



## **Oral History of Auriea Harvey**

Interviewed by:  
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**Weber:** I'm Marc Weber of the Computer History Museum and Charlton McIlwain and I are interviewing Auriea Harvey who is a pioneer. Well, she's a fine artist who's a pioneer of web and game design, as well as an artist and a sculptor, and thank you so much for doing this.

**Harvey:** Oh, my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me.

**McIlwain:** Indeed, Auriea. It's a pleasure to meet you. Honored to get to talk to you. So I look forward to hearing what you've got to tell us today and sharing a little bit about your life, and history, and journey, and all those things that we want to learn much more about.

**Harvey:** Yeah. Thank you.

**McIlwain:** So we'll start with an easy one, which is if you can just tell us your full name, and when, and where you were born.

**Harvey:** My name is Auriea Louise Harvey and I was born in 1971 In Indianapolis, Indiana, in the United States.

**McIlwain:** Perfect and can you tell us a little bit about your family, your parents, siblings?

**Harvey:** Yeah. Okay, let's see. That's like funny because you asked about my history, but it's like such a long story that I'm like, okay. So I'll keep this computer focused. But I was raised by my mother, a very matriarchal family, meaning I didn't really get along with my father, nor know him very well, even though we lived quite near each other in Indianapolis. Long story there. But most importantly, my mother, Doris Jean Davis, always wanted us to think internationally, and so she would take us to the airport, for example, as a way of sort of entertaining us four kids because I have two sisters and a brother, and so she was always trying to kind of broaden our minds in a lot of different ways, and she was a lot of things. But at one point in her life, she was a keypunch, or what do you call it? A computer punch card operator, punch card operator, and she did this for many years, and so she knew about computers, let's say in that sense, that she understood them to be something very important, and they were the future. She was one of those mothers who said, computers are the future, and so she encouraged me to be interested in them as well and sent me at a very young age to computer camp, you might say. This was in the early 80s even, so I was maybe eight years old when I was first learning about computers.

So it was, of course, very early days of computing in terms of the home computing sense. So it was a box that hooked up to a television set, and I just went to this computer club and learned how to program in BASIC as a child, which to me was good fun for some reason, and I loved making hearts go across the screen, and I enjoyed these books that you can get that had code in them, and me and my sister would type in the code on the computer, and we couldn't save. So it was usually like we would debug until we got bored, and then we would go out and play or something, and so I can't remember exactly what my first computer was. I think it was some Timex computer actually. But it was a very strange situation because I was the only person in my family who was interested in this. Maybe it's because I was

encouraged or because I don't know. I was a bit more... I was more in the house. I was less social, let's say, than my brothers and sisters. We were in quite a poor neighborhood, I guess also, and so my mother was in some ways trying to protect me from things all the time, and she was extremely protective of me in ways that she wasn't protective of my brothers and sisters, let's say, which was annoying to me, but at the same time, I understand now as an adult why she did that.

**McIlwain:** Were you the youngest? What order?

**Harvey:** Yeah, I was the youngest. I was the youngest of all. So I think this had something to do with it. Also, I just had a different character. I was more shy, I guess, when I was young, and so yeah, I guess I was born a computer geek in a funny way, in that sense. Like I was perfectly happy to sit there programming in BASIC as an eight- or nine-year-old, which is funny at that moment. But at any rate, yeah. If you have any specific questions just stop me because otherwise, I'll keep talking.

**McIlwain:** Well, there are a lot of details in there. I'm really curious about for one, your mother. So you mentioned she was a keypunch operator.

**Harvey:** Yeah, I think on a naval base, I think, but I'm not sure.

**McIlwain:** I was going to ask you, where did she come about that? Was that a function of just the job that she held or had she had some interest?

**Harvey:** I think it was just a job that she had. But funny enough, and this will come up later, it led to her lifelong interest in computing also. So my mother was a jazz singer. In her heart, she was very much an artist, a singer. She had various bands throughout her life singing jazz in clubs and restaurants and things like that. She even went on tour at a certain point when she was younger. She has a beautiful voice, so I grew up with music and jazz all around me, and that comes back too in my work throughout my career, the way that this music and the singing like sort of became kind of a subtext in some ways to my thinking about art.

**McIlwain:** So it sounds like from very young then you've got all of these sorts of makings of what ends up being your future kind of right there, the computing, the thinking about the international, and where that can take you, the artistic, whether it's singing and the jazz. It seems like that was very formative early and then just sort of blossomed.

**Harvey:** She had a very formative, very important record collection. I think now I wish she still had all those records. But anyway, yeah, it's like I think looking at them, looking at record covers, and all this sort of stuff also like gave me this kind of multimedia view of art in a funny way. Like also because I mean when you have four kids, you're always trying to entertain them. So it's like I said. She'd do things like take us to the airport. At the time, in Indianapolis, the Indianapolis Museum of Art was free. It really broke my heart when they started charging admission. Because the museum was free, she would also take us to the art museum, just something to do, but I had a real fascination for like Chinese ceramics, or like I don't know. Just whatever was there, I was always really into everything, and I would go to the library,

and I would look things up, and like things like this. So she was a great mom. She is a great mom, I would say. She's still lives.

**McIlwain:** That's great.

**Weber:** Were you specifically interested in art? Sorry, Charlton.

**McIlwain:** No, go ahead.

**Harvey:** I was specifically interested in art, but I didn't realize it in a way. You know what I mean? It was things like if there would be a drawing contest in school that if I didn't win, I'd be really upset because I wanted to be the best one, that could draw the best or something, and like funny things like this is what I remember. I didn't really want to be an artist until I became a teenager, but this is maybe we'll get to it.

**McIlwain:** Definitely.

**Harvey:** Yeah. Because what happened with the computer, my mother-- since I loved it so much, she got me a VIC-20, a Commodore VIC-20, and of course, I can't recall the year, but it was right when the VIC-20 came out. She must have saved up for it for a long time, and ready for it to come out, and like got it for me for Christmas, and I believe she got me two games with that, but I'm not sure. What is for sure is eventually I ended up having the tape deck, so that you could record your programs onto cassette, and I had games on cassette, which were text adventure games. Right? The text adventures definitely came first. There was Voodoo Castle and what was the other one? Oh, Voodoo Castle and I can't remember it, but at any rate, Voodoo Castle was the first game I ever beat, and I was so happy. I could not have been more than nine years old. I finished the game, and I just went running through the house, I finished it, I finished it. Like I was so psyched. It took me a long time too because it was difficult for a child anyways.

**McIlwain:** I'm guessing you mentioned your siblings, probably not, but probably not any of your classmates in school, et cetera that we're doing this.

**Harvey:** No one. I knew no one, only the other kids in the computer club. I mean it was a computer club. So I'd go on the weekends. I'd go on Saturdays or something and we would learn different things. There was someone who would teach us different things about BASIC and other things about how computers worked and stuff like that. But there was nothing, no one else, not at school obviously, and not anywhere else other than that, but this was the time of arcades also. So let's talk about that for a minute. There were tons of arcade games going on in the early and mid-80s. So people knew what computers were in that sense, and so in that respect, there were TV shows. There were lots of TV shows in America about games specifically, but computers in general, so it was a topic out in society and stuff. It wasn't too strange to have an interest in computers at that moment. It just wasn't the interest of anyone else around me. My sister and I both loved watching the... they had game shows even where people were playing videogames, and everyone wanted to go to the arcade and play a game as a child. But we weren't allowed to do that very much because that was a waste of money, obviously, and if you didn't have a lot of money. I mean we would sometimes, if we were going to a movie, my mother would do something

special, like treat us to a movie, going out to the cinema, and so we were allowed to play one game. We'd get one quarter. So we were never any good at any of those games. But my favorite was Tempest. I loved Tempest because of the rendering. It's like I learned later, of course, that it's a vector game engine and not like... so it's a special kind of game rendering, and I just loved the knob on it, the joystick turn-- what was it? Like kind of a trackball kind of, but you could turn it in a circle, and I really loved this. So yeah, go down that rabbit hole.

**McIlwain:** It's interesting to hear you talking about a game that early, but even in that sense, some of the features of the game beyond the play seem to have drawn your interest.

**Harvey:** Yeah. I was very attracted to the way it moved and I liked it better than any of the other games, I guess. I liked Centipede also, but Tempest was the only one I would waste my quarter on. It was like nothing else.

**Weber:** Well games were the cutting edge. I mean, the highest performance and some of the interesting arts, so it makes a lot of sense.

**Harvey:** Yeah, it was fun, and so other than that, the great tragedy which happened a bit later was that I lost interest in computers when I was probably hitting puberty. I probably turned 13, and was like okay, that was fun and everything, but enough of that. That's for boys suddenly. It felt like it was something that boys were into, and certainly as a young black girl, it didn't feel like I was cool or something. I got very self-conscious, and like I said, I was shy, and it felt like something that was just not interesting to anyone but me, and I couldn't do that or something. It was all in my head, but you're a kid, and you don't know what you're doing, so I dropped it. I dropped it like a hot potato. I gave my computer to my nephew, and I just didn't want anything to do with it at all, like nothing. My mother would mention it and I'd get angry. I was just like no.

**McIlwain:** Did this coincide at all-- what was happening with the computer club? Was that out of your neighborhood, it was easy to separate?

**Harvey:** No. That had ended by this time. Like before that I'd stopped doing that. I just had the computer at home on my own and was... I think I mean the interest in games kind of continued, but not very strongly. It's like everybody wanted an Atari or to play Mario or something. But like it wasn't very important to me and I just let it all go. I was just like never mind. I don't know why. I can only chalk it up to puberty, and like yeah, my perception of myself or wanting to have a different perception of myself or something. But artistically, other things happened at that time also. So this is like junior high. Okay, so for a minute, for like two years, we left Indianapolis and we moved to Nebraska, Omaha, I lived in Omaha, Nebraska for two years when I was maybe 11, I want to say, like 10, 11, 11, 12, something like this, and that was a strange moment also because being in a completely different state, and but I loved Nebraska, surprisingly, and I did really well there. My mother put me in some open-concept school called Jocelyn Elementary, and it was very... you learned at your own pace. It was not like the public school I had been to in Indianapolis. She put me in this school where you were given the ability to proceed however fast or slow you could, so I just went off, basically, and I loved to read, and so my reading was incredibly high. I

had an aptitude for like all kinds of manual things, so I could like-...and they just sort of let students do what they were best at. It's like very kind of hippie-dippy now maybe, but it was amazing, and I loved it so much. Like you could get perks like working in the cafeteria or like I don't know. It was just, it was really funny.

**McIlwain:** Nice. So can you say a little bit more? I want to [go] back to Indianapolis, and the computer club, and sort of through your neighborhood, and then the transition to Nebraska, and the question is other people of color, are there other girls of color in the computer club? Is that demographic changing as your...

**Harvey:** No. I mean I wasn't really aware of that either. So like no, but I would say no. Like it was just kids. You're very young, so you're not really thinking like that. So I couldn't tell you honestly. I would say that I just enjoyed the club, and I barely remember. I remember the computer. It's funny. I don't remember any of the people. I don't remember the teacher. Although there had to have been an instructor obviously. I just remember the machine being this black plastic flat with like the keys were flat also, like so it was like-- and I just remember that, and yeah, it was a lot of kids. I mean it wasn't a lot, but it was well attended and all of that.

**McIlwain:** The neighborhood itself that you grew up in, in Indianapolis, was it primarily black? Was it a mixed neighborhood, primarily white?

**Harvey:** Yeah. It was primarily-- most of my-- before we went to Nebraska, let's say like that, before we moved to Nebraska, I was definitely living in the projects, living in the 'hood. Yes, I was living in a predominantly black neighborhood, somewhat dangerous, but it's Indianapolis, and in the 70s. Yeah, so I didn't have a whole lot of consciousness about what was around me too much because I was so young. I just know what people told me or tell me, that it was... about what it was. I remember little things. That's all.

**McIlwain:** Did your mom, as you recall, did she make an effort to protect you from those things, or sort of bringing you up <inaudible>?

**Harvey:** I wasn't allowed to go to anybody's house. I couldn't go trick or treating. I couldn't like... I mean, if there was a sleep over, I was not allowed to go. I mean she just kept me inside. She just was like, no, you're not going anywhere, which was fine by me honestly because I just wanted to sit around and read, and I mean, I was just a very little geek girl. So and I think that was part of it, and the reason I brought up Nebraska is more than just the fact that I went to a special school and all that. It's the fact that when I went back-- we moved back to Indianapolis after my great grandmother died. We went to the funeral, and then my mother was like okay, we're moving back, which I later found out all the reasons why we moved back. But when we got back, I didn't have that special school anymore, and I was expected to go back to public school, and it turned out that I was just too smart for my grade at that point, like the grade that I was testing into, like but they didn't want me to skip grades, and so I had to go to public school and just be in the grade I was in, which meant that I felt like a freak because I was kind of smarter than everybody at that point because of the special school being-- so that was just a great system for me, and then you

get back into normal education, and it became sort of a struggle. But so this led to again, my mother realizing that this was a problem, that I was going to have nothing but trouble because I wasn't getting along with other kids and all this other stuff. So she then took me out again, and it was right when Indianapolis had started what they called the magnet program, and this meant that certain students, if they could test into it, could go to schools for things like math, science. You could specialize in the arts. You could specialize in languages, stuff like that, and so I tested into this program and decided to study languages, and you would think I would go the arts route, but I didn't, and I'd say that before that, there's one more important thing to say though about this. Actually, not before. This is kind of in the middle of this because it's like junior high where I make this switch from being in this public school to going to the magnet system.

The important thing about that was I won a trip to Japan. My art teacher told us about this contest that was given by the Asia Society in New York, and TDK in Japan, and they had a contest for different American junior high students to draw a picture and to write an essay. So you drew a picture about what you knew about Japan, and wrote an essay about what you wanted to know about Japan, and so they chose two students from each of the states where they were running this contest, and I won, and what you won was two weeks in Japan, and so this was the first time I was-- it was 1985, so I guess I was 13 or 14, and they basically-- you didn't go with your parents. That was the other thing. You went with your art teacher, since this was through an art class, and at the magnet school, so anyway, so I took my art teacher to Japan, but you were there with like a whole group of kids, and all their art teachers, and all the guides, and like all this stuff, and you were basically given an artistic tour of Japan. Like so we went to where they dye cloth in a special way, or we learned calligraphy, and we learned ikebana, and I mean I had already been studying Japanese for two years by that time because I went into the languages program. So that was another reason probably why I won, and I was talking-- my essay was all about Japanese fashion because I liked Japanese fashion designers for some reason, and I actually used to draw on my sketchbook like sort of fashion designs and stuff like this because I had a sketchbook. Somebody told me once, so all artists have a sketchbook. So but I was interested in bringing back robots from Japan. At that point I did want to see like what arcades were like in Japan, and I did, and all that stuff, but it was extremely important because the contrast, like of course, I had never been in a plane, and I had never gone so far away obviously, without my mother.

But I'd say that the important bit there was that... and I've mentioned this. Let me try and phrase this properly. It was odd because if you were going to take a car ride to Chicago from Indianapolis, my mother would be like we're not stopping anywhere in Indiana. We're driving until we get to Gary and then maybe we can stop. But otherwise, you were driving straight to Chicago because it was a time of... I don't know how to put it nicely, so I'm just going to say it. There was a lot of racial tension, and Indiana kind of being the epicenter of things like the Ku Klux Klan, and like a lot of real conservative... I don't want to say conservative even, just racist attitudes, which I, of course was too young to be aware of, but my mother had a heightened consciousness of like yeah, well, you don't want to get out of the car because you don't know how people are going to be. My mother was born in 1939. Okay, so she saw everything, if you know what I mean. She was there during segregation. She felt everything and really remembered that, it seems like, so she was very sensitive on the one hand, and I don't know if she was ever exaggerating, or whatever, or not. I was too young to understand that. But in my mind, it was dangerous out there for many

reasons, both in my neighborhood on the one hand, but then on the other hand, because there was this thing called racism that I didn't quite understand, and I couldn't know why she wouldn't want to stop to get gas on the way or something. We're going to make sure we just drive through. So for me to get on a plane and go to Japan was a bit like-- I couldn't even imagine it. They came and some representatives from Asia Society came and took us out to dinner, and that was my first taste of Japanese food, and then they were like oh, yeah, we're going to go, and I'm like okay, I'm going to Tokyo and Kyoto, and I'm going to have a homestay in Kanazawa, and it was sort of unthinkable. But I was so excited, and she was so excited, and worried, and everything. But anyway, it was a big deal, and it definitely blew my whole brain open and made me think differently about a lot of things.

**McIlwain:** Like you mentioned you had an interest in Japanese fashion and so forth. Where were you getting that kind of introduction? Was it magazines?

**Harvey:** Television.

**McIlwain:** Television, yeah, of course.

**Harvey:** Television. It was the time when you were just in front of the television nonstop. So I would say... how should I even say this on camera? CNN used to have a TV show about fashion and they'd show you like the latest runway shows or something. Like and I would see this, and so I just noticed that I really liked the Japanese fashion designers, so I would look at magazines, and I would see the fashion, and I'd be like oh, that's really interesting like, and I would draw from the magazines and stuff, like you do when you're younger, and yeah, so it definitely was a real interest, and so when we were there, I went to all the secondhand kimono shops, and looked at the fabric, and like tried to understand like how people dressed there and just other teenagers, and it was so much fun in that respect.

Like the students, the young kids would get dressed up. Like they'd wear a uniform all week, and then in the weekend, they would go to the park and get all dressed up, and it was really cool to witness all that. Of course, the downside of it was that while I was there, I was literally like pointed at in the streets like <makes gasping sound> because I was very, very tall as a child. I got tall really fast, so I was very tall, and I was skinny, extremely skinny, and I must have looked very odd to them. At that time, they didn't see a lot of black people, and so I was made to feel very special indeed. But we all were. I mean the whole group of us kids, we went to schools there to see other kids our age, and they would mob us because they gave us cards with our names on it spelled in Japanese characters and would give it to the kids, so that they could pronounce our names and stuff, and yeah, it was quite a thing.

**McIlwain:** So even though it was new, and they were fascinated by you as someone very unique and different, you didn't have that sense of what you were experiencing in Indianapolis in terms of the surroundings and the dangers.

**Harvey:** No. It was different. But I'd say I learned the difference between me and other people on that., I'd say it was filled with ups and downs that one would expect of young teenagers all together in a foreign country. I mean you made friends. You made enemies. We went to go see... what was it? Mad Max or



something, Beyond Thunderdome in the theater we went to. I don't know. We did all kinds of things you would expect young kids to want to do, including going shopping, and all that sort of stuff, and I got my robots, along with a bunch of other things, gifts that people had given me, and it was really cool.

**McIlwain:** So what happens when you get back? You're 15, and I think probably some of this, as you mentioned earlier, your artistic sensibilities are starting to come into play, in consciousness a little bit more, or no?

**Harvey:** A little bit, but only from the standpoint of I was very serious about my sketchbooks, and I always have been. So I was always drawing things and that really got more intensified when I got back. I would say that I got, in some ways, more introspective, and I still wasn't interested in computers again yet, or games, or anything like that. But I'd say that artistically, I got more interested in things. However at school, I continued to study languages, and when it came time-- like when it became time for me to go to high school, I decided to study languages still, instead of going to the arts focused school, and I still don't regret that. I still wonder at that, in a way. Like that was a funny choice. But I had been studying Japanese. I had been studying French. I'd been studying like Spanish, like all these things, and I thought this was very interesting, something interesting for the future, in some ways. Everyone expected me to go to the art school, but I just was like no, I'm going to study languages. I also didn't want to be told what to make, I think, also. Like I didn't want it to become-- and this is-- I'm just still like this. I didn't want to have assignments. I wanted to just make what I made. So time goes on, and I become a lot more of a difficult teenager as one does, I suppose, and that's when I became an artist, honestly. I had to get depressed enough in some ways.

**McIlwain:** Depressed, and rebellious, and everything that goes in.

**Harvey:** Yeah, it was hard for me to make friends, and the one thing I could do was draw, and that was how I made friends with people, to be honest. If there was a party, I'd be the one in the back like painting on somebody's jacket. Like there would be like-- it's somebody's house, it'd be a party, but I couldn't social. I don't know. I just wasn't able to really connect without that. That was my social lubricant was like drawing people, or like I had cute boys asking me to give them drawing lessons, stuff like that, so it was my way of being social was using art, and so once you get depressed enough, it was sort of like okay, I'm an artist then, and that made me feel better. It was comforting somehow. I was like that's my problem. It was something. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** At that point, were you resigned to-- or resigned is probably not the better word, but started to see your identity as an artist and see that as your future in terms of what you would do?

**Harvey:** Yeah, I mean I'd say when I was a very young child, I thought I would be a scientist. I wanted to be a pure research scientist who found like cures for diseases and stuff, and then the next phase, I guess, I thought I wanted to learn lots of languages and become a translator, whatever that means, and I also thought, oh, I could draw pictures, be that person who draws pictures during court cases or something. It was like these are my thoughts, and then thought oh, well, maybe I could combine these interests, and I could become a scientific illustrator for a minute. I even tried studying that when I got to

college. But I think that once I decided to be an artist, it just was a relief. I felt relief. I felt total relief, like yes, okay, and then I just leaned into that, and started painting, and loved paint, and still no computers yet, but we're getting there.

**McIlwain:** All right. So you mentioned college. So talk to me a little bit about that transition, how you ended up in New York City.

**Harvey:** I went to New York. Yeah. How I ended up in New York, went to a portfolio review day in Chicago at the school, the Art Institute, and there were all the colleges and representatives to look at portfolios, and I met, of all people, Tim Gunn, representing Parsons School of Design, and I showed him my portfolio, which then was very fashion heavy and very illustration-y, and I asked him, I said, "Do you think I could get into Parsons?" Okay, now there was no internet or anything. I randomly saw Parsons School of Design New York City, and went up to this guy, and was like cool, I want to go there. I did not want to stay anywhere near Indiana, Indianapolis. I really did not like Indianapolis for all kinds of reasons. So I wanted to get away from there as much as I could, as far as I could, and actually, what I really wanted to do when I was applying to schools was, I wanted to go to school in Venice, in Italy, but my mother was like, "Are you out of your mind? No," and refused to even entertain this idea because I had written away and gotten a brochure from art school in Venice. I chose that also randomly. There was no way to really research anything if you know what I mean. You could go to the library, and you could call people kind of, but long-distance calling was not really something you could do, and so it was like when I heard about things, it was kind of like in the back of some magazine or something. I was like I don't know.

So anyway, so at this portfolio day, I saw Parsons School of Design. I talked to Tim Gunn. He liked my portfolio. He told me to apply. I applied and I got in. Meanwhile, my mother-- I did have to do all the things that parents make you do. I had to apply to other schools. So I also got into RISD, and I got a free ride to the Savannah College of Art and Design, but I was just like nope, I'm going to New York, and my mom kept going, "Why don't you just go to school in Chicago?" and I'm like, "No, too close." I mean you can edit that out. I think she knows that I just wanted to go away. Like I wanted to be far away for some reason, and I didn't... like California didn't occur to me. But New York seemed like well, eventually, if you're an artist, eventually you have to go to New York City anyway was sort of my... I believed the propaganda, the New York City propaganda.

**McIlwain:** It was a calling and I assume you had never been there before.

**Harvey:** Never. I hadn't been there until we went and visited a friend of my mom's. When I got into Parsons and knew I wanted to go, we drove to New York City, and we stayed with a drummer, a friend of my mother's and his wife in Harlem, and I went and saw the school, and I went to the Met, which was a dream, an absolute... like there's just no words for how amazing that was for me, and then we drove home. We stayed there for maybe, I don't know, three or four days, a week. I don't know. Then we drove home, and then the next time I went back to New York City, she dropped me off at the dorm, and then drove away. It was just like and now I'm in New York. Yeah.

**Harvey:** So when you started Parsons, have you had your sort of sensibilities as an artist developed enough that you entered with kind of a sense or philosophy of art, or who you were as an artist, or saw yourself being as an artist? Or were you kind of just open to being in this place?

**Harvey:** I was open because I knew that I didn't know anything, but at the same time, I had my ways. I was very into painting. So I immediately started painting portraits of people in my style. There was lots of color, very realistic though, and people were impressed, slash jealous enough to make me feel shitty about it. Sorry. I shouldn't curse. Jealous enough to make me feel like I don't know. I don't know. Like I should question it or something. Or also, this was the late 80s now, so we're like in 1989. Yeah, 1989 and New York City in 1989, nobody was painting. At least this is what everybody was telling me. Nobody's painting. It was in some ways. It was Keith Haring. It was the tail-end of Warhol. It was I mean the rise of Jeff Koons. You know what I mean? It was very different. It's like so I had to sort of learn a lot about what contemporary art was, but I really liked traditional painting. I loved the old masters. I was very stuck in my ways of wanting to make very beautiful, realistic portraits of people, let's say, and that's what I did, and then I got kind of attacked for it in a funny way. There's no other way to say it. I think anybody who went to art school at that time will say the same thing that they had sort of all the beauty and the realism beaten out of them in a certain sense, and that's the kind of the only way I can describe it, to be honest, and so I was, in some ways, encouraged, slash pressured to look towards other ways of working, which I guess is supposed to be what art school is, right? I mean I gave up painting entirely and started thinking about other things, which quite early on led me back to computers because Parsons School of Design opened their computer lab that year in 1990.

They had a computer lab, but it was basically like a couple DOS boxes, and it was really only used by certain... in a more academic way, like students who wanted to do stuff on a word processor or something, and I think there was only like one computer that had this dial up thing. It was like an academic network. But anyway, they started a real computer lab where they had three PCs, three DOS computers that were probably running some very early DOS, but I think windows 3.1 might have been out. I don't recall that. But the cool thing about the PCs was that they were hooked up to-- okay, they had like an early versions of a 3D program called Crystal 3D on there, and there was also Luma [ph?], which was a very early- or Lumina [ph?]. I can't remember. Very early painting program. But to describe it as a painting program or as a 3D program is kind of different because it was mainly you had to code the 3D, and then you had to kind of wait overnight for it to render to a slide, and then you would see your image, but like way after the film had been processed, so it was like a very primitive 3D program in that sense.

But it's so you had to program your world, which I wasn't very good at, but I was interested sort of. So anyway, I had a friend, a good friend of mine who also loved computers at that time. He loved computers, and I had told him that I used to love computers, let's put it that way, and he said to me, "Oh, Parsons is opening up their computer lab. It's the highest paying work-study job. You should go see if you get a job there," because money, and I was like okay, because he had gotten a job there, and he's like, "Yeah, the more you learn, they'll give you a raise. You'll make more," and I was like, "Hey, sign me up." So I went and got that as my work-study job because I had to work my way through college basically, and so the idea of a job where I was going to get paid more if I learned more was awesome, and I just said, I will learn everything in this entire lab, and that's what I did. They had another room that had all the Macs in it

because this was-- I think the Macs that we had were Mac Ilcis, so that was the first computer. The Mac Ilci was the first computer that I could call my own in that sense. It wasn't really my own, but I loved that machine. I felt bonded to the Mac Ilci, and I just learned everything, all the programs, like so it was Adobe Photoshop 1.0, early versions of Illustrator and Freehand. What else? I mean there was some network games on there. We had like I don't know. I'm not going to remember all the names of them, but like early SimCity, like SimCity was out, like so it's like we just learned all this stuff. We learned about networking and we just taught this to ourselves. Like just kind of some somebody knew something. We knew something else. They had two LaserWriters or something, and then eventually we got one of these great printers, four color printers that had like ink on a roll or something and CMYK. So it would like go through the printer four times, and then I learned abuse that for my own purposes. But the important thing about that experience in the computer lab was I just was so happy. To this day, that's the best job I've ever had, like for so many reasons, and I was trying to use the computers for my art schoolwork.

There was nothing I could look at to guide me in that desire. There was nothing. I would go to the library, and I would try to find computer art or artists using computers, but there were no books on this, and so I saw in a magazine once, an artist, Ed Paske or something that seemed like he had used computers at some point in his process or something, and I was like okay, that's something, but it's like but there was just nothing to go by. Like so I was using Photoshop to do drawing work, and printing it out, and taking it to class, and my teacher was just like, "No, you can't do this. This is not art," and I was like okay, and but I still would do things like scan in photographs and try to make photo collages. It was a laborious, tedious process honestly, back then because there was no-- the first versions of Photoshop, there was one undo or something like this, and it's not like you had layers or anything until version 2.5 or something. I don't know. So it was but I would do it and the programs would get updated. We always look forward to the updates because they gave you new features, so quickly things got better in all these programs. But it was just so much fun to try and use them for art.

**McIlwain:** Was anyone else coming through the lab trying to use it for those same purposes or they were just trying to...

**Harvey:** I would say, I wouldn't say no one. I would say that like we all had bits and pieces of the puzzle, and we were all trying to-- I mean there were the graphic design students primarily used the lab, all the Mac's, like to use early versions of Quark Express and stuff like that. So I learned QuarkXPress, which turned out to be very important, and so I learned about design through the design students. They learned how to use the computers from me, but I learned how to how to do typography. I learned about like what a balanced design is in the graphic sense. I learned all that stuff just from other students, and so I really am thankful to have had that, and it's like so in terms of my actual major in art school, I shifted from painting to product design, which I hated with the passion of a thousand fiery suns, and I shifted then to-- it happened that I ran into a very good new professor who was there for teaching furniture design, and he taught me how to do woodworking, how to weld, how to make furniture, basically, and I was really good at that, and I really enjoyed making furniture. Like it was weird furniture. This is why I had to drop out of product design because all my products were weird and possibly dangerous, and they were just like no, you have to-- I thought I could invent a better toaster. I thought I could I don't know. I was making very interest-- I was using my imagination to come up with products rather than trying to design an actual

toaster. You know what I mean? I would try to think, okay, how can we make this interesting. Like I said, possibly dangerous, me and electricity, and also it was too precise. I couldn't deal with that kind of drawing. I did, like I said, try to do scientific illustration. But again, it was too precise. I was interested in perhaps going to medical school and studying, so that I could draw from a cadaver or something like this, and really learn anatomy, and all that. I was super interested in that. But I think I was more interested in computers, to be honest, and so therefore it took up more of my time, and I kind of let that fall. So what happened was-- okay, to make a long story short, what happened academically was that I decided I couldn't stay in the design department because it just wasn't for me. But and then when I tried to go back to fine arts, they said, you're going to have to take another year, and I said, I can't take another year because I couldn't afford it, and so they said, well or you can go into sculpture because everything I had done with the furniture design teacher transferred to the sculpture department, and I said, okay, I'll go into sculpture then, and so I ended up in the sculpture department, which was important because at that moment, it was a big time of discussion. What is Sculpture? Sculpture was no longer just a figurative art. Sculpture in many ways could be anything. So at that moment, you had a lot of students fighting for video art, believe it or not. They were fighting for film, or the moving image as being part of sculpture, and so I got to be the one who was like, "Well, what about computers then? Can we think of a way that computers are sculpture, or we can do our artwork with computer?" and I was also on their side. It's like so yeah, I did a lot of...

**McIlwain:** How did you think about computers as sculpture? What was your sort of theory of that?

**Harvey:** Well, I enjoyed making regular sculpture. I really loved like clay, and wax, and metals. I really enjoyed welding and all that. But I also enjoyed photography quite a lot. I'd say that was my minor, was photography. So a lot of what I did with computers to bring them into the sculptural was I would scan things in, and I would find ways of outputting them, and this was not always evident because you have your LaserWriter. It has a certain dot pattern. It wasn't like now where everything looks photographic. It had a certain pattern to it, and so you had to work with that or work against it. I would output things that... we can go back to this printer I was telling you about with the rolls of ink. So I would print things out through that printer, and I would wait until the roll was done, or I don't remember how I would do it actually. But I would get the layers that my print had been output on, and I would mount them in frames like sort of spatially. So it would look-...from one view you would see the full color image, but then you could sort of see the layers in some ways. I did sort of photographic processes somewhat. Excuse me. I'm getting like messages on my phone and it's annoying because it's buzzing. Okay, I'm turning it off. There.

Most importantly, okay, so the most important bit that I did in this respect was I combined-- I've always had this love of old processes and new. So I would do things like get a Photostat. This was a process that was done because you couldn't... how can I describe this? Photostat was like mainly for designers to get a... they would do paste up of a magazine layout, right, on a board, and so that's what I would do too. I would do a paste up or a collage, and then you take it to a service bureau, and they would take a photo of it, but it was called a Photostat. So what you got was a giant negative or a positive. I can't remember which, but you got a giant film with your image on it, and what I would do is I would take those photostats, and I would take a glass plate, and I would coat the glass plate with a photo emulsion, and I would do a

contact print onto the glass, and then I would set up these glass plates in different ways, like and use those as part of my work. So I was trying to find photographic ways to get things out of the computer and onto substrates. So I would also do this with cloth because you could paint this emulsion onto cloth, and so I would find some way of making a negative, any way I could to make a negative from the computer, like and photostat turned out to be a great way to do that. So but it was actually me manipulating images in the computer, printing them, making a collage, getting a photostat, and then finding some way of transferring that into-- yeah, it was a whole process. It was a whole process because there was just no other way to do it. I mean as time went on, my techniques changed, obviously.

**McIlwain:** So I'll get back to the sort of chronology in a second. But I'm really sort of fascinated with this idea about sort of sculpture and your sensibility to get things out of the computer and think about things that are coded and <inaudible>.

**Harvey:** I put so many strange materials through the LaserWriter, the laser printer. Like they were getting mad at me because I was like, "Can I put wax paper through?" I would just be-- I would dip a paper in wax, and then I would put it through the printer and like see where it melted or where it-- like I mean I caused problems, but it's like, and then I would make like sort of sculptural like collages and objects and things with these prints on it. It's like to me it was just all about printing. So it wasn't about programming, I guess is what I'm trying to say. But it was about using programs and then misusing like hardware, I guess to find ways to create what I was trying to create. It was just the only way I could think of to do it, really.

**Harvey:** So what ended up being the outcome of that? So you're done with Parsons. You graduate. Did you have a project that you had to do to get out and to finish?

**Harvey:** Yeah, I was into... on top of everything else, I was into performance art. So I actually was a performer for my professor, Lesley Dill. I did several performances for her, meaning it was her art, but I was the one who was performing, so to speak. So there was quite a digression into performance art, and that was my final, but okay, so my final had a few pieces to it, but I welded-- yeah, okay, I welded a kind of cage that fit exactly around me, and I wrapped myself up in red velvet, and I stood inside the cage, and then all my fellow students came in for my crit, and they didn't know that I was in there and stuff like this. But at the same time, around me in this it was a whole installation, and it involved x-rays and things that I had scanned in and output, and they were all hanging. I went through this whole phase in New York City of trying to find different materials that I could get for free and stuff, and so also I made a giant book which involved photographic prints and computer prints that was made out of stuff I found at an abandoned house, basically, like all kinds of textures, materials, and stuff like this. But I got out of school. Let's put it like that. I made a lot of different things. Very multimedia. A sound piece like with music boxes and these tin constructions, like all kinds of stuff.

**McIlwain:** When you ended this particular moment in your life, your identity is still as an artist. The computer was a tool. You're not sort of...

**Harvey:** I wouldn't say a computer was a tool for me ever. Like it was more than a tool for me. It really felt like even though it was just using programs and doing very trivial types of programming, like it really felt

like it was-- like even then felt like a lifestyle. It felt like-- no, this is-- I'm someone who uses computers. Like I just really, really dug them. So when I graduated in, I guess 1993, the first thing I thought was what am I going to do for job because I'm still broke. I'm a broke 22-year-old or 21-year-old, 22-year-old, and so I went and got a job. I had been working the whole time, obviously. But I was working in like a copy store, and I was working at school, and so I worked at the copy store just so I'd have access to the color printer because you could hook up your-- there was a computer hooked up to the printer. It was like a Xerox machine, color Xerox copier, and you could print directly from the computer to the copier. So I just abused that job as well to create books. I made artists books and that was another thing I did for my final thesis. I made a very well received thesis book called Millions of Secrets are Generated Every Day, as I recall. Yeah, and which was a combination of all kinds of things, images, and stories, poetry, and an actual thesis. But yeah, and so when I got out of school, I figured, okay, well, I'll just keep using my computer skills because this is the thing that I can do to make money. I can do this to make money while I figure out my art thing, and so I also got a studio with another girl where we could continue welding, and I got an apprenticeship when I graduated with a couple of artists where they were basically taking advantage of young people to do lots of heavy work, and I didn't last very long at that, and I just said no, computers because working for as an artist assistant in a semi-abusive situation was not for me, and so I decided to keep doing computers.

Also I should mention that one of my sculpture professors, Rona Pondick, sculptor Rona Pondick, amazing sculptor. I should have paid more attention to what she was teaching me, to be honest. But I did computer work for her as well. Like she was interested in how I had been trying to use a computer, and after I graduated, I still did a few things for her like in terms of just experiments, really, to help her understand how she might use computers in her work, and but then I kind of ran away from that as well. I don't know. I was a little bit weird, and I think I just wanted to make my own way somehow, and I wish that I had done things differently in some ways. But in other ways, I kind of understand myself. So I went off, and I became a tutor, a computer tutor for hire at some awful place where I was fired, and then after that, I've graduated. I've just been fired from my first post-graduation job and I just laid on a couch for two weeks completely depressed with my roommates going, you got to get up.

**McIlwain:** Why were you fired?

**Harvey:** Because I was bad at teaching, I think. I just wasn't good in that environment. It was very... it was a little... I don't know how to describe it. But it wasn't a good job, let's say. It was you were paid very little for teaching people how to use Quark Express or something like, and I was just like not good at being taken advantage of, I guess, I don't know, in any of these situations, and so I was fired, and I was very, very depressed, and I was like okay, I'm going to really do something. So I made a whole design portfolio like and I was going to go design book covers. It was the time of desktop publishing. This was a very important moment where the rise of desktop publishing. Like so I knew QuarkXPress in and out, inside and out, and I knew Photoshop inside and out, and like so I just took my portfolio. I pretended that I had graduated with a design degree and I went and got a job at Penguin. I applied for and got a job as an art director's assistant at Penguin Books, designing admittedly, paperback book covers, and the first job they handed me is to design the cover of Stephen King's Nightmares and Dreamscapes, and I'm sitting there like those are some really long words, how am I going to fit those on this cover? Fail, utter complete

failure. The woman who I was working for was like, “You graduated with a graphic design degree, right?” I was like, “No, I graduated with a sculpture degree,” and she was like, ahh, knew that she'd been had, and so I lost that job too. But it was okay because I understood why I lost that job, and but she was really, really cool, and she recommended that I go to this other publishing company called Workman, as I like to say, cookbooks and cat calendars. But so I went there and I got a job there at Workman in their digital prepress department. So no-- but again, I was teaching art directors how to use computers because they were indeed still paste up, still doing all layouts for books on boards, and they would give me the boards, and I would translate that into computers, into computer, into Quark Express, right, and I was just really made for that. I was so happy there. It was like I learned the whole way the publishing industry worked, and like how books were made, and like everything, it was awesome. I loved that job too.

**McIlwain:** So it must be, what, around '94, '95 at this point?

**Harvey:** Yes, indeed. It was like around '90-- this was like '93, '94. It gets us to '94, and of course, this is the magic year, '94, '95. The magic happens. The thing that totally like changed everything, which was the internet. I had been working at-- I was at Workman, and I had a boyfriend who had a computer, and he was on a BBS, like a bulletin board. That was apparently people in the neighborhood in New York City were all on this BBS. I was like, “What are you doing? Like what is this?” and he was like, “Oh yeah, this is a BBS,” and he loved it. They were having conversations, whatever, like and I was pretty like okay, that's interesting. He says, “Oh, yeah, well, you think that's interesting. Let me show you this other thing,” and so he shows me the internet. Basically he loads up, NetCom. He had Mosaic, okay, but he was like, “You're not going to be interested in that.” He's like, “Here's this one,” and it had graphics. It had a color background, okay, and it had text, and it had-- maybe there was an image somewhere, and I was like, “What is it?” and he was like, “This is the web, and there's the internet, and there's Gopher, and there's a BBS, and there's Usenet.” So he sort of just like explained, did a basic BS explanation, and I was like, “Okay, but how did they make that page?” and he's like, “Well, there's this language called HTML,” and I was like, “How do you do it?” and he's like, “I don't know,” and I was like, “Well let me look,” and we looked at it together, and I was like this is easy, and so I was like, “How do we do this?” and so we sat there, and we figured out how to do it. Okay, let me also preface this. Let me rewind slightly and talk about my mother again because you guys wanted the details. I mean this may take a while, but my mother was already on like-- what was it called? There was AOL and there was the one that was before that. What was it?

**McIlwain:** CompuServe.

**Harvey:** CompuServe. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** Prodigy, Delphi.

**Harvey:** That. I think it was CompuServe. My mother was already on this. I talked to her about-- I told her about the BBS, and the internet, and using it, and she was like “Oh, yeah.” She's like, “Yeah, I'm on AOL. Like I read the news. I like my weather.” I'm like, “What?” She already was on this, and she probably had told me about it, and I was just like <makes sound effect>. She was already all over it. So anyway, so I



was telling her about HTML. She didn't know HTML and all that. But like yeah, so anyway, I told her that I was interested in this, and she was really happy that I was interested in computers again. Then she told me about AOL, or whatever, CompuServe, or whatever she was on, and how interesting it was, and how she liked it, and I was just like okay, my mom was online before I was, and so anyway, as soon as I saw the internet, it couldn't have been two days later, I quit my job because a friend told me, "Oh, yeah, if you know HTML, you can get a job. You can work temp jobs," basically. At this moment ad agencies were paying like 55 bucks an hour just to code HTML, like so I went to a temp agency, and I said, "Oh, yeah, I know, computers. I know HTML." Like I mean, basically, I just had it all written down on a piece of paper, and like took that to work with me, and like they would give you whatever design, or they would give you text, or whatever, and they'd say, make an HTML page out of this, and here's the colors or something, and like you got paid 55 bucks an hour to do this up. Anyway, to this day, I'm just like wow, and so I worked for this temp agency, and I worked at every ad agency in New York probably doing all kinds of things. Also photo retouching in Photoshop like for billboards and stuff. Like you could just-- I worked the nightshift. I worked weekends and you'd get double, triple time. It was so awesome. It was like amazing. So it was like I really enjoyed that. I keep saying that.

**McIlwain:** Life started in New York City with that.

**Harvey:** Yeah. It felt like I got the New York City cheat code. It was just like okay, so this is how you can live in New York City because before that, it was very hard to mouth. I loved the job at Workman, but it was just a job that one would expect a young person to have, I guess, and suddenly I had a job that I could live from, and it was just really amazing, and I mean so all this time I'm not making any art though. It's like all right, I started out like I said. I had a little studio with a friend, and I got in a show with my glass photograph works at some point. But then after I really started doing the desktop publishing thing, I kind of just let it go a little bit. I drew. I did have one other show of some drawings somewhere, but like mostly I was just off in computerland, and especially after I discovered the internet. I was like this is all I want to be doing, and I just really loved everything about the internet. Like I don't know why. It was just... and I mean, part of it was meeting people that you couldn't meet in the real world. Like I have a friend who lives in Japan that I think we started emailing each other in 1996 or something, and I still know the guy, and like I met a guy online in London, and then I went to London eventually, and I met him, and it was like that was the first time I met somebody that I had met online, I think, and like that was really... it was just unlike anything else.

**Weber:** Where did you hang out online?

**Harvey:** There was no real hanging out. It was more like surf. You were surfing. Right? So I often would try to find, give myself like a goal in a way, like I'm going to surf until I find something in the Netherlands or something. So that's when I'd say the earliest arts organizations I encountered were V2 and De Waag in the Netherlands and Amsterdam, and the Devog in Amsterdam, so I would go to their website to try and understand oh, what's art like in the Netherlands. I mean you literally just had to... before the internet, you just had no way of knowing unless you actually went there. You just had no way of knowing what life was like somewhere else. You had magazines. You had movies, but like what normal people were just doing every day, like you had no clue, and so I enjoyed looking at academic websites also, like learning

about like I don't know, theories about cellular automata, or like I remember being fascinated by generative algorithms and all kinds of stuff, and you could find out about these things all of a sudden outside of the library. It was just you could just go looking for information one way or another, and usually there was no... there was Yahoo, but I don't think there were any other real search engines. So it's like it was links. I miss those days in a lot of ways. I could wax nostalgic for links.

**McIlwain:** Yes, indeed, the magic of getting around the web. At this time, the internet is serving your own personal purposes in learning and really engaging new things, and then at the same time, it's your work, and you're creating for folks. How did those two things sort of mix together as it were?

**Harvey:** It happened pretty quickly that I wanted my own website, and so my boyfriend at the time got server space one way or another, and I was like, "Can I put my page on your server?" and it was super cool back then because if you were on a server, you were literally just-- there was no fear of hacking really. So like you would go to the server, FTP into the server, and you could see everybody's folders. You were a tilde address, so you would see everybody else's folders, and you just didn't bother their folders. You just didn't go into that. You went to your folder, and you put your stuff up, and so I put my stuff in his folder on Inch. It was inch.com in New York City and we were there with a design agency. I remember this design agency, io360. They were like a really great computer-based design agency, and I became friends with those guys, just because we were on the same server, and I don't know. Okay, after I made my first web page, and I was able to show my mom, and I put photos up, and I I put some of my computer-based artwork up, and people started emailing me about my site, and I was like oh, cool this is great that people liked my website. That really meant something to you back then, and so then I'd say it was 1996 when I really went off and got my own domain, which was Entropy8.com, and then I started taking myself more seriously as a designer, so Entropy8 became kind of a design company. We're never going to get to the end of this interview. Sorry. I don't know how we're going to do this. We might have to-- anyway, I'm sorry. I just suddenly realized where we are and we're only in 1996.

**Weber:** Don't worry too much about time. I don't know what Charlton's hard stop is today. I mean I'm fine. But also, if we really need to, we can schedule another session.

**Harvey:** Okay, I'll try to be less nostalgic about everything, every little thing.

**Weber:** No, it's wonderful. It's really good.

**Harvey:** It accelerates at this point anyway because what happened was I got a, more steady job at an ad agency called Poppe Tyson. As soon as I signed the contract for the full-time job, I realized it was a mistake because people kept asking me to design websites for them. After I started Entropy8.com, the site, I put sort of my heart and soul into making it like this really beautiful website. I had a callous disregard for people's dial up modems and put big JPEGs up and stuff like this, and people kept asking me to make their website, and so I was working at this ad agency, and I hated it kind of, and I signed this contract with them for the money basically, and then I was like why did I do that? I should just make websites. So I quit. I quit. My mother was just like oh, and I was like no, just trust me. So when people would ask me to make their website, I'd do it, basically, and so people-- I just had a little design agency in

my apartment where I was making websites for people, whoever asked basically, and I would get paid for that, and at first it didn't bring in much, but then gradually it got to be sustainable, honestly, and mainly because my style was really flamboyant, and I really did a lot of interesting things with gifs, sort of integrating them into the overall image of the page, and like doing some early-- things that now we would do with CSS, I would just figure out ways of doing, let's say, and so I would get-- I got the attention of a lot of people in entertainment industry. So I worked with a lot of independent filmmakers. I worked and then, for example, I started working with-- I'm not going to remember a lot of the places in New York City that I worked with, but for things like sort of Broadway shows, or I want to say, but then I started working with Virgin Records at that point also because a guy there saw my website and was like, "Will you design the website for Janet Jackson?" and I said, yes, and so I submitted some designs to this, and so this was the first big thing that I designed, and then he goes, "Okay, so how much is it going to cost to make this website?" and I was like, "Oh, I don't know. Maybe 8,000 or something," and he's like, "No." He's like, "I can't go to Janet's people and say that her website's going to cost 8,000. Let's try tripling that, quadrupling that," and so I ended up charging \$27,000 to design this website, which I think I earned in the end because it was like I did a lot with Macromedia Director, which this is before Flash even. I did this whole interface with Director and like some really fancy HTML work.

**Harvey:** It was Velvet Rope.

**Weber:** Were you using Shockwave?

**Harvey:** I used Shockwave. Yeah. Yeah, Shockwave. Actually, yeah, Shockwave only, I think, in that case, and then probably some fancy JavaScript tricks, and so for Janet Jackson's the Velvet Rope album when it came out, and I was really super, super, super excited about this because I heard she liked it. I didn't get to meet her. But I heard she liked it, and it got a lot of press, and a lot of people saw it, and I was super happy about that, and so I worked with Virgin on a few other things. So like the site for Lenny Kravitz's 5 album, and like I don't know what else. A couple of other things. But those were very exciting projects, obviously, and then I got contacted by Mute records, I think it was, and I worked on Depeche Mode's website for their The Singles 86-98, which was amazing because I actually did get to meet them, which was super, and I think I did the site for Garbage, the band Garbage, and I don't know, a couple of others, and which got me a reputation as being a designer for music sites, for pop musicians and stuff, and so I worked, but I actually learned during that time that I hated the music industry, and I thought it was very... like you learn a little bit about it, and you're sort of like no, that seems really exploitive towards these artists, and so I started working more with independents.

So I worked really hardcore with a... I became sort of the signature designer for this record company called Conscience Records in New York City, very small record company, and so I started just doing smaller things, and I got a job working with designing sites for PBS TV stations, local, and I mean whatever, PBS just doing sites for their documentaries, which turned into a sort of a steady thing, and et cetera, et cetera, and so that's what I was doing professionally, I guess you'd say, but there was no real division for me between what I was doing professionally and what I was doing artistically. So I was also involved in early Net Art, which the Net Art scene was very international and very underground, you might say. Like you ask people now what was Net Art and maybe they don't have a consciousness about it. But

it was basically just artists using the browser to create work. That was not like just a picture of something that they made, but that was making artwork with the browser itself. So this was a whole other era. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** Go ahead, Mark.

**Weber:** I was just going to ask how did you choose Entropy8 and I see your email was Chaos at Entropy8.

**Harvey:** Yeah, Chaos at Entropy8. Yeah.

**Weber:** What did the name mean?

**Harvey:** This goes back to high school where I was...I used to... like I said, I was a bit of a disaffected youth. I used to write chaos is my life on all kinds of things and I had like this whole thing. So when I had to choose a name, I was like chaos. Chaos, what's the opposite in a way, and it was entropy chaos. It kind of fit. So I chose entropy8. Eight, I don't remember why I chose the eight. It might have had something to do with entropy one, two, three, four, and five, six, and seven being taken. I don't know. But I also just like the number eight because if you put it on its side, it was an infinity symbol, whatever. It's like I had my reasons, and you needed-- okay, we get to the meat of this whole thing. You were not yourself when you were online back then either. When I say that I was a design company, I was kind of just like bit-masking as a company, if you know what I mean. I didn't actually have a company. I was just me. But people thought I was a whole design bureau or something, and I didn't change their mind about that. They didn't necessarily see me even. It wasn't necessary. This whole face thing, it was not necessary for me to make someone's website. It was for the more corporate stuff, but for just people like oh, will you make my website, yeah, okay. we never even-- there was no exchange of photographs. So even with Net Art and in general, your persona online was not your name. Nobody knew my name. It's like if it was business, yeah, you know my name is Auriea Harvey. But if it was just like art stuff, or just hanging out, eventually what came to be known as hanging out online, like you didn't use your real name. My name, I was womanonfire That was my handle, and that's who I was known to be, and womanonfire makes these websites. That's the art. It's like that's how I'd sign it at the time.

**McIlwain:** No one questioned that or had a drive to like who really is this woman, what's her name. They just took it as you were.

**Harvey:** Nobody really thought about it like that, I think at that time, and there was a magazine article because there were a lot of internet magazines back then, where they did interview me, and they got my name and stuff. But they acknowledged that I was Woman on Fire and stuff. I'll send you the article because I have it. But yeah, so there were a lot of-- I got interviewed a lot, I think also because my website was super popular. I won the first two Webby Awards, first two Webby Awards two years in a row for artistic website, or whatever they were calling it then, beating out like all kinds of-- anyway, it was kind of one of those funny things.

**Weber:** Tell that story.

**McIlwain:** Yeah, really, and too, and as I remember the Webby Awards, there are categories for them, and there's a submission process. So yeah, so what was it like to be found, discovered when there's those awards at that time?

**Harvey:** Well, the Webby Awards didn't mean much to me. But I would say what meant a lot to me was being discovered, that people saw my website like meant an awful lot to me. I was very proud of the fact that people could see what I was doing, and that I could talk to them, and I mean how did you learn anything? You viewed source. I would always just be telling people oh, yeah, this is how I did this, view source, and the Webby Awards was interesting and everything, but it was kind of a laugh, if you know what I mean. I didn't want awards. You know what I mean? It's like I wanted contact I think, so I did things like I was what we would now term a cam girl also. Like I had a... with all this like money I was making with Virgin Records, I had a T1 line installed in my apartment, my shitty like walkup on the Lower East Side had a T1 line, we had a fat pipe, and like we were hosting. We had a Red Hat Linux box, and we hosted our work out of there, and I had a live webcam that was just sitting looking at me while I worked. I was just sitting there. I was just working or whatever. But I was cognizant of projecting myself onto the internet all of a sudden. I did this, I don't know, for a few years. So at that point, people knew who I was. They could come to my website, and I had it full screen, like right there. You would just come to the website and there I was.

**McIlwain:** On Entropy8.

**Harvey:** On Entropy8, yep.

**McIlwain:** But just in your workspace, not through the whole apartment.

**Harvey:** No, just on my workspace, just in my little room. I would be sitting there, but since I was hosting it myself, I had my laptop right there, and I could see people connect. I would see IP addresses connect and so I would know people were looking. I was fascinated by this notion that you were connected to a page at the same time as someone else, and so I made several works that were about seeing, revealing that there were other people there on the page at the same time as you were, and so that was-- yeah, that was a fascination that I had, the fact that everyone was connected to the same page at the same time, which seems like nothing now, but at the time, it was gold.

**Weber:** Would you chat with the people that were connected?

**Harvey:** Yeah. It wasn't like a real-time chat. That wasn't possible. Or if it was possible, I didn't have it set up. But it was more like they would email me. My email address was right there too, but no one-- it was a different time. There was no problems with this. In fact, I made again friends who are still my friends to this day like this way, and yeah, it was pretty cool.

**McIlwain:** Speaking of friends at this moment, where and how... we learned about you through Lettie McGuire. How did you two come to meet?

**Harvey:** Probably she came to my website or I went to hers. This was a little further on though. This is like we're talking like high dotcom boom bubble period here now. So like I started making contacts. I thought I wanted to get out of New York City. So I thought about going to London. I thought about going to San Francisco, and so I met Lettie probably in that San Francisco period, and so I took a trip out there. I had a couple of friends out there, and I wanted to see... I'd never been to California, so I went there, and I met with Lettie and all those guys, and they were doing great. I mean it was real startup *avant-la-lettre*. It was really like the beginning of startup culture, and so everybody had something going on, some kind of hustle, and everybody kept trying to hire me. That was the other thing and I kept saying, no, I just want to be independent. I didn't want a job. I wanted to work for myself. Why would I want to work for somebody else? I mean there was just no reason in the world for me to do somebody else's work because I had plenty of work of my own, and lots of energy to do it, and so things like do you guys remember BowieNet, David Bowie's whole thing?

**McIlwain:** Yeah.

**Harvey:** So I got contacted by his people, and they picked me up in a mysterious limousine and took me to see David Bowie at the offices of... I don't even know where. Somewhere in Midtown, and I sat across the table from David Bowie and told him I didn't want to work for him, which I now go... but at the time, it made sense.

**Weber:** He wanted to hire you, not freelance.

**Harvey:** Yeah, he wanted to hire me for when he was starting up Bowie Net, and I looked into his eyes and told him I wanted to remain independent, which he respected.

**Weber:** In his two-colored eyes.

**Harvey:** Yes. Can I tell you? It was difficult. It was so difficult. Anyway, yeah, and I felt... but in that moment, I just felt like I was still very young. You're 25. You have your own thing going and it's going strong. You have no concept of it ever ending. So it's just like why do I want to work for somebody else? Even you, David, even you. Although it was amazing, and afterwards I kind of half fainted and everything, but it was still pretty cool. It was still like that part was in me, that notion that I needed to be my own person, my own thing, do my own work because since I wasn't making artwork, this was my-- I wasn't making artwork in the traditional sense, and the artwork that I was making online was not appreciated as such yet. This is a whole other conversation that we'll get into a minute. But yeah, it's like so I felt like I needed to remain independent.

**McIlwain:** So I'm just going to ask, in this moment, I have to imagine (a) having all the skills that you had that were very valuable, but many people didn't have, being a black woman in this space, how did that all sort of contribute to that moment of seeing yourself with high value, wanting to be independent, seeing who else was around at the time, or who wasn't around at the time? How did that sort of play into...

**Harvey:** That was just a whole vibe. I mean like a lot of people-- of course, I knew a lot of other people who were making websites and making their own way this way, and so I had friends who were doing similar things that I was doing, either on the art side or on the design side, and there was this feeling at that moment that it was an important thing to be doing, number one. I remember the first time I saw a URL on TV on a commercial, and it was when I was still working at Poppe Tyson, so it was one of our clients. I think it was Firestone or something, and there was a... they had the commercial, and during some big race, the commercial, and then they put the URL that we had designed at our ad agency, and I was like wow. Stuff like this and then Windows 95 came out in '95 when Windows 95 happened, and then they had... it was just like this whole moment of like computers being important, and then later, when the internet started to become more widespread, it felt like a very important thing to be building, and it also felt like... artistically, it felt like it was... this is where I was sort of like this is the future.

This is the convergence of art and technology was something that I thought was freeing, and that feeling was a bit a feeling of power, like we had suddenly changed things for ourselves. Like there's a possibility here that I don't need an art gallery. I don't need an art gallery. I don't need that old system. We're going to build something new right now, and I just met people who felt the same way about that, and you felt a bit like a rock star. You'd go out, and like people were like "Oh, you designed that site?" Oh, yeah. Like it was hubris, or something, or whatever. You think the world has changed now and you're the one who changed it or something. Which all turned out to be you know, but very early on, art museums were interested in-- this is the flipside of it. Art museums were interested in the web also, and artists that were using the web, and I think SFMOMA was collecting websites from designers and artists. The Whitney Museum, I think even. It was 1999 or 2000, and the Whitney Biennial, they had a whole section on Net Art that I refused to be in once again because-- but this was like '99. Okay, so let me preface this with a couple of things and I'll finish that story.

But the deal was that in '99, I met my husband. So I moved to Europe at that point. So I left New York City finally, and moved to Belgium, a town called Ghent in Belgium, a beautiful medieval town that I still love, and I lived there for 20 years actually. Only recently moved to Rome. So when I moved to Belgium, Michael, my husband, who was my boyfriend at the time, we met online. We met on a server called hell.com, and hell.com was a server where a bunch of artists hung out. Basically, we all had server space there. There was a guy. It was run by one guy who was kind of being shadowy, mysterious, whatever. We later found out who he was, but at first we didn't know him. He just started inviting people, artists to be a part of the server, and so we all got space, and we all made stuff there, and that's where I met my husband. I met my husband in hell. His email address was God at hell.com, and I was womanonfire at hell.com. It's awful, right? Yeah, it's awful, but that's 1999 for you. It's like so when he and I met, we met via our work. We met one night when we were in a chat program, like very early video chat called CU-SeeMe, I think it was, or ICQ

**McIlwain:** I remember. CU-SeeMe.

**Harvey:** It was CU-SeeMe, and so like it was like say like 20 artists all met in this. We all met in this program at the same time to see if we could find a way of doing a performance together, all together online and invite people, and so yeah, that's where I met him was that night. We of course knew each

other as being on the server together. But we didn't know what each other looked like or anything. Like he wasn't even projecting a picture of himself. I had my webcam, but it was all blurry and arty and stuff, and so he and I just started talking that night, and the next day, he sent me a web page and a work of art, and then I responded to that with my own work, and then he sent something back to me that responded to that, and so we went back and forth like this. It was a conversation, and then we started meeting each other for chats and stuff and talking, and but that work, that turned into a site that we made because they were basically love letters. It became a site. That was the first thing he and I made together, a site called skinonskinonskin, and that was the work that the Whitney wanted to show in the Biennial because what we did with hell.com was we were making this site together, but like I said, it was love letters. So we didn't show it to anybody. But then other people on the server found our directory, and they looked at it, and they said, "You guys have to show this," dah, dah, dah, and we were like, "No, it's too private."

So what we did was we made a pay per view on hell.com where we sold tickets of admission to see the website because we were like-- we didn't want people to just casually surf by this thing that was so meaningful to us. We wanted them to mean it. So they had to pay 10 bucks to see it and people did. People did and we still have the exit chat log. Like when people left the exhibit, we asked them what they thought, to type something in, and so we still have people's reactions to what they saw and everything, and so we had set up this whole elaborate thing, and then the Whitney Museum wanted to show it in their Biennial. But they didn't want anyone to be able to browse it live. They wanted to have-- they were treating it like a film program, if you know what I mean. They had it in a cinema. It was projected large, and there was one person doing the browsing for everyone, and we thought that this was the most absurd thing we had ever heard in our lives, and we were against it. We were like no, we want a computer terminal. We want someone there to help people understand what they're looking at. We want to design an installation around it, perhaps. We wanted to be treated like artists basically and they said they couldn't do it. Well they at first said that they would think about it, and then they said they couldn't do it because they decided that it would just be a film program, and I was like we did all this, went through all this effort, and you're just going to treat it like it's a film, like because to us the importance was the interactivity, obviously. It was audiovisual. It was interactive. It was important that you interacted with it to feel what we felt, to get the meaning out of it, we thought. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** Yeah, it's interesting. They seem to not understand either the artistic value of this or the, I guess, technical value in terms of this interactivity, the digital dimension, and they'd seem to dismiss it all together.

**Harvey:** In the end. I would say now, being more adult and also understanding more about how museums work, there may have been people who cared about that, but that it was impossible in the grand scheme of things, and respect to all the other people who were in the Biennial that year. It was actually an amazing show. If you look back at the selection of people who were in there, it was really great, and I don't regret not doing it because at the time it felt like no, we got to stand up for our medium. So instead, what we did was we worked with a gallery called Postmasters. Postmasters Gallery in New York City is one of the earliest to appreciate Net Art, actually, and I had met with the gallery owner, Thomas Banovitch, like very early on. Like when I was still working in New York City with just my little Entropy8 website, like he was supportive and wanted to do a studio visit. It was my first studio visit. I was



just like studio visit, like it's a website, like but I did it, and yeah, so anyway, so they offered-- when they heard that we had turned down the Biennial and everything, they offered to do the exhibition as we envisioned it, and we did, and I can't remember what we called that exhibition, but I'll dig it up and send it to you. Because we created two boxes, and we put computers in there, and we like-- there was a soundtrack, and yeah, it was very melodramatic. It was amazing.

But yeah, so those were the first things that me and Michael did together. We also created our first website together. His website is [zuper.com](http://zuper.com), and so we became [Entropy8zuper.org](http://Entropy8zuper.org). It was like two dotcoms, plus dotcom equals dot org, and so when I moved to Belgium, we were [Entropy8zuper.org](http://Entropy8zuper.org), and we got jobs together. We worked together. Our first client together was the Museum of Sex in New York City that was just about to open. So they were our first client. We did their website. We did kiosks. We did all kinds of stuff for Museum of Sex, and what else, and we still worked with PBS quite a bit designing sites for documentaries and stuff, and then we got clients here in Europe, obviously, Doors of Perception Conference in Amsterdam, but every site we made, we made sure it was extremely unique, and like there was just no line for us between the art we were making and the design we did. We could get away with a lot back then. There was none of this standardization stuff. There was no hamburger menu and all that crap. It was very much a creative act just making any website, I would say.

**McIlwain:** Can you talk a little bit about-- I mean, you mentioned interactivity in passing, which I mean to me at least is kind of the secret ingredient of computers over other media. Can you talk about interactivity and also multimedia? I wonder. Were you exposed early to like-- there was the Vatican, the Louvre had sites with art. Then like the Hawaii site, Kevin Hughes video and sound combined. I mean how did you think about kind of interactivity and multimedia early on?

**Harvey:** Yeah, it's very funny. I wanted nothing more than to make the website for the Met. In fact, I sent them an insulting email once like because I thought they weren't doing enough with their website. But yeah, how did I see that? I saw it as like-- let's put it like this. when I met Michael and we were trying to be in contact with each other because I was in New York City, and he was in Belgium, and we discovered quickly that text was just not enough, and so this is very much we both felt this way, that the only way to really communicate on the web was through multimedia was through-- so we programmed our own chat environment that had not only text chat, but it also had webcams, so that we could see each other. It had what we called the stereo, so that we could like play music for each other, and this was all done with very simple technology, like Perl Scripts, JavaScript, Flash, we use Flash. We used Flash. It was early versions of Flash, which I guess at first was called like something else. I can't remember now what it is called. Future Splash, that was it. Future Splash, and then we used- yeah, ultimately this is where it went. But at first it was just like... I mean there was no mp3 or anything. We were playing wav files. Like we were uploading files for each other. We were like-- it's like so to me, this was like-- it's always been that way. Like very important. As soon as it was possible to make multimedia happen online, I was very interested in that, and definitely after I met Michael, it was sort of our claim to fame. I mean, one of the reasons I fell in love with him was his JavaScript library that he called `cross-browser.js` or something. I can't remember, but I was like so seduced by his JavaScript library, to be honest because it could do anything. He had programmed this library that you could just call functions and like make animations happen and sounds on rollover from Flash movies, and it was just so mysterious to me how he was

programming things that I was just-- I fell in love with that even. Basically, I fell in love with him because of his programming skills and had to meet him. I was just like oh, this is going to be-- like we have to make stuff together. That was all because of multimedia.

**Weber:** Did you know each other before you met?

**Harvey:** Huh?

**Weber:** Sorry. How long were you in touch before you met in person?

**Harvey:** Not long. Like yeah, I think we met in a February, and I was... we met in February, and I was living in Belgium by May. So it all happened very quickly. But it was just, yeah, important. We both had the same priorities when it came to what we thought about artistically, I guess, and so we both saw art and technology as being one thing and wanted to make things together, basically.

**McIlwain:** So speaking of falling in love with his JavaScript and the secrets that that belied and so forth, how did this era start to begin and you all working together, and how did that sort of evolve to new software, hardware, other types of art that you were trying to make separately or together?

**Harvey:** When we got together, it was important that we were really together. It's like so I kind of dropped what I had been doing. I had made some progress in terms of my... you know, the sort of artistic side of things, like I said, there were a lot of museums who were interested in this. I had commissions from... like the first computer I ever bought myself, for example, I got via a NYFA grant, New York Foundation of the Arts. They had an Emerging Media category, and I think it was the first year they had it, and I won that. And so, I bought a... it was the year of the Mac clones. You guys remember this? The Mac clones? So I had a Power Tower Pro 2000, something like this. And-- but I got it totally kitted out with like a digitization board, so I could, you know, hook up a VCR-- hook up my VCR to my computer and like digitize video all of a sudden, you know? It was just like, wow. I bought a video camera, an early compact-- one of the ones that use the microcassettes, Sony Handycam, something like this, but very compact.

**Weber:** Digital one, though.

**Harvey:** Yeah, digital video. And this was when I was still in New York City. And so, when Michael and I got together, it was important that we were really together, I guess. And so the last commission that I had from a museum was Walker Art Center, they had Gallery 9, and that was my last solo piece, you might say, was the piece that I made for Gallery 9 of Walker Art Center. But, you know, I say that, but also, that was right when the bubble kind of burst, and all of these arts organizations kind of... it was the rise of the European Festival, arts festival, so you started seeing Sonar, you started seeing Ars Electronica being more important. Transmediale started up, you know? ZKM opened in Karlsruhe. All this. But in America, it was like the end of something, you know? So, I think Walker Arts Center stopped doing Gallery 9. There had been other initiatives like 'Ada Web? I don't know if you guys know 'Ada Web. There were several things. So many things that sort of had to stop... that ended, you know, because of the dot com crash. Museums, just writ large, were no longer interested in what was going on, you know? In 2000, 2001,

when I was already in Europe... 2001, SFMOMA had a giant show that was called 010101 Art in Technological Times. And Whitney had one too that I think was called data something. I'm not going to remember what that was called. I was not in the Whitney one, but I was in the one for the SFMOMA, where they commissioned artists to make net-art pieces, and we had a piece, Michael and I had a piece there. And also, we won a prize from the SFMOMA, that's right, that year, too, which was huge for us. It was the SFMOMA Webby prize. They only gave it once. It was money from an anonymous donor. We received the award during the Webbys, and I will send you this video of our acceptance speech, because, you know, the Webbys, they have like you have to say five words or something. But we basically got up there and just kissed for five minutes, or something. And there's video. There just happened to be video of that a friend sent me, and otherwise, I would have no documentation or proof that I had done this. But that was a real highlight. You'll see the video and you'll understand why. And so-- but that prize that we won from the SFMOMA, and then the subsequent exhibition commission piece, was really important to us, because we had never had any money as a couple. And so it was really-- it was a big prize. It was like \$35,000, you know? And so we were finally able to buy furniture, basically.

**Weber:** Important.

**Harvey:** Yeah. But it was important, also, because SFMOMA flew us out to... you know, because of course, they're going to give away a prize and have this exhibition of commissioned work, and then they wanted the artists to be on a roundtable, and we got up there and said some rather outrageous things about what museum-quality artwork means, and our view of what it meant to be making digital art today, and stuff like that, which was really quite... we were really adamant and revolutionary about it. We were still of the mind that it was possible to survive as an artist without all this stuff, without galleries and museums and all that stuff, you know? We still hadn't changed our mind about that yet, you know? And yeah. And so it was a real moment. And then it just kind of went off a cliff, you know? After the dot com bubble burst and all that, it was like-- it didn't make a difference in our lives so much, because we were-- because I wasn't in New York City anymore, and I had already sort of transitioned to working in this collaborative of myself and Michael, and we had our clients and stuff like that. But we saw the writing on the wall around 2002, you know? I mean, a year later, we were just sort of... after being, yeah, you know, art on the internet, we were sort of like, no, that's not what we see happening at all. What we see happening is this homogenization.

I mean...okay, so getting into another era here, and I will say that I was on LiveJournal from the beginning. LiveJournal was like a big part of my life for a long time. But LiveJournal was not a blog. LiveJournal was a community. And where I met, again, dear, dear friends that I still have to this day. Like you just really connected with people on a different level on something like LiveJournal than you did in what became Blogger and all that. I hated blogs from day one. I was like, this is the wrong way, you know? But even before that, you had stuff like MySpace, which I also hated, you know? Everything that started to become more populist, I was against. And I was like, no. I do not-- no, you know? So when I saw blogs-- and I knew one of these people who invented the blog, so to speak. He didn't really invent it, but... Derek Powazek. You've got to talk to him. If you haven't talked to Derek, I will send you his information. Because he had many important sort of early sites, experiments in writing and art and design. One was called The Fray. If you don't know about The Fray, you've got to know about The Fray,

okay? But he worked on blogging software that eventually became Blogger, I think, because-- and it was-- and he felt like it gave people a chance to publish, because he was very into publishing. I might have it wrong, but I know he was involved, okay? This was a long time ago. At any rate, you still should talk to Derek, though, if he'll talk to you.

**Weber:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**Harvey:** Because he's jaded, he's very jaded, at this point, about this whole period of time. But because... and for reasons that I'm going to say, like that led me to leave the web, honestly. Because when I saw-- like LiveJournal was one thing, you know? And I needed LiveJournal, because I moved to a whole other country where I didn't know the language and I didn't know anybody. And LiveJournal was like a lifeline to, like, the familiar, you know? People who spoke English, people who I felt had something in common with me, you know? Or something. But then, when blogs started, I was like, what are-- what's the deal with this timeline thing, you know? Like I was against this idea that the web was about linear time and updating and all this. And it really-- it hurt me, you know? It hurt me more than the spam hurt me. I mean, it didn't hurt as much as the banner ad. Like I remember when I first started seeing banner ads, and, in fact, this is one of the reasons I quit working with advertising agencies, was that they were in league with things like DoubleClick and stuff, that was early data mining.

And I didn't know where it was all leading, but I was very much against this linearization, this idea of push media, this idea of banner ads and data collection and, you know, just all these kinds of things. And so I left. Michael and I, you could say, rage-quit the web by making... we made one art piece in 2006 about it, but it was like-- we just did not want to be a part of the Facebook-ification of the internet, the turning it into a giant shopping mall, the, like... the fact that they... this is where I start ranting, okay? We're entering the ranting era, my ranting era. And I will say that it maybe was most acutely felt with the first version of Apple's OS X, where suddenly everything was all white, and you couldn't customize anything, and you couldn't change your... I mean, all my... my entire computing career up to that time, I had a start-up sound, you know the start-up sound? You could put your own start-up sound, you know? So when you turn on your computer, my computer used to say-- oh, I don't remember what it used to say, but you know what I mean? You could completely customize your experience, you know? And that was part of my-- like I said, the computer was not a tool, it was something else. I gave them names, you know? They-- but then, I started saying, yeah, I give you cute names, but you're not my friend, you know what I mean? Because the computer was suddenly owned, you know what I mean? It was not my computer anymore. With OSX, I would say it was most acutely felt that this was not my computer, you know? They took away my ability.

And this was just an example. Because you had MySpace on the one hand, where it-- I also felt like it was an atrocity because you couldn't do anything with it, other than this thing that it did. But people were still hot-linking images. I can turn those off. Yeah. There's lights that are going to come on. Just a second, I'll be back.

A rant about how my computer was savagely stolen from me. Yeah. So, as I think I was starting to say, that... my rant era. Let's see, that it was about... with the first OS X is when I noticed it, with MySpace is

when I noticed it, that they were gradually taking away power from people, to create the web. With MySpace, people were still hot-linking images. Like I started noticing that instead of making images, people were just linking things in my directories to make their background pictures on MySpace, you know? But they still had to learn a little bit of coding in order to make anything happen, you know? So it was like, okay, innocent fun, you know? But then you had Facebook, you know? Or... and this was just like anathema. I was completely put out. I was beside myself with grief. I was... because I could see that it was going to be popular, number one, that everybody wanted to be on Facebook, et cetera, and everybody wanted to have a blog, but they didn't want to make the blog, you know? They wanted to download a template. They wanted to be on Facebook, where you can't do a damn thing. They wanted to be on Instagram, where there were no links out. And I was so-- I was just like, okay, I'm done, you know?

It took a couple years, but it was just like... I thought it was a tragedy, that people couldn't know how easy HTML was anymore. That, you know, even things like... and I think it was around this time, you had something called a Page Validator, like HTML validation or some tools or something. And I was like... it sounded like fascist-like speak, you know? Like vocabulary of "validation," you know? Because before this, you have to understand, there was nothing wrong you could do in a browser. If it ran, it ran. If it crashed the browser, it was better, you know? It was about this synchronization, this creative act, you know? This creation of-- what I felt was a place, a place where you met people and, you know, you had a life and, you know, all this stuff... my offline friends, when I was in New York City, like they didn't know what I was doing with my time, you know? Because I had friends who weren't into computers as well, and they didn't know what I was doing with my time. But I would try to tell them, and they would just get, you know, the dead stare, you know? But it was like, this was a place where I was living my life, you know, online. And for it to turn into something that people suddenly couldn't create with was painful, honestly.

And I was in Europe already and Michael and I had been working together, and it was painful for him too. We were both like-- this was something we put so many years of our lives into, and, in some ways, we felt like we built this shit, you know? It's like-- we had a hand in popularizing it, and then along comes this thing called Facebook and every... they're just, you know, some bullshit, you know? And so we rage-quit the internet, basically, and decided to make video games instead. That's how that happened, to be honest. It was... that was the big, inciting incident, was them taking the internet away, and by extension, my whole computer away from me. And yeah.

**McIlwain:** So I have a question. I'm going to try to articulate it. It's kind of one of those multilayered ones, but figure out where in there you want to find something to respond to. You had mentioned earlier, you know, something about that moment in, you know, late-'90s and so forth, and you're out in California, you're successful as a freelancer, and there was that sense of power that came from your creativity, your ability to make it, to be free to kind of make... even if you were in a corporate space or working for someone in a realm where they had some sense of, you know, can you make X, there was still that realm of freedom. So my question is, to what degree, as you go from that point to this moment where they've taken your computer from you, to what degree is that a... do you feel that, as an artist, as a creator, but more specifically, as a Black woman in this mode where this new thing sort of offered not only a new way of life but maybe a way out of kind of predictable economic circumstances, or those kinds of things?

**Harvey:** Okay. There's a couple of ways I'm going to attack this. First of all, it wasn't just taking my computer away. That's one way of putting it. But it was a bigger issue, also. For example, we made a website for the Brooklyn Academy of Music. We also went and performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with a piece that we had made called Wirefire, which was a live performance. It was kind of like a VJ set, but like people could connect online. So it was like a live online performance that we performed for like nine years or something. And we did this at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Brooklyn Academy of Music had a whole art and technology thing. They revived Experiments in Art and Technology, the EAT lab, at Brooklyn Academy of Music, or like something involving Bell Labs, kind of thing. Like it was a big deal. And you can no longer find any information about this stuff. Like all the things, these initiatives that were going on at that time, just disappeared, you know? So when I say taking my computer away from me, I'm talking about a huge, cultural death, you know? I'm talking about like an erasure of like an entire cultural moment, you know?

**Weber:** But can you fill in, though, you were performing music. What music were you...

**Harvey:** Well, it wasn't exactly performing music. It was a performance. It was an audio/visual performance. So Michael and I had built-- I'll send you this-- the URL is still there. It was called Wirefire. And we put... we had built... it grew out of that interface that I talked to you about that we made to chat with one another, long-distance. But it became this whole thing that was built in Flash, where we would feed it music and images and movies and all kinds of things, and he could be anywhere and I could be anywhere, and we would sort of play together and do this kind of grand, operatic collage-- audio/visual collage thing, that other people online could come-- on Thursday, we did this every Thursday, online, at midnight in Belgium. People would just come and we would do this performance. And so people saw this, of course, and we got invited to do the thing at the Brooklyn Academy of Music because they had a program for this. They had a whole program that was around art and technology, you know? It was like, ask somebody at the Brooklyn Academy of Music now, what that was. They won't know. I've talked to Wayne Ashley, who you should talk to. Wayne Ashley, who was the one who ran this. He now has a studio called FuturePerfect. And he will tell you, at length, the amount of forgetting that happened, institutionally, during that time.

And so I'd say that it's mostly as an artist that I start feeling the betrayal at that moment, because I saw how it destroyed the culture that had been there, and I saw how artists who had been working online now suddenly had to go back to the traditional gallery system, now suddenly had to... instead of, perhaps, making something with code, generative art, or something like that, now suddenly found themselves as video artists, perhaps. Or maybe they had to go work for the corporations. They had to go work for Google. I mean, there were advantages to that, obviously. But, at the same time, these were people who had careers, you know? And now they're sort of just, you know, Google's R&D, you know what I mean? It's like... so this is where my outrage comes from. And it's like, you know, to me, there was no greater tragedy than that, you know? And I wasn't going to sit around and watch it happen and be a part of it in some way like that. I didn't want to work for Nike anymore, you know? And I mean, I never worked for Nike, but I didn't want to work for Nike. I didn't want to just make visuals for a brand and make content, you know what I mean? It's like, before that, we weren't making... we may have been making websites for companies, but they were very much part of our vision. And that seemed to be something that was closed

down with this sort of era of templated websites and expectations about what the navigation was going to be and all this other stuff. We were just like, it's not interesting, you know?

**McIlwain:** So then-- so how does video games become the response?

**Harvey:** Yeah, right. So we had started... we had been playing video games really seriously only on the weekends, and you could still rent video games back then at video stores and stuff. And so we were playing some game on our PlayStation, and we looked at it and suddenly we just sort of -- lightbulb moment -- like why don't we, this is interactive, and this is art, you know? Why don't we make a video game? Let's make a video game, you know? And so we started looking at it. And there were other artists who were working with video game technology. Primarily, they were making mods of existing games, Quake and whatnot. And we looked at those mods and we were like, yeah, but these are not nearly as artistic as Quake itself. The games themselves were the interesting bit, you know? Yeah, you can make a mod there, but why don't these artists make their own game? And we were like, well, we don't want to just mod something, we want to start from scratch. We want to... how do you even do this, you know? And suddenly, it was an interesting adventure.

And so, we set about trying to find out how games were made. It just seemed like our commitment to interactive art was that strong, you know? It was like, that was the only place we were seeing interactive art. We saw it dying in our native environment, you might say, and so then we decided that we needed to go where there were people willing to spend time with this kind of work, and [the] gamer community was very, very willing to spend, you know, 23 hours playing a video game and then dissecting every single character and plot detail, and writing books about it and, you know, making artwork and fan art and dressing up as the characters. And we were just like, okay, sign us up, you know? So... but there were a few problems about this in 2002. And the biggest one being that there was no independent game making scene as such. Of course, there were independent people who made games, but mostly, if you wanted to get your game in a store where somebody could buy it, you didn't want to sell it like on a floppy disk in the back of a magazine or something, you know, you had to get a publisher.

In order to get a publisher, you had to be a real company, and you had to do things like business plans and get a loan or you know, all this other stuff. And then, you had to... the classic problem of, you make the data, you put the data on a disk, the disk goes in a box, the box goes on a truck, the truck drives to the store and puts it on a shelf, somebody goes to the shelf, buys the game, takes it out of the box, puts it on their computer, and it's data, you know? It's like this whole thing was the way games were made, you know? And we were just like, okay, let's try it. So in 2002, we started our company called Tale of Tales. And we started it as a research project at an academy called-- it's the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, in the Netherlands. Jan Van Eyck Academie, where we were design researchers. And so, we made it our research project into games and the game industry, and so that was how we funded it, in a way, because it was a funded research period. And we learned that it was impossible for us to make a game, basically, because we really faked it like we were a company. We were used to faking like we were more than what we were, you know what I mean?

So we just, we made our company. We founded the LLC, it's called a BVBA there, but an LLC. Tale of Tales. And we went to [a] games developer conference and we showed our prototypes to important people and we did all the things, you know? And discovered that no publisher was going to take us on, because our games were too open. Video games were very specific at that moment. They were very much genre bound. Like so you had adventure games, you had racing games, you had fighting games, you had RPGs, I think that's about it, you know? And if you didn't fit in one of those, you had point and click adventure games, you know? But our work was 3D. This is another thing. This was the start of my interest in 3D, and both of our interest in 3D worlds, immersive worlds. And we had made... the project that we made for the SFMOMA in 2001 used an obscure plug-in for the browser that allowed us to make a real-time 3D world, generative world. It was basically a parser. It was kind of our last hurrah, our last love letter to the internet. What it did was you could type in any URL and it would go and grab the code of that webpage and it would parse it and it would change...it would find all the tags and it would change the tags into 3D objects that were represented-- it would represent the tags as 3D objects in the world, and it would create... the project was called Eden.Garden. So it was showing this paradise garden that we felt was behind every single webpage. Kind of a beautiful note. It was also funny. But it was full 3D. Like explorable 3D world, right there in your browser, you know? So that was one of the first 3D projects we did.

**Weber:** Sorry--

**Harvey:** When we started making games-- go ahead.

**Weber:** No, but I saw, on your slide early on, you had VRML listed. So you were interested in that early on, then?

**Harvey:** I was doing VRML stuff like 1998 or whatever? 1997? I don't know, whenever that was happening. And that was another reason I went to San Francisco, actually. I had hooked up with some people there who were really deeply into making VRML worlds, and I wanted to work with them.

**Weber:** Tony Parisi and Mark Pesce?

**Harvey:** And learn from them, yeah. But I didn't-- there's nothing I made, to speak of, in VRML.

**Weber:** Okay, but you were interested.

**Harvey:** Yeah, I was very interested.

**Weber:** Lettie did an art exhibit on that, I think.

**Harvey:** Oh.

**Weber:** She had a virtual exhibit of some sort, using that.



**Harvey:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I went to see-- let me just jump back again in time a little bit. But in 1998, maybe, or '97, I went to see Char Davies. You know Char Davies? Somebody else you've got to talk to, about her early VR works. So I was immersed in her work, *Éphémère*. I drove, or had somebody drive me, because I didn't have my driver's license. Drive me from New York City to Montreal to go see this thing, because I was so into VR. But like I of course had no access to it because I was not in school anymore. You could only really access it in academic environments or-- you know, so I went and talked to her. I was like, what are you doing? This is amazing. And like I have video. I have a little video clip of me immersed in this. You can just see my silhouette, like with the visor and the vest and all that. I'll send that to you too. I hope somebody's making a list, no, of all the things I'm supposed to send you. But like, yeah.

**Weber:** We'll hold you to it.

**Harvey:** But this was very formative for me, this immersion in 3D. So like when we started making video games, of course we were going to make 3D, but this was weird for the games industry, right, at that point. There were only things like... there was like Quake and all those, and Unreal and all this. Those types of shooter games were in 3D. And then, you had PlayStation games, which were sometimes a faking of the 3D world, but often--...then, I saw Tomb Raider, and I was just, wow. Tomb Raider 1 is a beautiful game, by the way. But that one showed me what was possible. I'd say between that and Myst, I was like, I could get into this, you know? But then, of course, when we started making games, it was much later on than those games, you know? But I'm just saying that these were things that I had looked at that sort of made, in the back of my mind, making a video game a good idea, you know? What I would say, about Myst, when I first saw the internet, I thought, oh, now I can make something like Myst, but I wouldn't have to make it on a CD, you know? To me, the internet was a way to make these kinds of deep, immersive experiences, where people could just connect anywhere. So when I started making video games... when we started getting into video games, it was sort of disappointing to me that there was no way to distribute them digitally. But I only had to wait like three years or something, and then it became possible. Because, as you know, the first thing that had to happen was people had to get used to the idea of using their credit cards online, because nobody wanted to use their credit card online. Especially in Europe, this was just not a thing. I mean, most people didn't have credit cards and all that, you know? So there was no way for people to buy anything. PayPal had to be invented. When we did our pay-per-view in '99, we used the same pay processing that porn sites used, which was a company called CC Bill. And that made it possible, you know?

**Weber:** I was curious how you billed that.

**Harvey:** Yeah. So once PayPal existed, we were ready to go, I think. So that took until like 2005. And then it became a whole movement, really. Around 2005 is when you started noticing that independent game development was becoming very important. And we were right there, like trying to push it, you might say. Going to the Game Developers Conference and meeting other independent game developers, starting little associations with one another, you know, to try and support each other. But you could just put it up on your website and buy it, and people would buy it, rather. This was a process, but we got it all... everybody got it sort of working, and independent gaming became a whole movement that is, I don't know, not so much overlooked now, but it's just very different now, I think. Even though things have

opened up, and the kind of weird games we were making became accepted... not at first. We got a lot of heat at first. We got a lot of hate mail at first.

**McIlwain:** What was that about?

**Harvey:** Yeah. It was...now, here's where it comes in. Where this whole thing about identity, and all of this stuff. I mean, before this... up to now, like I've been... it hasn't been an issue, you know? It's like, to be honest, I had no problems. Like happy, on the internet. Like, you know, the internet has changed, let's say. But like when I started making video games, it suddenly became an issue that I was a Black woman making video games. I was just like, whatever, you know? But at the same time, it became like a big issue, because the kinds of things I wanted to make were weird, you know? I wanted to make a game about a little girl who gets lost in the palace of Sleeping Beauty, but it's a little Black girl, and she...you know? It's like...and you're guiding her. And this was just weird, like, for publishers. And there was no way a publisher was going to do that. We had to make this on our own. You know, we wanted to make a game about an old woman who visits a cemetery and knows that one day she might die, you know, and there's a 50/50 chance she might actually die during the game, you know, as a matter of fact, you know? It's like our games were nonviolent. They were story-based, but not narrative. They were open-ended. And it took a game like Grand Theft Auto to come out... Grand Theft Auto III, GTA III, to come out, for people to accept a sandbox game, a game where there's no I mean, yeah, there were goals, but you didn't have to do them. We made a multi-player game as our reaction to World of Warcraft. We made our multi-player game where everyone plays a deer, called the Endless Forest. That came out in 2005. That started as a commission by a museum, the MUDAM in Luxembourg, the Museum of Modern Art-- the Museum of Contemporary Art in Luxembourg? I don't remember. MUDAM. Anyway, they commissioned us to make that first version of that game.

They didn't know that's what they were commissioning, but that's... they actually wanted us to make a piece of net art for their website, and we asked them, can we make this game instead, and they said sure. They had a little bit of money, and they gave it to us. But our reaction to World of Warcraft... what we saw as the strife of the internet, of people grieving each other, people... you know, a woman shows up and she gets sexist comments hurled at her, we saw this as a design challenge, basically. So when we made the Endless Forest, we designed it in such a way that none of that could happen. And we had people try. They would like organize themselves on forums and say, we're going to go... because our game was considered weird, so they were like, oh, we're going to go like attack the people in this game or something. And we'd find their forum posts, but then we'd find their frustration when all they could do was like make each other laugh, an... you know, it was just like... it was our version of Utopia. We were trying to think of, how can we make a Utopic game, you know? And we succeeded at that, you know? And the game is still online, it's still free to play today, you know? And we did that by getting rid of chat, you know, the only conversation you can have is like body language. And people who play the game have come up with a sort of language that can be played through the motions that you can do in the game, and stuff. I don't know. Anyway--

**Weber:** All through the body of a deer of course, right?

**Harvey:** Yeah, through the body of a deer, yeah. I mean, we thought it was a big joke. We didn't think anybody was going to play it, actually. But we loved it, too. We just wanted to make worlds that we loved to be in, you know? And this was not how you made video games. You made video games to sell a product, and we learned that very quickly. But we were just like, eh, but you don't have to, you know? And then, once people started buying games online and downloading them, we felt like, well, why can't you just make whatever you want, you know? But the hate that we got from that, for things like our game *The Path*, which stars... it's the story of Red Riding Hood, essentially, but it's six girls, and you have to play through each one, their journey through the forest, and they meet their wolf and all this stuff. It's a horror game, actually, but not in the sense that people are used to. There's no killing, there's no shooting, or-- it's more just like this existential trauma of growing up, in a sense, you know? What we felt the fairy tale was actually about, you know? And people had a real problem with this. We got so much hate for that. Because... and I can only say that it was because people were shocked that the game was more psychologically horrific in a way than it was physically because of course no one has a problem with... no one has a problem with violence in games until you show them what violence really is, you know?

And yeah, so that. And then, and that went all through our career in games, you know, up to the point where the last game we made, "*Sunset*," about a Black woman in the seventies who leaves the United States looking for a better life in South America but ends up in a military coup. And but she's just a housekeeper and she ends up ending the war through her actions. And that was the last statement we had to make about video games and that was in 2015. That was our last video game. And that was our mic drop moment. We were just like, "Okay, we... I have nothing more to say about anything artistically and through the medium of the commercial video game as such." And yeah, but it was... I think our games were important at the time towards being a part of that movement of people who are trying to change people's attitudes about who plays games and why they play them. What can be the content of a video game, which now seems like you could possibly make a game about anything, but at the time, it really felt like a revolutionary act just making a game about a little girl, like, or about, you know, about subject matter that maybe people normally don't make games about, you know.

And we had a games festival that we ran with the Cologne Games lab in Cologne, Germany. We did three. It was like every other year, so 2011, 2013, 2015. It was called the Not Games Fest and it happened at the same moment as the largest game festival in Germany, which is, Gamescom, a huge games festival. It happens every year. Giant. And so we had our alternative festival that people would come to and it was sort of like showing alternative games and, sort of more chill environment. And yeah, so we did our best. <laughs> We did our best of the poetry of the medium. We felt like real-time, real-time media, real time 3D was a poetic medium and we wanted people to see the beauty of that and that... And underneath that, that you can do anything with your computer. Again, we were like, you're making games but like why are you stuck to this? Games are ancient. But video games are not games. Video games are video games, and you can do anything the computer can do, you can do in a video game, you know what I mean? Any subject you can think of, you can make that game about. Because to us, we weren't tied to this notion of games, we were tied to the notion of interactive art and that was quite something else.

**McIlwain:** And so it seems like the video games were your way back in and reconciling maybe what drove you away from the web...

**Harvey:** Yes.

**McIlwain:** The connecting point.

**Harvey:** Absolutely.

**McIlwain:** Yeah.

**Weber:** But then you sort of got disillusioned with them, too.

**Harvey:** Yeah. But that took 13 years, you know?

<laughter>

**McIlwain:** I want to if I can move to a question that has to be my final one, because I've got to sign off. But moves the story on a little bit more and for me it's maybe more of a happy question, which is how did you end up in one of my favorite and increasingly favorite cities, in Rome? How did you... Yeah. What took you there?

**Harvey:** Well, that's a little-- After we stopped making games, we didn't know what to do with ourselves, so we just started doing arts residencies. We wanted to be at home as little as possible. We were just like, we're going to figure out where we want to go and go there. But, like, I was in love with Rome, with being in Rome already because we came here in 2006. Started coming here in 2006 just on our honeymoon, you know. And then we kept coming back for like, vacations like everybody does, you know, vacations. And then... and then we got a residency here via the Ministry of Culture of Belgium, so we were at the Belgian Academy...the Belgian Academy for five months. And at these academies you get a free apartment, <laughs> you know. You're sort of just in Rome for five months, you know. And after coming here at every given opportunity, it was interesting to finally live here and then we at the end of the five months we couldn't understand why we were leaving because we felt so at home by that time that we had gotten used to the chaos and the--

**McIlwain:** Yeah.

**Harvey:** Everything and decided that it suited us, I guess. And so we went back to Belgium then and then I started teaching and because we had to make our way somehow. But then we just kind of I got a prize for being, what is it, the Künstlerinnenpreis which is like the female artist prize of the Nordrhein Westfalen or something in Germany, which came with some money, and so I took that money and I said, "We're moving in Rome." And so we did. And so we moved here in right before the pandemic hit, so, like 2020 I want to say. I don't remember what year it was exactly. What is time anymore?

**McIlwain:** Yeah. <laughs>

**Harvey:** But, like, we moved here in a September and we had like four months of absolute happiness and then got locked down hard and had to stay inside for two years, which was, yeah, you can imagine, kind of a mess. We were-- we were allowed to walk around the neighborhood but luckily this neighborhood is very interesting, you know, and right next to St. Peter's Square and Castel Sant'Angelo is right there. We just couldn't cross the bridge, you know. You could walk around but you couldn't really leave, if you know what I mean. So, so that was a bit strange and we're only now really coming out of that for real. Like, the city I'd say is now back to normal, whatever normal is in Rome. But it's a great place and I've always, I've been obsessed with it for a long time I guess.

**McIlwain:** Yeah.

**Harvey:** And I love living here. Yeah. Despite its flaws, it's also got, I mean, you know, it's like once you get here you learn the flaws, I guess, but it's on the whole just amazing, actually. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** Yes, indeed, indeed. Well I have to sign off. It has been a pleasure.

**Harvey:** Okay.

**McIlwain:** I know we will talk again.

**Weber:** And if you--

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** I have a few more if you've got the time.

**Harvey:** Okay, okay. We'll just do these two and then we'll give everyone a break. <laughs> We'll get out of here. Yeah.

**McIlwain:** I'll look forward to being in touch again. And thanks so much for taking the time and...

**Harvey:** Oh, no problem. Thank you.

**McIlwain:** All right. Take care, Marc. We'll see you later.

**Harvey:** Yes. Bye.

**McIlwain:** Bye.

**Weber:** So I saw your more recent 3D sculpture. I mean, you sort of came full circle when you were talking about trying to figure out how to combine sculpture and computers back when you're in school.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** But I guess your 3D printing...

**Harvey:** Oh, I figured that out over time. Like, you know, as much as I complain about how computing has changed, like, there's been a lot of great things as well, like the open-source movement, you know, open-source software. The fact that you can find all these scripts on GitHub, et cetera, you know. Google Collabs and all that, notebooks and everything everywhere. It's like I'm just saying that like somehow I ended up back on the web, you know, now. I make my work exclusively, it's either in the physical space or it's online, you know, so I'm a net artist again. And I'd say that what's made that-- what's made that possible has been the fact not the computer itself, which I'd say I still don't see it as a tool only strictly. It's still more than that to me, but at the same time, that web technology has become something a bit more liquid, Like, it's not just HTML. There's also more you can do with CSS, more you can do with JavaScript, more that you can do with 3D, you know. I'd say that three.js is an amazing library and you should talk to Mr. Doob, the guy who wrote three.js, if you haven't talked to him already; again, someone you should talk to because he, I'd say everyone owes him a debt because he makes 3D online or that script, I'm sure it's many people working on it-- But you know that three.js is a library that made it-- made me realize that I could translate the things that I have been doing in 3D to something that could be online again. And I would say between that and 3D printing in general, when I made my first 3D print from a character that I had... a character that I had used in a game and I made a 3D print of it and it was just like, again, you know.

I only like technology when it feels like magic, you know, and this felt like magic, like I can hold this thing that was in the computer and it felt real to me, real enough to be inside the machine. But like, now when I have it outside, you know, and holding my hand it's just, it was love, you know. So between I'd say those two things, the ability of easily executing digital environments, 3D environments in the browser and the 3D printer led me back to sculpture and also led me back to the web, so to speak. Which I'm pretty committed to now, but it's like I don't feel as emotional about it now as I used to, I guess, you know. It's like I let it... I let the web be the web, you know, and my art is my art. So you know, I try to find ways to combine all of my interests now and I don't put all my eggs in one basket I guess. And I don't trust technology, so, I don't need to trust it. I just need to use it, you know.

**Weber:** Yeah. You were burned in your kind of first love with it.

**Harvey:** I was burned.

**Weber:** But you've come to a more mature...

**Harvey:** Yeah.

<laughter>

**Harvey:** Yeah, yeah. Once bitten, twice shy. Yeah.

**Weber:** I Remember the nineties, you know, that, yeah, the world was just going to change forever. I mean, I was doing web history, but it's very disappointing to realize it's just going to be absorbed by the world and <laughs> put into business as usual.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** But I did want to ask you to go back a little bit to the trip you took when you met Lettie and you saw the people at NetNoir.

**Harvey:** Yeah, sure.

**Weber:** If you could just talk about that experience. She remembers you also bringing out a whole bunch of cameras.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** She said a couple pictures that...

**Harvey:** Photography was still very important to me. Digital photography was not quite a thing yet. And I was still into dark room processes, you know, So I had a big 4 X 5 camera that I took out there. I took it cross country. When I met Lettie, it was a cross country trip that I took with my boyfriend and we just went across the United States and I had my big camera and I would set up my 4 X 5, you know, in front of the, you know, Grand Canyon or whatever, you know. You know, and I would take these big, you know, Ansel Adams moments, you know, <laughs> or something. And I took pictures of people I met and different things. Yeah.

Other than that, on that trip, I don't remember much except that everybody in San Francisco was high rolling, that everybody had a Range Rover and like, you know, and just made a million and you know, I don't know, had some great apartment that I could never afford and-- <laughs> That's all I remember about San Francisco, honestly. But I remember Lettie and all her friends and that was really great, to, I mean, it was really a lot of fun. I don't, I must say it was so long ago that I don't recall much except I met Lettie several times over the years, too, here in Europe as well and in New York.

**Weber:** And did you, you visited NetNoir, the offices, and North Park and all that.

**Harvey:** Yeah, yeah.

**Weber:** Talk about do you remember a sense of excitement or...?

**Harvey:** I do remember a sense of excitement. Yeah, I mean it was, it was everything everyone was doing felt very important and like it was going to make a difference, you know. And like, but I honestly don't remember much about like being there...being there. Honestly, it was just such a long time ago. I wish I did remember more about it. I remember more about like just being and driving around and us

eating meals together and going to the park. I don't know, it's like, yeah. Sorry, my memories of that are just day-to-day...

**Weber:** No, no.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** That, in ways, that's maybe more important, the meals and friends. But yeah...

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** Oh, I looked at your Gray Matter sculpture.

**Harvey:** Oh, thank you.

**Weber:** But tell me if I'm... I thought there, maybe it's just because I know you're in Rome, you know, that it seemed like there's some classical influence. You had something, you had some references... But I mean, you're obviously in a city where sculpture is very important.

**Harvey:** Yeah, but I mean, my sculpture, my sculpture has always been this way. You know, I've always kind of borrowed a bit like aesthetically. I think that's just my aesthetic, you know, it's like my language, my visual language, sculptural language, always is in conversation with art history. And now that I'm here, I just have the perfect excuse to just not be ashamed of that, you know? And yeah, so it definitely is all in there, you know, the love of interactivity, the love of classical art or more baroque art really. Yeah, like the web, like everything. That show really was about a lot of like all of my interests at once. I would say that this happened in a way this was my online statement and my offline statement was my first solo show that I had at a gallery called bitforms in New York City. That happened during lockdown, which was a fun experience, let me tell you, creating all these sculptures in my apartment and like shipping them to New York City and then not being able to go to my opening and doing it all digitally. Which actually I felt like I had been training for that my whole life, like it made perfect sense. Of course, I will do my opening digitally, you know. And I lead people around the exhibit. But that, that exhibition was also me trying to put everything together again. So that exhibition had video cam footage, webcam footage of me in 1999 at my desk with my webcam that I told you about. It had videos of my sketchbooks, me flipping through my sketchbooks. It had the early net artwork that Michael and I had done together. It had our videogame, The Endless Forest and L.O.C.K. was represented in there. It had my new sculptures, it had AR works, which ultimately became NFTs because of the timing. It had, you know, everything that I was trying to put together, you know, to figure out what it was exactly that I was doing with my life or had done. Let's say, what have I done, you know, was in that show. And I'd say that Gray Matter was kind of making that same statement, but like just about how I feel about this digital material of polygons 3D material that I work with, my clay, so to speak, you know, and how I how I view that, you know, is what I was trying to, express in that, in that group of work.



**Weber:** Beautiful. And then the one thing that we usually do, you don't have to do this, but I wanted to ask you, you know, a little bit, looking forward, looking back. But we ask and you can think about if you want to do this, one word of advice to young innovator entrepreneur artists, what is the word? And can you tell a story that illustrates why you chose this word? So literally, one word. So, you know, people have chosen things from curiosity to Steven Levy, the journalist, chose "truth". Sandy Lerner of Cisco chose "don't" to tell young entrepreneurs not to do things just to be an entrepreneur, do it to solve a real problem in the world. <laughs> So I'm just saying, it could be anything from your personality.

**Harvey:** Wow.

**Weber:** But that-- think about that for a little bit.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** I just wanted to ask you, looking, do you have suggestions for, I mean, not in one word, but longer. You know, what suggestions could you offer to young people, particularly artists, people of color, women?

**Harvey:** Could I offer the word "faith?"

**Weber:** Sure.

**Harvey:** But in many ways, many aspects, I mean, I think that people should just think about that word a little bit, like what it means to have faith in yourself and faith in technology, faith-- And to not take that word lightly, I guess, but to use it to guide you. And that can mean a lot of things to many people. I just want them, would want people to think about what that means. if I had to choose a word, it might be "faith," but it might also be "independence," but also to think about that, like what does it mean to be independent of something? That was a big deal when we were independent developers, it was like realize that your independence also means you're also dependent on something. So it's what do you want to be independent of? Not so much being, "Oh, I'm independent," you know, "I'm free of all this stuff," you know; it's like you're always-- you're always dependent on something, you know? So what is it? What is that trade off you're making for that independence in one area as opposed to another? Yeah, so that's two words, but they're both good.

**Weber:** No, I like the idea that you're always dependent, but you can choose what you're dependent on to some extent. Yeah, as long as you're alive, you're dependent on something.

**Harvey:** Yeah. But not only that, it's that there's no such thing as true independence. I mean, like I said, it's like, you know, I felt, I felt free, but at the, at the same time my computer is now like sort of something that at any moment Microsoft can just decide, oh, there's an update, you know, and that update is going to break all the software I made, you know, or something, you know. And I have no control over that, you know. It's like, so I'm dependent on, you know, my independence is only as far as, you know, their

corporate boardroom will allow me to go in a way, you know. Not to sound bleak, but it is bleak, you know.

**Weber:** Well, what's the famous--? There's no art without resistance in the materials?

**Harvey:** Yeah. <laughs> That's a good one.

**Weber:** But, in this case it's corporate strategy. <laughs>

**Harvey:** Yeah. Yes.

**Weber:** There's a lot of resistance in the material.

**Harvey:** Yeah. When people talk about the metaverse now, I'm thinking about that. I'm like, oh you think you're going to build the metaverse, you know?

**Weber:** Tony Parisi, one of the VRML guys, he wrote a great piece in *Medium* on, you know, like this is the third time around with the metaverse. <laughs>

**Harvey:** Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. And I think it's important that people understand that, you know, that people hear that and don't believe the hype or don't go off on your own fantasy about this. You know, it's like this is the third time. Yeah, exactly.

**Weber:** It's not necessarily the Zuckerverse.

**Harvey:** Yeah. It's going to be something that we can't imagine and that probably will all-- hey, but deal with anyway, you know, unfortunately. Maybe there'll be a moment, a brief shining moment when it's amazing and you know, we all get what we want or something; but mostly, it's going to be whatever-- At least right now, let's say things can change I guess, you know, but at least right now, it's going to be whatever, you know, the consortium of, you know, the large corporations, Google, Apple, Microsoft, Facebook, whatever, want it to be meta, yeah.

**Weber:** Not if it doesn't work. I mean, the web took off despite cable companies, telcos, Microsofts, so who knows?

**Harvey:** Yeah, but what's the equivalent of that now, you know? I don't even know what that is.

**Weber:** I mean, this is sort of half-joking, but we did a ROBLOX game and a Minecraft game for the museum. And you know, ROBLOX, there are people saying the metaverse could sneak in through a kid's game or something.

**Harvey:** <laughs>

**Weber:** Who knows?

**Harvey:** My thing to always say is we already have the metaverse and it's the web. Yeah?

**Weber:** Yeah. You know, where do you hope the online world will be in pick 10, 25 years, whatever you like. What do you fear it will be? And then the same question for net art gaming?

**Harvey:** You have another two hours? Like--

**Weber:** <laughs>

**Harvey:** Where do I... where do I...? Okay, what was the first question again?

**Weber:** So basically, where do you hope will be in in let's say 25 years. Where do you fear?

**Harvey:** No, but--

**Weber:** Or choose--

**Harvey:** But I can stop you right there. I do not make these kinds of predictions.

**Weber:** Okay.

**Harvey:** I don't even have hopes in those things. No. It's all about-- it's all about what I think should exist in the world and finding ways to make those things happen. Other than that, I make no predictions anymore. I don't even, I don't even care. Like where all that is in 25 years is none of my business. I really feel that my job as an artist lies elsewhere. And it could evaporate tomorrow and I would still be all right, you know what I mean? It's like I really feel that the job of the artist is to find ways of helping people through all of this, you know? In some-- in small ways, mostly, you know, but and that can take many forms and I don't necessarily need a computer to do that. Wow. Is that maturity speaking? I don't know. I'm just flexible. I'm just flexible now. Yeah.

**Weber:** Good answer. And diversity in tech in the U.S. and Europe, do you think it's... How has it changed that you've seen? And do you think it's...? What's the trend?

**Harvey:** I don't know, to be honest. I don't know because like I said, I've always kind of done my own thing and I haven't really let anything get in my way. And then on the other hand, I feel like this is the wrong question because I've told you my concern is that the corporate system, whatever you want to call it, is what controls everything. That's what's stopping creativity and diversity and everything else is the fact that you can't freely do anything, that your computer is not your own, the web is not yours, you cannot build the metaverse. I can't even buy a headset without going through Meta or somebody like this. Yes, I can build my own. But then the software, am I going to write the software? Like, you know, it's like there's no spirit of building these larger structures without the corporate system of things, data collection by

Facebook. You know, it's like, I'm just saying that it's like that's the issue. That's, solve that and maybe you solve diversity. Solve that and maybe you see something different. But it's like, other than that there's these other things are just distractions, you know, talking about identity or diversity or whatever as if we got some control over that, as if there's anything we can do really about that. I mean, it's a larger issue. It's systemic, it's, you know. Yeah. Anyway--

**Weber:** Well, and you could have diverse people running corporations that don't have--

**Harvey:** That's not going to help you.

**Weber:** The public's interest at heart, right.

**Harvey:** That's not going to do anything. That's not gonna do anything. Because those things still work in the way they work. They work as designed. They're designed to control, to grow value for people who are not you and who are not me. And that's what's going to build the metaverse and that ideology is going to be in the metaverse. And to ask me what I think we can do to change that?

**Weber:** Oh, I'm not saying-- I'm not asking you what we can do, though that would be great. Just what do you think...

**Harvey:** How is it changed? How has it changed? Like, I wouldn't know. I don't know because I see that as being the issue. You know, it's like I just see the effects, you know, the effects it has on society, I guess. And like, you know, and the effects are like well, more people are online than ever. Shouldn't we just be happy about that? You've got revolutions running themselves off on Twitter, you know. Isn't that like...Isn't that utopia? You know?

**Weber:**

It's all going to work out in the end.

**Harvey:** Or not. Or not.

**Weber:** I'm kidding. <laughs>

**Harvey:** And, yeah, exactly. <laugh> It's all going to work out or it's not, you know. It's like...

**Weber:** Well, as Franz Kafka said, there's infinite hope but not for us.

**Harvey:** Right. There's infinite hope, but not for us. Yeah.

<laughter>

**Weber:** But--

**Harvey:** Yeah. Accurate. Kafka had a lot to say. Yeah.

**Weber:** This, you know, tell me it's really more for my curiosity. But did you, were you aware in the early days of the web that, you know, the web originally was supposed to be more participatory that...

**Harvey:** Yeah. It was also supposed to be 3D...

**Weber:** The first browser was also an editor.

**Harvey:** You were supposed to use your hands.

**Weber:** Right.

**Harvey:** Yeah. It was supposed to be in VR and, like, we were all connected and...

**Weber:** But every browser was originally going to be an editor as well. I mean, the first browser was all... You knew that at the time.

**Harvey:** Mm-hmm.

**Weber:** because there was sort of a, it was, you were talking a lot about the ability to create and who has the power to let you create.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** I mean, and this is more my own view just because I started with some of the early web people at CERN interviewing them and stuff.

**Harvey:** Nice.

**Weber:** And you know, they saw it very much as participatory more like a Wiki in some ways.

**Harvey:** Yeah.

**Weber:** And that got sidetracked by the popular browsers. It's mostly because CERN wouldn't fund developing the browser editor there for different common platforms. But you knew that there was some something that had gotten sidetracked early on.

**Harvey:** Yeah, I knew there was pushback. People wanted, you know, there were those who said that there shouldn't be any graphics in the browser at the time. There was a lot of pushback to there even being graphics, that you know, it should be Mosaic. That it should be different protocols that go together, you know, to create the internet. It's not just about the web, you know? This was also something I was aware of at the time, you know.

**Weber:** So, yeah.

**Harvey:** And I still think that that's-- that in some ways they were right, you know, that I mean, I think that they were right <laughs> that the world would be, the online world would be more interesting if there were different protocols, if there were different ways of connecting and interacting and...

**Weber:** Yeah, I mean...

**Harvey:** And creating.

**Weber:** Originally, they wanted to have multimedia integrated. Tim Berners-Lee wanted a more flexible multimedia tag to bring an embed tag or something like that that would, you could bring in video or sound or whatever and...

**Harvey:** Well, we can kind of do that.

**Weber:** Format negotiation. Well, it sort of developed later. But the yeah, I mean, there were big battles early on. And then the VRML people thought the world would be fully 3D very soon. I mean, that was the high-water mark of idealism was, like, '94.

**Harvey:** Yeah. It was way too idealistic. <laughs> It barely worked, barely worked. Yeah. And was extremely difficult to achieve. But yeah, I've read books on the beginnings of VR, you know, and how this was supposed to be...VR was always thought of as an interconnected world... as the metaverse. I hate that we call it that because that's such a dystopian concept, but, yeah.

**Weber:** But maybe it's appropriate. <laughs>

**Harvey:** Yeah, but it's appropriate. Maybe it's appropriate. Yeah. But I know that VR was supposed to be this way of, you know, virtually being together, so to speak, as well, you know? And I still love that idea. I still love the idea of VR, but like as it exists right now, I don't think it has a future. <laughs> Yeah.

**Weber:** Yeah. Well, we can be surprised. So.

**Harvey:** Yeah. We could always be surprised. Always, always.

**Weber:** Well, thank you so much. Is there is there anything else you want to add?

**Harvey:** No, not really. I think that covers it, <laughs> to be honest. I mean, you know, other than that I'm fairly, I'm a little bit optimistic about the future because of I guess what they're calling Web 3 and this idea that perhaps there is another way. To me, Web 3 stands for a third way I guess. And even though I don't know what that is exactly, and no one does, you know, just like the metaverse, they don't know what that is either. But I'm a little bit optimistic about the fact that people try to see the web differently now, you

know? And I hope that that leads somewhere, sparks something other than, I don't know, people thinking they're going to make millions in crypto. But, yeah.

**Weber:** Well, yeah, decentralized web folks say it's different from a crypto.

**Harvey:** Yeah. The decentralized web aspect of it I think is fascinating, but I don't know what it is yet and I don't think anyone does. So yeah.

**Weber:** I've been to some of the conferences at the Internet Archive and I'm still not sure I know what it is.

<laughter>

**Harvey:** Internet Archive is great, though.

**Weber:** Oh, yeah.

**Harvey:** Internet Archive's a great force for good.

**Weber:** You know, your site is up there. Entropy8, right?

**Harvey:** Yeah. It's all there.

END OF THE INTERVIEW

Resources:

- internet articles - <http://e8z.org/godlove/closer/pop/index.php?dir=&ofile=3>
- sketchbook video - <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/519157402>
- SFMOMA/Webby prize kiss video - <http://e8z.org/godlove/closer/pop/index.php?dir=&ofile=19>
- webcam videos - <https://vimeo.com/515861270>
- ananatomy link (Gallery9) - <http://ananatomy.walkerart.org/>
- skinonskinonskin original url - <http://entropy8zuper.org/skinonskinonskin/>
- viewer exit comments: <http://entropy8zuper.org/skinonskinonskin/>
- emulation of piece by Rhizome - <http://archive.rhizome.org/anthology/skinonskinonskin.html>
- info: <https://anthology.rhizome.org/skinonskinonskin>
- Godlove Museum download: <https://taleoftales.itch.io/the-godlove-museum>
- link to Wirefire - <http://e8z.org/wirefire/>
- Let's make a video game talk - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-LCHPrZA3s>
- Eden.Garden video - <https://vimeo.com/145720242>
- Char Davies immersed in Ephemere 1998? video
- <https://www.dropbox.com/s/zyav73lh4gsotgd/immersion.mp4?dl=0>
- Realtime Art Manifesto - <https://www.tale-of-tales.com/tales/RAM.html>
- Notgames - <http://notgames.org/blog/2010/03/19/not-a-manifesto/>