him that we're not coming. Why you're not coming? I said, Because there is a war in Beirut. He said, No, there is nothing, there is nothing. And while talking to him, I hear *boom, boom*, on the phone from Belgium. I said, What's all this boom? He says, No, this is far, this is far. This is not here. They're shooting outside.

[00:19:19.73] So this is when people love a country. And I think Lebanon is a country you can love but you can hate also. And today, I'm not hating, but I'm really very angry with what's happening. Not only in Lebanon: what's happening in the world. What's happening in Ukraine, for instance. Or—and Gaza also. But I mean, what can you do? This is the world. Because you have to live with it and try to do the best.

[00:19:52.05] I always watched political people talking about peace, but all of them making war. And when Sadat and Rabin both—Sadat went to Egypt, uh, to Israel, to the Knesset, and made his speech about peace and two states and all that, and Rabin followed with that—both of them got killed by their own, uh, by their own extremists.

[00:20:18.07] And I was not understanding why we cannot live in peace, why we cannot just appreciate the gift of life, and not start killing each other, for stupid principles sometimes. Because—

[00:20:33.76] and until the time we, with Armenia, became independent. Armenia, in '89, became independent, like all the Berlin Wall countries became independent.

[00:20:47.26] I always thought Gorbachev, to me, was the man of the 20th century, who realized that his system does not work. And he tried to open up because they were always fighting to kill people who are climbing the wall and all that. And he was a, I think, smart man compared to what we are having today. We're going backwards five centuries, now; we're going to the empire, to the tsar; to the Persian empire, also, because Iran is also playing its game.

[00:21:16.09] And

[00:21:17.12] we started because Armenia—I never lived in Armenia, but we are Armenians. And I wanted to see with my brother what is happening in Armenia. And there we saw the tragedy because Armenia was very poor country. The salary was very low, \$40 for a president, I imagine. But it adjusted very quickly because—

[00:21:40.69] But, you know, we had to start putting money in Armenia.

[00:21:45.25] And we bought a space, land, that we built an orphanage. We built a summer camp. We built a theater. We built a music school. I did many projects with USAID and also with the Italian embassy, because I love to do projects with other administrations. So our foundation becomes more and more recognized.

[00:22:07.97] And so we were participating sometimes. Sometimes we were doing the whole the whole investment. We did an important park. Today it's the Lovers' Park done by the Boghossian Park Foundation. This cost only two million—dollars, [laughs] not Armenian

currency or stupid currencies devaluating.

[00:22:29.69] So the action in Armenia started very strongly. And then we started helping our Armenian people in Aleppo, Syria, but also in Lebanon. And we built a school with the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. Maybe you know this foundation—"Mr Five Per Cent," in Lisbon?

[00:22:47.51] KATIE LARSON: I don't know it. I'll have to look it up.

[00:22:49.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Gulbenkian. This is an Armenian guy who was "Mr Five Per Cent" because he left Turkey, also because of the genocide, and connected the Arab Gulf countries in the '20s, 30s—*Lawrence of Arabia*, you have to imagine that period—to the oil companies. And the oil companies were paying him five percent on every barrel of oil, because oil was becoming so important. And they were producing it very cheap at that time. And he made a fortune.

[00:23:24.53] And he made a fortune and he—

[00:23:26.48] When we built this school with them, actually, I wanted to go and see the history of Gulbenkian because I didn't know well. And I went to Lisbon. And I fell on my back because I saw it's such a beautiful place—and a museum, library, students coming to learn about culture.

[00:23:48.70] And I ended up finding that Gulbenkian Foundation is like a ministry of culture today, in Lisbon, because all the money was given to Portugal. And they're doing a great job for the Portuguese. Small amount of his—of his foundation was allocated to Armenians. Not in Armenia: because they were communists. And he wanted to allocate it to Armenians in the Middle East for culture and for education.

[00:24:16.00] And so we built a school in partnership with that foundation. And when I saw that foundation, I thought, We need to go in another level—not just a humanitarian, but a humanistic level: building bridges and changing mentalities—because I was feeling that our action of giving money to poor people is not enough. We needed to go on the change of mentalities. We needed to go on something to find us common language.

[00:24:43.12] And I was thinking, What is a common language? When you talk of religion, you fight. When you talk of politics, you fight. When you talk of identity, you fight. When you talk about borders, nationalities, you also fight. So, when you don't fight? So I found out that art is a language where you don't find—where you don't fight [laughs]—and you can discuss without being—

[00:25:07.60] So I bought this Villa Empain, which is an art deco villa. It was totally demolished, and we had to restore it. So this is, at the same time, a restoration of heritage for Belgium. And at the same time, it's a siege [*sic* headquarters -Ed] of our foundation, where we decided that it would be an art center, a center of art and dialogue between East and West.

[00:25:31.20] Because orients are disoriented, need to be reoriented, and occidentals are accidented.

[00:25:41.25] [They laugh.]

[00:25:42.09] KATIE LARSON: I'd love for you to elaborate a little bit more on that. I think that's very catchy.

[00:25:47.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah. So it's really, this is my—let's say, my motto—for saying, Why this foundation? People don't understand how artists can be the answer. For me, art is also the question, but art is also the answer. So maybe you want to ask me some more. While I have water. [Drinks.]

[00:26:08.01] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, have a sip, please. Take your time.

[00:26:10.12] No, I really love this, this commitment to humanism that you ascribe to with the Boghossian Foundation. And so it sounds like you have all sorts of really fascinating and significant projects that you're supporting monetarily. But there's also an element where you're supporting up-and-coming artists, right? Is that another element of—

[00:26:32.58] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: We have an artist residence, six rooms, that we receive people—artists, young artists, and maybe older artists also. And depending, there are writers, there are—it can go on literature, it can go on sculpture, it can be on painting. And they change, every—from various parts of the world, actually.

[00:26:52.48] We even went to—I was in Korea. But our foundation organized a trip to North and South Korea. Nobody can go to North Korea except our foundation because, they're considered as a cultural center, not politically—non-political. But we wanted to bring South Korean artists and North Korean artists to be together in our foundation. Both countries refused, because they said, No—The North Koreans said, We will send, but they have to be with Norwegians, not with South Koreans. And South Koreans did not believe in North Korean-related—

[00:27:31.23] Although, at some point there was at the demilitarized zone some buses that came from North and South, and they were meeting. And a grandmother is on that side, grandfather is on the other side, or the opposite, and they kiss each other, they spend one day crying, and each one goes back to his life.

[00:27:50.19] So Korea is one example of same people, same culture, same history. When you go to museums, they tell you the same story until 1953, when the country was cut in two because of two systems. One was independent and capitalist. The other one is communist.

[00:28:12.98] But this is the last bastion of communism. North Korea is the last bastion of communism because even Russia is not so strict. So you were always with a guide that was at the same time with us, to accompany us but also as a supervisor. And when we open our heart and when we speak, they couldn't talk too much. They were just saying, We cannot say, we cannot speak. But we were always followed for a few days when we were there.

[00:28:41.58] So the Foundation is making its course. We restored it. We opened it to the public. And today we are considered as one of the top destinations in Brussels to be visited.

[00:28:56.61] KATIE LARSON: And so you are showing both loan exhibitions—I saw you had an Albers exhibition up now. Are you showing the work of the artists in residence as well?

[00:29:07.93] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It shows artists in residence also. I make it a point not to show my work in the Foundation. Except if your curator insists for one piece that goes with the theme that he's exhibiting. But I always resisted that, that fact, because I don't want people to think I made my foundation to make my promotion.

[00:29:32.43] I prefer that Lisa makes my promotion [laughs], here in the studio. And she's doing well.

[00:29:40.72] KATIE LARSON: It's interesting because I think of like the Burri Foundation, which he did make to show his own art. And I don't know if you've been to Città di Castello to see it.

[00:29:48.97] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I may do after I die.

[00:29:50.96] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, I see.

[00:29:52.09] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Maybe I need to shoot myself [laughs], then they do it. [Laughs.] But I love life. I love life too much. So I will never shoot myself.

[00:29:59.87] KATIE LARSON: No, please don't do that.

[00:30:01.01] [They laugh.]

[00:30:03.73] Well, I'm sure it's really meaningful for these young and up-and-coming artists to have that kind of support, both financial and kind of the space and time to think and work.

[00:30:16.84] Do you often have conversations with these young artists? I'm kind of curious to hear more about your artistic circle.

[00:30:23.68] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Unfortunately I don't have time. Because even I was asked last time—somebody—by curator, by president of the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Why don't you

teach? I said, I don't have time. I don't have time to do my work. How can I have time to teach? And teaching is a dedication: because I know from my teachers at the academy how much they involve themselves and how much, you know, they put all their life in the teaching.

[00:30:51.60] I cannot. Because I don't have time to do my work. I'm coming late in the art life. I'm really a coming-late artist, you know? Artists come at 18. But I had to make it first financially. I had to make the Foundation at the same time. And parallel to the Foundation, 1996, we did that school. But I was already in arts since '87, when I bought for my son the whole present, and when I was on top of it, and he never touched it. I told you about that?

[00:31:24.77] KATIE LARSON: Yes, you did. Well, and I also heard that perhaps your wife played a hand in helping to convince you to move full time into art. Is that something you want to talk a little bit about?

[00:31:36.68] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Not my wife. My wife, on the contrary—my ex-wife, first of all, wanted me to stay in the business. But gradually, my new wife, who was not my wife for a long time, until five years ago—she was my girlfriend. And of course, she was, yes, more into art, but not into the point to advise me on these things.

[00:31:58.17] No, I took the decision gradually, because I was feeling I was doing something right. I was doing something right for myself, something right for the art world, and something right for the people who acquired my works also. So I was really very happy to have people, amateurs, who liked my works.

[00:32:20.03] And also exhibitions were very important. So, if this year I have 12 exhibitions, I think it's the most I had in one year. So it's very important year for me.

[00:32:31.55] KATIE LARSON: Okay, so tell me, how many hours a day do you spend in the studio on average?

[00:32:36.00] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I think you ask Lisa, maybe it's six hours at least, if not eight.

[00:32:40.25] KATIE LARSON: And so give us a quick day in the studio with Jean Boghossian. What does it look like?

[00:32:49.14] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Jay? What is jay? Jay with Jean Boghossian—

[00:32:51.85] LISA DE BOECK: One day. One day.

[00:32:52.86] KATIE LARSON: A day. One day, yeah.

[00:32:53.88] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: A day with Jean Boghossian. I keep giving instructions to everyone. Sometimes I take an opinion. But sometimes I follow. But sometimes I don't follow, I do what I have in mind. A day with Jean Boghossian is very little talk, because talking is not working, and not working is not my cup of tea. So Lisa knows that.

[00:33:15.66] KATIE LARSON: So you come in, you give some instructions—

[00:33:18.01] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I come in, then I get out of my—yeah, I get hi to everyone. And then I say a few things that I have in mind. But most of the time, I do it on phone because, as traffic is heavy—and I hate traffic—but I drive myself—I do a lot of work on the phone of what I have to say or what I have to listen to, what decisions we have to make. So when I come, what has been said—what had to be said has been said. And then I go immediately up and start continuing what I was doing or starting a new work or whatever.

[00:33:50.87] KATIE LARSON: Are you working on one piece at a time or over the course of the day might you work on several different things?

[00:33:56.81] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So—because

[00:33:58.09] I tell you what, sometimes I need this diversion. I need this going-toward-something-else. And I don't know if I told you about Fontana, that—did I tell you about it?

[00:34:11.75] KATIE LARSON: No.

[00:34:12.40] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No, because I had an interview yesterday. And it was there that I mentioned Fontana. Because, Fontana, when I visited his exhibition in Paris, it was a retrospective. And you saw so many things of his work. And people next to me were saying, There is 30 artists here—because he worked on glass, he worked on bronze, he worked on clay, he worked on traditional work. And then he passed gradually to the Buchi —*Teatrino*, of course, that was his main—and then there's *Concetto spaziale*, which was his discovery, important discovery: the second—the third dimension.

[00:34:49.80] And I saw at the end the film, of Fontana, where they ask him, How come, Mr. Fontana, at the same time that you were concentrating so much to do your *Concetto spaziale*—which actually could take very little time or could take hours because you're thinking before—at the same time, you were doing sketches of naked women? And they show some of the sketches he made at the same time, same date. How do you combine this with that? How can you explain?

[00:35:24.67] He said, Nothing to explain. First of all, art does not need to be explained. It just—*ça me distrait*. How do you say—distracted me. Making a sketch of a naked woman in five seconds or five minutes distracted me. And he was making every five minutes one sketch, which I did at the academy also. When we had the *modèle vivant*, we had to do, with painting, in five minutes, one sketch and give the expression and give what you want to express about that woman—she changes the pose and all that.

[00:35:59.77] So this comforted me with the fact that you don't need to be one direction or one thing—one vision or one message—as an artist. And again, it distracts me to go to the wood sculpture at one time, then to go to the ceramic room, and then to go back to the burning or to go to painting or to take the brush or—

[00:36:25.50] And many, many things are going, are working at the same time. It's like an army attacking right and left.

[00:36:34.78] [They laugh.]

[00:36:38.37] KATIE LARSON: I love that. So rather than just kind of focusing solely on one thing from start to finish—

[00:36:44.01] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Afterwards, of course, I think about what I've done. I think what I like and what I didn't like. Sometimes I destroy a work, and I start all over again. Not everything is—I accept. And some things last six months or one year to be finished, and some things are finished in three weeks. Sometime also I have a deadline to finish something, so I have to finish it in three weeks. And then I put aside whatever is taking time.

[00:37:10.02] And I have a lot of—there is a lot of drying in my materials. So it need time to dry. And some things take a week to dry, for instance.

[00:37:22.27] KATIE LARSON: I feel like design—I think that what's really interesting about your work is this kind of element or play between control and—

[00:37:32.07] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:—hazard—

[00:37:33.00] KATIE LARSON:—spontaneity.

[00:37:34.05] And hazard, yeah. But all of your works, as I was saying on Tuesday, they're really beautiful. There's something really aesthetically pleasing about your work. And so what is that—what is the role of aesthetics to you?

[00:37:47.04] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:

[00:37:47.23] You know, sometimes I feel, No. Sometimes when I burn, I see it black, I see charred, I see—I say, This is too much. And then I tell the [laughs]—the studio comes and says, Stop, you can accept it like that. No, I wanted to change it, I wanted to—

[00:38:03.55] Because, yes, I do think sometimes that it's not for beauty only. And sometimes it is for—

[00:38:10.09] Like, I work on stamps. And then I didn't think I will sell a painting with stamps, because stamps is something sacred for me. Stamps tell the history of a country.

Stamps tell the—it's very precious. And I was a stamp collector because I—first I took care of the collection of my father. And then at one point I—of course, increased it—and then I started working, and I left it in Beirut. And my mother called me one day to say, The daughter of your cousin wants to have it. So I said, Okay, give it. And then I missed that collection.

[00:38:50.40] So when I was one day at an antique dealer and I saw a catalog of stamps about navigators—and I feel I am a navigator also, myself, because I travel the world. At the same time, in my work I am a navigator. I don't know where I get—I know more or less what I want, but never completely. And the result then tells me if I'm right or I'm wrong, and if I have to continue or go back or destroy.

[00:39:19.55] So I don't work only on beauty. I work on what I believe, what I feel, what gives me a good feeling about what I'm doing. And it's not necessarily beauty or—

[00:39:36.07] I like harmony sometimes. But sometimes harmony is negative because total beauty—there is a saying that say—how it says?

[00:39:47.95] *Le joli est l'ennemi du beau*. The beautiful is the enemy, uh, of the—essence, let's say. Essence. So it shouldn't be always always beautiful, but be beautiful. But—yeah, I evolve with my work. And I do what I think I have to do. And apparently some people like, and some people buy it. So it's, uh—

[00:40:15.88] Yes, I came late on the market. And people are suspicious. Who is this guy? How come he can be a businessman and at the same time a foundation and at the same time an artist and—and many *casquettes*—many hats [laughs] on his head? So, I don't know, it's—

[00:40:38.85] Artist was something—I could have stayed in the jewelry business. But I decided to leave the business to my brother and my sons to take over. Which I believe is a wise decision, because I feel the patriarch is sometimes too heavy on his children and his grandchildren and his brothers, his younger brothers. The patriarch thinks he knows everything. And I believe I don't know everything. And I believe they have their say in doing something else.

[00:41:07.81] And this was very successful, that I left, because we have a new dimension in our brand, which was not a brand before. But my brother decided to go on the—on the street. And also we have six shops, Boghossian. And I wanted to stay in the office, because I wanted to close my safe and go to my studio. So I didn't want to be bothered by having a shop because by having a shop is like, uh, slavery sometimes.

[00:41:37.49] KATIE LARSON: A lot of work, it sounds like.

[00:41:39.02] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah. But no, actually he's doing it very well. And he's doing really a great job as managing the company. And I'm informed of some good news, of some important things, but I'm more in the—in my life, which is art, which is my wife and my passion.

[00:42:01.58] KATIE LARSON: Do you find that there are lessons that you—

[00:42:03.44] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN:

[00:42:03.73] I found I have three poles: my wife, my foundation, and my art. These are my priorities. And I say I have a wife and a mistress: art and Cathy. I don't know who is who.

[00:42:18.98] [They laugh.]

[00:42:22.40] KATIE LARSON: I love it. Both very demanding mistresses, I imagine.

[00:42:26.57] [They laugh.]

[00:42:27.78] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I don't know who is who. [Laughs.]

[00:42:31.51] KATIE LARSON: Do you feel like there are lessons that you learned as a businessman that have helped you become successful as an artist?

[00:42:40.63] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I think, authenticity. I think, honesty. We have these

principles of—of not lying. And of course, capability. Knowledge. Doesn't happen—you know, work—work is not—there is no free ride. You don't work, you don't get. That's it. There is no free ride in this world.

[00:43:09.20] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. I think that's a good lesson. And it definitely shows how dedicated you are, that you've had this career change and have been so successful in the career change. And it boils down to hard work. Absolutely. And vision, I would imagine.

[00:43:27.96] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Vision, yeah. The brand was the vision of my brother. It was not mine because I wanted really to focus on my art. And I didn't want to be slave to the shop, you know? Well, he is kind of slave, but he's doing it very well. So I congratulate my brother. He's taking care of the business of our family. And we contribute together to the Foundation. This was—the condition to leave, to step back from the business, was, of course, the Foundation and the humanitarian action to continue and the Villa Empain to continue its work.

[00:44:10.34] KATIE LARSON: So could you tell me a little bit about what you're working on this week?

[00:44:15.56] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: This week? What I'm working on—we're working on Monaco because we have to finish some works to—because we're making—we realize that if we make the works especially for the space, and it fits there, it's really much more powerful than to just make the work and I can do the same work without thinking of fitting in the space. But if you think of fitting in the space, then it's—it have more strength. So we work sometime, yes, on the size of the place where it has to go.

[00:44:52.46] KATIE LARSON: And so what is the type of work that's going to be filling that space?

[00:44:55.59] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It will be—I have some some—I will present some of my wood sculptures in the hall. I will present some paintings in the dining room. Like, I'm a man of the hotels. I don't know if Lisa has told you. But I'm in the Conrad Steigenberger in Brussels. Maybe she can send you some photos to add to your—and I have—I am in the Hotel Amigo, which is a Rocco Forte, in Brussels. I am at the Mandarin Oriental in Geneva.

[00:45:30.50] And I'm a man of hotels because, for me—gallerists and museum people don't like that artists shows his work in a hotel. But I believe that this is, for me, a permanent exhibition. In a gallery, you exhibit three weeks, and then they change. While here, I'm always there. So it's a powerful impact. And if they invite me, I don't refuse. And sometimes they pay for it. So it's good that I get paid for it. Not necessarily—they don't buy it. But I get either rooms or some compensation or some payment also, for some—for what it costs to make it, for instance.

[00:46:11.45] So I love to be in hotels, because all my life I was in hotels. When I travelled the world, I was hotels. And of course, I learned to taste—I learned to have the right taste for the right hotel, for the piano bar, and the glass of champagne. [Laughs.] So this is—yes, this taught me to consider hotels as part of my—

[00:46:41.03] KATIE LARSON: How did you get connected with that? Did you reach out to a few select hotels? Did they reach out to you?

[00:46:46.41] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: They reach out to me. Because they knew I'm an artist, and they reach out to me. In one of the hotels I have an apartment, where I work. And that apartment became a studio because—for small formats, I don't come here. And sometimes, one hour, between two meetings or between two things, or if it's too late to come here alone—because I don't like to open the studio on my own and all that in the evening—so I go for some time.

[00:47:14.37] I'm waiting for my wife to be back today, to pick her up at midnight at the airport. I'm going to get her. But meanwhile, I'm talking to you. Then I'm having a friend for dinner until 10:30. Then I'm having another friend to discuss various things, like Art D'Égypte. I don't know if Lisa spoke to you about Art D'Égypte. We're having—we're presenting a work near the Pyramids.

[00:47:39.89] KATIE LARSON: Oh, wow. Tell me a little bit more about that.

[00:47:43.59] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Because it's—I always wanted to work on metal. And I found the price of the artists who sell metal so expensive that I said, I want to do it by myself. But I cannot—there are things, I need to do it with either a partner or with an assistant. So we did one work with this artist who works on COR-TEN. And we exhibited it in Square Armand Steurs. Lisa will send you some photos of this exhibition.

[00:48:13.02] It's called the—*L'empreinte des vagues*. It mean—it's the print of—no, it's—how do you call the finger—the fingerprint of the waves. The fingerprints of the waves. Because it's a wave, but it's three waves together. One has the style of burning—because we have to solder and burn the metal—of him. One has the trace of burning of me, because I'm more aggressive in the way I do it. And the third wave is both. So we have these three waves together; one is his, one is mine, and the middle one is both.

[00:48:50.91] And it's a work we have done together. Of course, he did some things that I cannot do. But we did the concept together. And there is the strong work of the metal in big machines that I'm not used to. But I follow what he's doing. And then we worked on the finishing, which was—we were together. Each one worked in his way to finish the sculpture. And we presented it.

[00:49:16.36] So we presenting this work now in Art D'Égypte. In Art D'Égypte, the theme of this year is excavation. So we're going to make it come out of the sand. And people can climb on the sand to go to see it from top, to see it from bottom. She will send you the photo. But please keep it confidential because, apparently, we cannot speak until they announce it.

[00:49:41.86] KATIE LARSON: Okay. I will keep it confidential. But I'd love to see it. It sounds fascinating.

[00:49:45.32] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So wait until they show it. And then you can talk about it. They show it in October 23.

[00:49:53.05] KATIE LARSON: Okay. What's the name of the artist that you're collaborating with?

[00:49:57.94] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Gilles Libert.

[00:49:59.45] KATIE LARSON: Gilles Libert.

[00:50:00.27] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Gilles Libert. And as I told you, I don't do many experiments with other artists, except to learn something, because I don't know how to do it. And while doing it with him, I learn. And I can do it on my own if I want.

[00:50:18.00] I don't want to miss anything in this art life. I want to be everywhere. And of course, I don't have all the time in the world. So I'm doing whatever is urgent. And sometimes, to get some kind of distraction, I do something else and then pass to something else.

[00:50:36.13] KATIE LARSON: I love that sense of unbridled curiosity that you have.

[00:50:40.76] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah, I'm also very impatient. So sometimes I destroy things because of my impatience. And sometimes I succeed them because I'm impatient. So, one throw, and that's it—yeah, it's successful, okay [laughs], it's good. I accept it.

[00:50:58.97] KATIE LARSON: Well, it's part of the process, right? [Laughs.] You never know if something's going to be good or bad. But I like that. That's interesting. You've mentioned—you have a studio in Belgium. And you have a studio in Monaco.

[00:51:12.98] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: That is a small studio where I work on small formats. But I carry a bag, always, to bring there. Because I—sometimes I work on stamps, because stamps is a small—but I'm working under the table sometimes, because I don't have a big space, and I need things to dry. So I put them, really to dry, under the table because I have a small space. And I have to manage with this small space. But I need it because I discover many things I cannot do in my big studio.

[00:51:45.74] As I'm in jewelry, jewelry was always something very small—diamonds: very small. And ceramic, for me, is a kind of transition to bigger things. It's a sculpture, but a kind

of jewelry in sculpture, right? I don't know if Lisa can send you some photos. You will see some of my stones on the sculptures. And it's—again, it's a theme: let's not unveil too much because it'll be in Monaco. But after Monaco—are you coming to the South of France sometime or not?

[00:52:19.22] KATIE LARSON: I don't have anything planned. I would love to, but no immediate plans.

[00:52:23.30] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: You'll spend your holiday in America?

[00:52:25.53] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, I'll be at the Venice Biennale in October.

[00:52:29.57] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I'll be in Venice Biennale in end of July, early August. Two days. Usually I go during the opening. But this time I went outside this because hotels become too difficult, too expensive—and everything, restaurants, you cannot get in. And even the fairs are too full sometimes. You have to queue. When you come—during—then you can see everything at your leisure. I exhibited one work in the Venice Biennale last year. Did I tell you?

[00:53:00.99] KATIE LARSON: Yes, the big installation. Sounds like it was amazing.

[00:53:05.72] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And in 2017 was Armenian pavilion. So I don't despair to represent Belgium and Lebanon in some years, future years.

[00:53:15.68] KATIE LARSON: It will happen, I'm sure. Well, do you notice—I'm curious, because you seem so involved in both of those spheres. Are there similarities or differences between the art world in Monaco and in Belgium?

[00:53:30.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Now it will be at Art Monte Carlo [clears throat], where there will be about 30 or 40 galleries. It's a good event. And that's a quality—we're going also tomorrow to Monaco, at the Fondation Maeght. You know the Fondation Maeght at Saint-Paul-de-Vence? They have top sculptures from Miró, from all the Modernists—um, the Impressionists. And so—a big collection also.

[00:53:59.14] So they have added the space. And they had donors, big donors. And one of the donors who gave one million, Dassault, is an important family in France. They're in the airplanes. We will be at his table. He's invited us. So we're going for that dinner. So I have to go and come from Belgium to Monaco, because Monaco is a social life, extraordinary social life. And we are involved in that. And Belgium is my studio. And this is where I work. So the real work happens here.

[00:54:34.23] KATIE LARSON: Interesting. How did you first start going down to Monaco? Was it for art-related work?

[00:54:40.77] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No, I was resident in Beirut for a while because—I was resident in Beirut since 2012. And when the explosion in Beirut happened [clears throat]—for business purpose, I was resident in Beirut because I was closer to the Middle East and all that. But at the same time, I was coming always to Belgium. And when the explosion of the harbor happened in 2020, I decided to leave and come to Monaco.

[00:55:11.33] KATIE LARSON: Were you impacted at all by that? I mean, did you have friends and family impacted by that?

[00:55:16.28] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: My office in Beirut, where I also paint sometime, was destroyed and was re-done totally. I have—but that space is where I—but it's only a few years. I think in five years, I went one time. And so—where were we? Put me back.

[00:55:41.88] KATIE LARSON: Talking about the impact of that explosion on your studio.

[00:55:46.02] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It impacted us, of course. First of all, I was disgusted again because—I told you, you cannot hate Lebanon, but I hate Lebanon because of that. Because of the explosion, but because there was no punishment, there was nobody responsible, because we are manipulated by Iran, also, in Lebanon, and various powers. And the situation that happened today between Israel and Gaza is impacting Lebanon.

[00:56:11.75] And so—I don't know. This is not a place to plan. Good life; because I call my friends, all of them say they're happy, they're going to restaurant, they're going out. But

how can you live without a vision?

[00:56:26.48] And also, already, when I left Beirut in '75, I said I will never come back—to live there. But gradually I was enticed to live in Beirut because of, as I told you, the business connections with the Middle East and all that. And at the same time, I was coming to my studio here—my studios here. But then I moved my residency to Monaco.

[00:56:51.65] So Monaco is spending six months, where we have a social life. But at the same time, I have my invitations. Like, I have two exhibitions in Monaco. So it's because I'm living in Monaco that I'm having this. And one exhibition is lasting till the end of the year, again in a bank—in a big bank, major bank—and in a hotel.

[00:57:12.53] And of course, I am at Opera Gallery, for instance.

[00:57:15.27] But he's selling some of my work; sometimes in Miami, sometimes—he exhibited me last year. He gave me solo exhibition in Monaco last year. And I'm in Spain, I'm in Beirut, I'm in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Singapore—because he sent my paintings to all. And every off and on, there is one sale happening. Which is good, because I need to feel that people are liking my work without knowing me, and not because they know me. Because then my work is impacting without having the influence of knowing the artist.

[00:57:55.00] KATIE LARSON: Well, I mean, it's remarkable, the number of shows that you're doing on an annual basis. So I think that speaks to the strength of the work in and of itself.

[00:58:05.20] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes. I hope.

[00:58:06.10] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, And we've talked about a number of kind of very major events—political, sociopolitical events, historic events—that you've lived through. We haven't really touched on what your experience of the COVID pandemic was. Do you want to speak at all about that?

[00:58:20.65] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes: I had COVID, and I thought, I'm going to die. And really, I had the worst experience of COVID, where for 10 days I was with 40 degrees and sweating all the time in bed. And I thought, I don't recognize myself. That's what I—

[00:58:38.35] And one time, I fell in the bathroom, and my wife called the, uh—*urgences*—emerg—911. What do you—

[00:58:49.38] KATIE LARSON:—911, the emergency number.

[00:58:50.84] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: The hospital thing. And they came. They wanted to take me to hospital. And I said, No, I don't want to go to the hospital. And so they spoke to me a little bit. I said, No, I'm okay. I don't want to go. I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm okay. Then they left. And I passed that COVID thing.

[00:59:06.79] COVID was not a problem for me except for the being always with the mask. You fly, you this—of course I am with the mask very often also in my studio, but this is for working. But if you go on the plane with the mask, if you go on a train with the mask and all that, it becomes a hassle.

[00:59:26.88] So it didn't really bother me because I could work.

[00:59:30.76] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. So you didn't see an impact on your studio practice or your gallery exhibitions?

[00:59:37.92] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: No.

[00:59:39.00] KATIE LARSON: That's good. That's good.

[00:59:41.97] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: COVID was a bad experience for the world. But it comes, I don't know, from—bacteriological war can become one of the new dangers of tomorrow. They're still fighting with traditional weapons, and I don't know why, because with one push the whole planet can disappear. So why do you need to keep this aggressiveness and this fight? And when you realize at the end that there is death at the—we're not eternal. Just enjoy life and make the best out of it. And stop killing each other.

[01:00:19.65] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. No, absolutely. I mean, it does feel like sometimes we're

just bombarded with one negative thing after another. And so holding on to the positives feels really important. Anything else that you think we should cover that we haven't touched on?

[01:00:36.09] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I don't know. Many things come, but then they go. And I don't know. If you ask me a question, I'll answer you what I think. If you think you have all what you needed. And I look forward maybe to see it on—I mean, when it's finished. Will there be a print, or not—there will be—just this video will be there? I mean, will it be printed somewhere?

[01:01:02.52] KATIE LARSON: We'll send it to someone who will transcribe it. And they'll send you the transcript for you to review and to edit, if you like.

[01:01:11.94] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: [To Lisa:] *Allez-y.*

[01:01:14.03] LISA DE BOECK: If you mind, maybe it's a good idea to just have it rest a bit. And if there's anything else you would like to touch, we can be in touch with Katie.

[01:01:21.45] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And we can do something in a few months, for instance; maybe by the end of the year. And I'll talk about new things that we think are important. And if you think you have a, I don't know—a place where it can be published in America, for instance. I don't know. Because, as I told the Smithsonian, for me it's linked to the Hope Diamond.

[01:01:44.66] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:01:45.35] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: It's not the archive. It's the museum.

[01:01:48.44] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:01:49.76] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: But Smithsonian is in New York—or in Washington?

[01:01:53.39] KATIE LARSON: Well, so—both. But the Hope Diamond is in Washington at the American Natural History Museum.

[01:02:00.35] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And you are in New York?

[01:02:01.47] KATIE LARSON: I'm in DC. I'm in Washington, DC, as well.

[01:02:04.19] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Okay.

[01:02:04.51] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:02:05.09] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Is it the same space, the same place? I've never been to Washington. I went to Boston. I went to New York. But Wash—

[01:02:10.89] KATIE LARSON: You have to come to DC. Yeah, no, so it's on our National Mall, which has a number of kind of Smithsonian and federal museums. So there's American History, Natural History. The Hirshhorn is contemporary and modern art. The National Gallery of Art is a compendium. So it's a whole space of these wonderful, encyclopedic museums.

[01:02:36.93] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: So you are where the president will be?

[01:02:39.82] KATIE LARSON: That's right, yeah; in the White House. [Laughs.]

[01:02:42.69] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I was wondering why in America they only have two people that are—of that age. I mean, does there not exist a younger, more energetic, more —

[01:02:54.66] Although, I'm nearly the age of—the same—the same people presenting themselves. And I feel I have full control of my mind. But I think to rule a country, you need to be a little bit younger.

[01:03:10.75] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:03:11.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: 60 is better than 80.

[01:03:12.94] KATIE LARSON: I wish I had an answer for you. It's confounding. But [laughs] here we are.

[01:03:18.31] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And who are you voting for?

[01:03:19.88] [They laugh.]

[01:03:20.61] Or it is confidential. [Laughs.]

[01:03:22.57] KATIE LARSON: Well, we'll cut this from the—let's cut this from the video. [Laughs.] But I'm a Democrat. I'll vote for Joe Biden.

[01:03:30.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah.

[01:03:31.81] KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[01:03:32.80] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: We had a meeting with—we had a whole group of Europeans and Americans meeting at Villa Empain. They privatized our Villa to discuss about Ukraine and to take some decision. It just about one week ago.

[01:03:46.57] KATIE LARSON: Wow.

[01:03:47.17] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: And Blinken was supposed to come, but he was replaced, last minute, by somebody else. But I don't know. I didn't follow, because I was not here that day. I wanted to go and greet everyone and talk a few words about our foundation and why we are here and thank them for selecting our space. But they put three cars for security. They parked their car in my office because they needed to watch that security is well preserved and controlled and all that.

[01:04:18.93] Well, that sounds really incredible, that you have such significant dignitaries that are using the Foundation. So hopefully, it'll continue to be a site of peace and reconciliation—

[01:04:29.60] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Let's hope so.

[01:04:30.49] KATIE LARSON:—and our cultural diplomacy.

[01:04:34.43] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yes, we believe in cultural diplomacy.

[01:04:38.45] KATIE LARSON: Jean, before we finish, one question I do like to ask people, just as a way to kind of wrap up, is—you have this wonderful career and an amazing studio practice—do you have any advice for younger or emerging artists, lessons that you've learned over the past two decades?

[01:05:00.10] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: I think, if they hear the [laughs] whole conversation, everything is there. But one message to give: as I told you, the principles of honesty and hard work and vision.

[01:05:13.44] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful.

[01:05:14.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Honesty, hard work, and vision.

[01:05:16.58] KATIE LARSON: I think that's a good slogan. That's great. Well, thank you.

[01:05:20.88] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Thank you so much. So we'll keep in touch. But—maybe in a few months, when we think we have something. And we follow up about what you will print or what we will—I mean, whenever it's—

[01:05:34.02] JENNIFER SNYDER: Six months, it will be ready, the transcription.

[01:05:35.85] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, it usually is a little bit slow. But we'll definitely keep in touch. And if you—yeah, as you're working on other projects throughout the summer into the fall—if you decide it would be great to have a follow-up conversation, I would love to do that with you. So you can have Lisa get in touch with me. And I would be more than happy to do that. Yeah. Yeah.

[01:05:55.34] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Thank you, Katie.

[01:05:56.32] KATIE LARSON: You're welcome. It was so lovely to meet you and to meet Lisa as well. And I look forward to seeing all these amazing projects that you are coming out with.

[01:06:04.68] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah, my mind is always working. Night and day. It's like a computer. The neurons are always, uh—connecting.

[01:06:17.04] KATIE LARSON: Hey, I think that's wonderful. And it's very inspiring for me to see all these projects you're working on. I'm like, I got to start doing more things. [Laughs.] Jean is beating me right now.

[01:06:26.65] [The laugh.]

[01:06:28.35] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Yeah, it's with time. It takes time.

[01:06:31.74] KATIE LARSON: For sure.

[01:06:32.44] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Thank you so much.

[01:06:33.75] KATIE LARSON: All right. Well, you have a wonderful evening. And I'll look forward to being in touch with you.

[01:06:37.83] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Thank you so much.

[01:06:38.83] LISA DE BOECK: Thank you, Katie.

[01:06:39.52] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Bye, Katie.

[01:06:39.87] KATIE LARSON: Thank you.

[01:06:41.10] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Bye-bye

[01:06:41.22] LISA DE BOECK: Bye.

[01:06:41.49] JEAN BOGHOSSIAN: Bye-bye.

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