THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH:	**ANNE d'HARNONCOURT (AD)**
INTERVIEWER:	**SHARON ZANE (SZ)**
LOCATION:	**PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**
DATE:	**11 SEPTEMBER 2003**

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: I think what you were about to say was interesting.

AD: Not only because of this pending interview, but also because of being so deeply involved in the museum world for so long now, I've been reflecting on the fact that my father's very sudden and completely unanticipated accidental death, just after his retirement, created a kind of gap in my education. It was just as I had started to work at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I had been at the Courtauld Institute in London doing an M.A. in art history, having gone through Radcliffe College. I did not really think that I was going to go into the history of art, was not even considering it. I was doing the history and literature of modern France and Germany, and writing a very crazy thesis on aspects of the poetry of Shelley and Hölderlin, never thinking that a museum career was something that I was going to be attracted to. It just didn't occur to me because I had been so interested in history and writing and less, apparently, in the visual arts.

SZ: Did you take any courses when you were at Radcliffe?

AD: At Harvard? Only in my last year did I take a couple of quite wonderful history-of-architecture courses. I never took an art history course. I audited a course in Chinese painting, with Max Loehr, which was an amazing experience. It was not until my fourth year, my senior year in college, that I suddenly felt an acute deprivation of the

visual experiences. I think it began to take hold because of my father, MoMA, and lots of other things that I had been exposed to. In my senior year I realized I really did want to do art history, and I really did want to think about museums. So I went off to the Courtauld for deep immersion. My father, I remember, was both delighted and proud, but it struck him as absolutely hilarious that a daughter of his would study the history of art. Because he had such an extraordinary, rather elliptical, if you will, career. It was unpredictable from its inception, his career, and it led him through so many fascinating parts of his life. His thesis was on "The Creosote Contents of Certain Soft Coals of Southern Yugoslavia," which is not exactly what you would expect the thesis of the future director of The Museum of Modern Art to be.
So he was very proud. Neither of my parents ever pushed me in any direction. They encouraged me to explore, to be who I wanted to be. If anything, they kind of poked their heads into my room and said, "Don't you want to stop doing homework and do something else?" But, in fact, when I made the decision that I was passionately eager to immerse myself in art history, my father was thrilled and very proud.

I also remember a wonderful encounter with Alfred and Marga Barr. Of course, they were very close to my parents, and Alfred gave me what I recognized later as a little quiz. This might have been when I had already been at the Courtauld for a year. He was showing me something he was concerned about -- a recent acquisition -- and he produced a very beautiful black-and-white drawing. He asked me who it was by, and by some miracle I managed to guess that it was by Kandinsky, even though it wasn't a conventional Kandinsky in any way. I haven't thought about it since. It would be fun to see what that was. Then Marga, who, I think, had disapproved of the Courtauld (she thought it was very narrow in its focus), told me I was going to spend my entire life studying little silver boxes, and that this was of no interest.

Nevertheless, I was undeterred and undiscouraged. I listened, but it somehow didn't seem to worry me, although I admired her greatly as an art historian. Again, I'm not going to be great about the chronology, but both of those conversations may even have come after I had graduated from the Courtauld. It's hard to say.

My earliest powerful memories of visual art comes from looking at the great number of books that my parents had in our apartment at 333 Central Park West. I clearly

looked at those books more than I realized at the time, because some of the images I saw in them are still very vivid to me, today. The picture I first remember ever really being irresistibly attracted to was Matisse's *Blue Window*, at the Modern. It's been in my mind forever, it seems to me, and it's clearly the real thing, not a reproduction. I spent a fair amount of time at the Modern, as I was growing up. This was during my school days at Brearley School, in the '50s. In ’61, graduated from Brearley and went off to Radcliffe in the fall. I remember quite clearly the character and feeling of the galleries at the time, and encounters with specific works of art -- *Guernica*, the amazing collection of Matisse paintings, including the *Blue Window*. I think *The Piano Lesson* is another that is just embedded in my memory.

I visited my father off and on in his office. He was so incredibly lucky to have the great, curvilinear desk, designed by Guimard. I also remember being so impressed and thrilled for my father when the Modern commissioned a new desk with the same modern, long outline, after the old desk was whipped out from under him and put in the galleries by the curators, who were understandably desirous of having it on view. It enabled him to sit very close to you, which I think he loved to do. When he sat at the desk and faced you, he was only about two feet away from you, and that was something that he loved. I don't think this was ever explained to me by him. I think somebody else must have said that this was why they'd done it. I still have that desk.

SZ: You said this was something he loved. I presume this had to do with the way he chose to interact with people?

AD: I think so. Whether I read it, or this was said to me by one of the trustees or one of the staff, I really don't know. It could be any number of people; I don't think it was him. The desk, as it passed in front of the person sitting at it, became very narrow. If you were sitting and talking to him, you were very close. There were drawers on one side and plenty of spaces for papers. I could use that myself, today. It was clearly something he very much enjoyed. I have no idea how the [Guimard] desk arrived in his office. It would be interesting to know if he actually pleaded with somebody for it, or whether they just didn't have any place to store it at the time.

I also had the wonderful pleasure and memory of encountering a number of artists and, of course, the MoMA staff, over those years. I obviously have two, or maybe three, phases of my own interaction with The Museum of Modern Art. One was during my father's lifetime. That was really concentrated between whenever it was that I became conscious of art and MoMA -- from the early '50s, because I started to go almost as a child, through the time that I left for college, in the fall of '61. As a college student, like, alas, all too many college students these days, I spent extremely little time with art. I don't think I went to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts more than once.

SZ: Or the Fogg?

AD: Or the Fogg. I didn't darken the doors too much, until the last year, when I realized what I was being deprived of, and began to search for a way to immerse myself in works of art and the history of art.

So, that was really the first era -- childhood and adolescent memories. Then, I came back from England in the fall of 1967, after I had done my two-year immersion, which I enjoyed immensely. I had also had spent six months as an intern at the Tate Gallery, which, for me, was very productive and exciting. I came back and promptly interviewed with five museums for some kind of curatorial assistant's job. I had loved working at the Tate. It was very exciting. I had gotten to meet a lot of people, some of whom are still involved there, which was wonderful. Norman Reid was the director then. Of course, this was a very complex thing because many people in the museum world knew my father, and I was always eager not to ride on his coattails. And he was very funny about his coattails. He really was so delighted, and so tickled -- which is the right word -- that this was the way my interests had started to turn, that when I came back he called several of his museum director friends and said, "Anne is interested in a job. Just treat her like anybody else," (which I'm sure they didn't do) "but it would be great if somebody in your museum could see her, because she wants some kind of starting-level position and she's willing to do anything."

I don't know what he said but whatever it was, I got wonderful offers. I went to Boston and saw Perry Rathbone. I went to Chicago and saw Charlie Cunningham. I

went to Cleveland and met with Sherman Lee. It was just astonishing. They were all very kind, and none of them had jobs. The one place where my father didn't really know the current director -- who had just actually arrived only three years before and was much younger -- was in Philadelphia. I also interviewed with Evan Turner, who was then the director of the Philadelphia, and has since become a great friend and mentor to me. So Philadelphia was my first job, as a curatorial assistant in what was then called the Painting Department, which is now divided into three different spheres -- modern and contemporary art, European painting, and American art. At that time it was all one department.

My father knew a number of people in Philadelphia, largely at the University Museum, because of his great interest in Native American, pre-Columbian, and African art, and his long, pre-MoMA career working in a number of those fields. He knew the then director [Frohlich Rainey]. He had already been participating in the "What in the World?" programs, the television programs produced by the University Museum, which got this wonderful mix of scholars, experts, and artists together to identify mysterious works in the Museum's collection. I don't think he or my mother knew anybody at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Then, of course, my father's death came just a year after that.

In retrospect, I got a huge benefit, obviously, from the things that he taught me unconsciously, or through osmosis.

SZ: Such as?

AD: I think there were things I learned from him, and things I absorbed from him. I have several clear senses of what inspired and motivated him as a museum man. One of those was certainly an enormous respect for and delight in living artists, whether it was Hans Arp, Sandy Calder, a Navajo silversmith, or a Mexican potter. The vast range of artistic endeavor by living artists and craftsmen was something he was endlessly interested in. That goes way back in his own life. Somehow, it was contagious, because it has certainly informed my own life, even though my career has been so different and much more boring, although exciting in its own respect. It's

much more monolithic, shall we say, since I've been at the same institution now for thirty-two years.

So that's one thing. The second was his profound belief in internationalism -- in the reach and intersection of museums and the arts, with relationships between countries; relationships between civilizations; relationships between people. I was very aware, growing up, of his particular love of Latin America and, obviously, of Mexico, to which he remained devoted ever since his years there.

SZ: Did you make a lot of trips down there?

AD: It just makes me crazy to think of all the chances I missed. I went once with my parents to Mexico. I don't have the precise date, but I could probably find it. I think I was around fifteen, maybe a little younger. I was still at the Brearley School, and I would guess it was over Christmas. We had maybe ten days or two weeks, something like that -- an unusual amount of time. We stayed in the house of his great friend, patron and mentor, Frederick Davis. The book remains to be written on Fred Davis, and the record about him needs to be expanded, because he was not only, as described in a number of texts, the owner of a shop. He was really quiet, but among the most influential American émigrés and ex-patriates involved in the whole Renaissance of the arts in Mexico. He designed silver, as, of course, did the much more well-known Bill Spratling.

Fred Davis was immensely interested in folk art. I think that he really began as a collector and then as a purveyor of colonial Mexican antiquities -- not ancient works of art, but colonial period things. Then (and my father shared his enthusiasm for this) he became one of the greatest collectors and enthusiasts of Mexican folk art, together with, of course, some great Mexican artists such as [Rufino] Tamayo, [Diego] Rivera, [Freida] Kahlo, and Miguel Covarrubias. It was Miguel Covarrubias who was my father's closest Mexican friend, though he had many. I think there's been a recent biography of Miguel Covarrubias. There is surely even more to say about Covarrubias's role in modern Mexican art and in the spread of interest in Mexican antiquities, the great pre-Columbian era, and New York Modernism. But I barely remember meeting him, because I believe he died in the '50s [Miguel

Covarrubias, 1902-1957]. He died quite young. That, again, is a great sadness, because he is somebody who would have had many tales to tell.

The Mexican artist whom I met through my father that I most remember was Rufino Tamayo. He came to our apartment a number of times. I just remember this grand person of whom my father was so admiring and, in a way, so close to.

SZ: You were talking about this atmosphere of internationalism --

AD: I was very conscious of my father's travels to Latin America, in particular, and of stories he would tell about exhibitions in which he was involved, like the Art of the Andes ["Ancient Arts of the Andes" 1954], for example. I can never date the stories themselves, although I can try to date the roots of the stories, because my father loved to tell stories all his life. They often got better over time, but for the ones I've serendipitously had a chance to verify, the spirit of them always turns out to be very true.

For example, one story about his work on the Art of the Andes exhibition was about a very distinguished private museum in Peru, which remains one of the great institutions there. The progenitor of the museum, the great collector, had not decided whether or not he was going to lend to the Art of the Andes. It was finally decided that my father would go, in the last months of the exhibition, and try to persuade him, and they ended up having a wonderful time together. My father, of course, because of his Mexican years, loved Spanish, and some of my earliest memories are my father speaking Spanish on the telephone to any number of people in other parts of the world. Finally, after the collector had agreed to lend, he produced a small, metal suitcase, and proceeded to put into that suitcase some of the greatest gold artifacts in his possession. He closed the suitcase, handed it to my father, said, "Go with God," and had his driver drive him to the airport. My father said, "Could I make a phone call before I go?" The man said, "Of course." He made a phone call to The Museum of Modern Art and said, "You know, somebody had better meet me at customs, because I've got them all, and I'm coming with them." And they arrived.

In fact, I went to visit this museum in Lima [the Larco Museum], and had the good fortune to meet the son of the founder of the museum. When he heard my name, he just beamed all over and said, "Ah, you are the daughter of my father's great friend, René d'Harnoncourt." He had, as it were, the other side of the story. The objects are in the catalogue of the Art of the Andes. I think they were all black and white, in the front of the catalogue, because they weren't sure they were going to be able to borrow them. They're right there, in living color, in the museum in Lima.

SZ: You talked about there being artists at your home -- that that was a very powerful part of your life then.

AD: Yes, I remember a number. The trouble is, if I worked at it hard I would remember a lot more. I remember Sandy and Louisa Calder, because they were so memorable. I loved Sandy Calder's work, and my father admired and enjoyed them enormously. I think they were certainly people whom my parents really saw as friends, to the degree that they had a chance to see very many people outside of the rush of museum life. I know, for example (but didn't know at the time), that my parents went a couple of times to have dinner with Marcel and Teeny Duchamp. I know that from my later friendship with Teeny Duchamp, who became an extraordinary mentor as well. But those were, I think, much more quiet occasions, and I was not particularly aware of those. The other person I remember very vividly, for some reason, being in my father's office was Mark Rothko -- just a lovely, lovely encounter. I don't know what brought Rothko to the museum that day. I don't know if he and my father were discussing something of vital interest to both of them, or whether they were just passing the time. But I happened to be there, and just remember this lovely, very intense, slightly melancholy looking man, whose work I had admired and had never met. I'm sure that was when I was only fifteen or sixteen.

SZ: I was reading a discussion of your father’s installation techniques, the way he had genuine emotion for the works and how that played itself out. I was wondering if that was anything that you could speak to.

AD: I think my father was never happier than when working on an installation. He would sit at the desk in our apartment on the Upper West Side, doing lots of little drawings

of each object in the show (this is all very evident in the museum's archives), just whistling away. He always whistled, with a cigarette in one hand (always part of the vision), thinking about each object, how it fit in, where it would shine and make the most of itself, just shifting [works of art] in his mind and shifting [them] on paper. The one I'm probably most conscious of, specifically, is the Picasso sculpture exhibition, because by that time I was really older and more aware of the specific aspect of what he was working on. He just loved the art of installation, and believed very strongly that the installation should not overpower the art object or the personality and character of the artist, but should, to the best degree it can, bring that forth. I love installation myself.

It was my father, also, who introduced me, for the first time, to A. James Speyer, the great curator of 20th-century art at the Art Institute in Chicago. He was somebody I met when I interviewed at Chicago the first time around, when there was no job available. But he told me that he was aching to be able to hire a young assistant, and maybe they'd get the ability to do that in a few years. And sure enough, two years after I'd been in Philadelphia, Jim offered me the amazing chance to go and work with him. He was one of the *installateurs* of our time. My father and he admired each other very much, I think. He was a Miesian-trained architect, who admired and worked with Mies van der Rohe quite closely. His way of installation was quite different than my father's, but there were very strong, underlying connections, really rooted in this huge respect for and fascination with the work of art.

Also, in my father's case, the issue which always arose, particularly with art by Native Americans, ancient cultures, or African art, was one of not depriving the work of art of a context. There's this great dialogue that you see go on, this great cyclical conversation between the object by itself and the object embedded in the society and the life from which it comes. My father was immensely interested in that whole discussion. He was not, I think, completely on one side or the other, but he appreciated and thought a lot about both aspects of how art works and how it expresses the artist, and other aspects of its time.

The other aspect of my father's idealism and mission in the world of museums that I think affected me the most was his complete and utter conviction that museum work

was public service. He believed that engaging a broad audience -- unlocking the potential of art to communicate with people, and people to communicate with the works of art (if that's not too silly a phrase) -- was really the primary thing that museums were about. He believed in them very strongly as educational institutions. I remember a lot of his interactions with the staff of the museum -- Victor d'Amico, in the early days of the Children's Art Carnival.

SZ: Did you ever do that?

AD: I must have done that to a degree. I can remember the little door which only children could go through, although I got so tall so fast that I had to stoop. I know I was there. I have just a general memory of colored papers and things being fun. I can't say that I remember it in much detail.

SZ: But you were saying you remember his interactions with staff such as Victor d'Amico, in terms of what?

AD: I just remember how important he thought Victor d'Amico's mission was to the museum. I remember something about various experiences of individual curators, or individual members of the staff doing specific projects, such as Bernard Rudofsky doing "Architecture Without Architects," [November 1964-February 1965] for example, which was a project that absolutely fascinated my father, and that got bigger and bigger over time. That's another whole topic, which I would really have to spend some rigorous time reviewing.

I remember some people very well -- Dorothy Miller, for instance, and Arthur Drexler. I remember Captain Steichen, as everybody called him, at the outset of my memory of photography. I remember very vividly "The Family of Man." I can still see some of those photographs in my mind's eye, and I'm surprised, when I actually look at a vintage print of them, that the scale is different, or something is different about them. I had no idea at the time of the involvement of Dorothy Norman, who later became a friend and such a wonderful supporter of this museum, and, of course, a woman from Philadelphia.

You have to think of a busy schoolgirl, who was doing her homework until midnight, and focusing with half an eye. My memory certainly fixes on some things and not on others. I'm sure if we went down the staff list from the early '60s, I would have known almost everybody.

SZ: If we were to do that, would you then have stories that you might be able to tell?

AD: I don't know that I would, necessarily.

SZ: Nelson Rockefeller said that he learned everything he needed to know about politics at The Museum of Modern Art. Did your father enjoy the administrative part of his job?

AD: He enjoyed people enormously. It was sort of hand in hand. Artists are just a very special kind of people, but he loved people and he loved solving problems. He loved building a consensus about how things should happen. I don't think he was a great man for confrontation, but I know that more from what other people have said than from anything he said. He wanted to make things work, and he believed in the Modern and its mission. He believed very profoundly in Alfred Barr. He told me and my mother a number of times that he believed his mission at the museum was to make it possible for Alfred Barr to do what needed to be done.

Alfred is another whole topic, because his creation of an institution that was already so compelling by the time my father arrived in the 1940s was just astonishing. My father certainly saw Alfred as the primo mobile of the whole place. I think he enjoyed enormously working with the staff. He was fascinated by their individuality; the various ways they contributed; the way they went about things; his interaction with the trustees. My sense, growing up, was always of the museum as an extraordinary, extended, and very intense family, which is not to say without difficulties, disputes, or growing pains. But the sense of its being a shared, mission-driven place was very powerful, and that came from everybody that I met and remember meeting, who was involved with it. It's something that continues today.

The Museum is a very extraordinary institution in its sense of self, which, obviously, changes over time. MoMA is an enormously different institution now, in terms of scale, complexity, and many other things, than it was when my father was deeply involved. Nevertheless, there are, I think, many continuous strands that persist.

SZ: Which is pretty remarkable.

AD: Which is very remarkable.

SZ: Most of your memories must be of the building before the '64 expansion, so it was the original building.

AD: Yes, and I remember the '64 expansion quite vividly. I remember one of the people my father enormously enjoyed working with was Philip Johnson. He was a great friend and had an amazing sort of passion for art and the Museum. I remember my father's involvement in that work.

SZ: That was a several-year effort, from ’62 to ‘64, which included a big, capital campaign, then dislocation.

AD: The reason I'm probably less aware of the details of that is because I was in Cambridge at that time, and completely self-absorbed. I'm very aware that these days, or for about the past ten or fifteen years, I would give my eye-teeth to have quizzed my father every night as he came home from work. But, certainly, when he got home in the evenings, he had a capacity to instantly relax that was better than anyone I've ever met. That's not something I have inherited from him in as direct a way as I could. Somehow, he arrived home; he changed into a pair of Bermuda shorts and some kind of short-sleeved shirt; watched television; read cowboy stories that the local stationery store had to supply for him endlessly.

SZ: Oh, he liked those?

AD: Oh, he did. Adventure stories. I think, in a sense, it came straight from his Austrian childhood of reading of the works of Karl May, who was the author of lots of stories

about American Indians and cowboys, which just transfixed the youth of Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Actually, I think it paved the way, in some very remote sense, for my father's passion for Native American art and early civilizations of all kinds.

Let me go back for a moment -- and this is less about MoMA than my father –- and talk about the importance of the Joanneum [Landesmuseum Joanneum] on my father's thinking. The Joanneum, in Graz, is a museum that has a collection of not only Celtic antiquities from the Austrian region, and old master paintings, but also minerals and natural history. It's one of those wonderful museums that are now so rare -- that bridge the arts and the sciences, and also include folk art and, to some extent, contemporary art. It was founded by Archduke John of Austria [Erzherzog Johann], who was an extraordinary Enlightenment figure, who dedicated himself to the arts and the natural environment of the provinces in Austria. I think the museum and some objects in it affected my father enormously. When he went back to Austria at intervals, he kept track of the museum and what it was doing, and I think later gave some talks there.

Obviously, one of the great forces in my father's life, as well as the life of The Museum of Modern Art, was his friendship with and admiration for Nelson Rockefeller.

END TAPE 1, SIDE 1

BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2

AD: Certainly, I know now that Nelson Rockefeller was very involved in my father's coming to the museum in the first place. But what was most evident to me, as a child, and later, as a fledgling museum person, was their shared passion for all the arts of the ancient Americas; Africa; the South Seas; Native American cultures; and the creation of the Museum of Primitive Art. All, to the best of my belief, with a sense that some day that collection would transform itself into part of a great, comprehensive museum -- to wit, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. That wasn't particularly expressed in my hearing as a child, but it was clearly where they had

gotten to together. I think one of the most interesting things for me is this interaction between The Museum of Modern Art, a museum devoted to the art of its own time, and the arts of people with very different, distinct, and remote societies, cultures, and periods. It's a strand that ran through the Modern, I think, even before my father got there. What's the exhibition -- which title I'm sure I have wrong -- of "10,000 Years of Modern Art," or –- [“Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art,” 1940].

One of the things that both my father and my mother felt very strongly about was the fact that there were already strands in the Modern of the desire to connect the art of today with the art of the very remote past or, even, the art of European and American culture. I think it was Jim Sweeney, Jim Soby, or others of the early crowd -- and Alfred Barr, himself, in a sense, if you think of his interest in 19th-century Russian art -- that made him an uncanny and amazing interpreter of [Kasimir] Malevich and [Vasily] Kandinsky. The fact that he knew as much as he did about 19th-century Russian art made his understanding of early 20th-century Russian art that much deeper. That's a different kind of comparison.

Jim Sweeney's name sticks in my mind. Another person I remember my father talking about with admiration and fascination was Edgar Kaufmann, that astonishing, early force in the design and architecture side of the Modern. The impact of his programs was that the creators of brilliantly designed objects, in his view, in the view of the museum, and in the view of Alfred were in that same mix of my father’s –- that sense of the relationship between the Mexican folk artist, the Navajo silversmith, and Mark Rothko.

The interests of each person at the Modern, whether trustee, or staff, or in some instances a bit of both -- like Jim Soby -- intersect in amazing ways. Another person I remember very well, and I remember my father's delight with, was Bill Seitz. His exhibition "The Art of Assemblage" [1961] is probably among the exhibitions that I remember the most vividly, just because it was calculated well and it appealed to everybody. I think people were fascinated by it, and it was really something that changed the way people thought about modern art.

Another show that is vivid to me through my father's stories is the Japanese house in the garden [“Japanese Exhibition House," 1954] at MoMA. I remember his total delight in that. In the process of its installation, he used to look down from his office on the fifth floor every morning (you maybe have heard this story before) and noticed that there was a man who came in and crouched down, and seemed to remain fairly motionless for long periods of time. He couldn't fathom what was going on, but was fascinated. Finally, one morning when he came in, instead of going to his office, he went into the garden. The man was crouched down with his ear to the ground, right next to a little stream of water, and he was tuning the waterfall. That was probably the first sense I had in my life of an astonishing sensitivity to nature and the uses of nature, if you will, in Japanese art.

Then there are things that I, very surprisingly, hardly remember at all, like the "Homage to New York," the [Jean] Tinguely sculpture [1960]. I've written about it since. I knew Tinguely -- not well, but admired him a lot. I've conflated what I read about it and what I know about it. Whether I remember it or whether I read about it I’m not sure: That's the trouble with having become a historian of modern art, and The Museum of Modern Art is entirely derived from the history of modern art, so you're sunk.

Another artist I remember very vividly is Richard Lippold. I can recall his sculpture *The Moon*, the silver-wire moon, and then *The Sun*, at the Metropolitan. I haven't seen either of those for a long time, but it would be lovely to see those again, and his particular way of being. I not only remember the sculpture, I remember him because one summer my parents rented the Lippold's house in Vermont, and my father spent his time, with Richard Lippold's permission, taking down a small, tumbledown shack. He would hack away at it because it was good exercise and he was out in the fresh air. As he was chopping away, he'd hear a little sound. He'd chop again, and then he'd hear more sounds. He found out that there was a porcupine who was working underneath. There was the famous day when the porcupine emerged, much to my father's huge satisfaction, and he discovered that he'd had a helper all the way along.

I certainly remember "The Art of the Asmat" very vividly ["Art of the Asmat-The Collection of Michael C. Rockefeller," 1962], and I'm sure I remember it because it was just one of those amazing moments. And, also, the tragic death of Michael Rockefeller, after his extraordinary trip in the South Seas, is a very personal memory. I don't think I ever met him, or, if I did, it was all too briefly. But I remember how deeply stricken Nelson Rockefeller was by his death, as was Tod Rockefeller and also my father. I don't know how well my father actually knew him, but I know they had some connection.

SZ: Because he was so close to Nelson.

AD: Yes. I remember "The Responsive Eye" [1965]. When I look through this list of exhibitions, of course, there are so many I remember, like the Bonnard exhibition in '65 [“Bonnard and His Environment,” 1964]. I also remember a wonderful textile show that Connie [Mildred] Constantine worked on, but I'm not sure exactly when it was [“Wall Hangings,” 1969].

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LOCATION: **PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART**
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DATE: **31 MARCH 2004**

BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: Would talk about your mother's contribution in terms of your father's career?

AD: I was an only child, and I arrived on the scene a decade after my parents were married. They were married in 1932, and tried to have children, but somehow or other it didn't happen. I don't know if they had given up hope, but all of a sudden I appeared, to their amazement. I coincided pretty well with my father's arrival in New York at the Modern, which, of course, he was not director of at the time. I wasn't conscious of the Modern or his life there in any major way, I guess, for about ten years.

I will say, however, that as a child I certainly was deeply aware of art in general, and MoMA and its collections in particular. I may have said this before, I'm not sure, but the painting that has always lived in my mind as the first picture that really struck me was Matisse's *Blue Window*.

My parents, both of them in many ways, were very, very absorbed in the life of the Museum. My mother was a very bright, elegant woman, straight-forward, Scotch Presbyterian, and Middle-Western, as she said about herself with amusement. I think she saw her role (although I'm not sure she articulated it this way to me) as providing the most help possible for my father in his life as a whole, and particularly in his role at the Modern. I think a lot of that was simply making sure to cook him meals that didn't make him any fatter, as she would have put it, only to discover, when there was a *New Yorker* profile of him, that he was undermining her good work at lunches

by eating eggs benedict and the like. But she took it in stride, making sure that he had an endless supply of Western novels, and the minute he got home he could take his mind completely off work, if that's what he wanted to do, or talk about it if that's what he wanted to do.

I remember very early on going to some things, sometime during my teens, at the Modern, or going to places in the evening when my father would make a speech, and watching my mother die a thousand deaths. She loved him very dearly, and she loved the museum dearly. It wasn't what he said that concerned her, but the way he talked. He was very deliberate, persuasive, and rather slow. One of her great gifts -- she had several great gifts –- was editing. I know when my father had something to write, when he had a complicated letter or a talk, he would always consult her. She would always think about the clearest and the best way to say things. Their values were very, very close. It was remarkable.

I had this feeling of a seamless whole as a child, in which these two beings whom I was so happy to be part of were very different from each other in demeanor and in accent. My father was so outgoing, so charming, so ebullient, so persuasive -- all kinds of things -- and my mother was much more reserved. She had a wonderful sense of humor, but was reserved, sometimes really shy and rather nervous. But they had terrifically high standards, so she certainly served him and the Museum well with her editorial eye. I also think she went beyond that, because she was somebody who enjoyed enormously other people on the staff. She got to know many of them very, very well. I think of Monroe Wheeler and Porter McCray, for example, as two people to whom she was devoted and remained so after my father's death. She continued to have very warm relationships, particularly with the people of my father's tenure there, even the young ones, and the guards and trustees as well. She was somebody who took the association with the Museum and my father's life as director as a remarkable responsibility; a sense that it was never something that she should do or wanted to do to intervene in any way. I think she bent over backwards never to utter opinions that she thought would travel through staff or board. If she loved an exhibition or didn't like an exhibition -- whatever it was. If she was enthusiastic she would always say so, but if there was something that she had doubts about, she would never, ever have said something.

SZ: She was sensitive to the politics.

AD: She was sensitive to the politics, but I don't think she would have described it that way. Neither of my parents were political people at all, in that sense of the word. My father, I think, made his greatest effect, at the Museum and on people, by valuing people for what they were, by listening to them pretty hard, and, even if he disagreed with them, managing to be fond of them. My mother was in many ways the same way. Her discretion was monumental. I'm sure I never heard one quarter of what she and my father would quietly say together. I think he knew he could trust her absolutely, that she would never say anything to anybody, and that she loved the Museum in many ways as much as he did. She loved it both through him and separately. I think that was something that a number of the trustees and the staff also felt. I'm sure that was the case.

She made it possible, in very many ways, for my father to do what he did. She was not an immensely social person in the sense of wanting to go out. High society was not what she craved. Everything my father asked her to do she did, very happily, and with increasing enthusiasm over the years as she got to know more people. And people came to our apartment. It was a big, rambling, old apartment, so it felt like a house to me. People say you can't feel that way in New York, but of course you can.

My mother admired and was fond of Bill Burden and his wife, Peggy, but I think she was always very amused. There was one time when Bill came for an evening at 333 Central Park West -- I don't know what the occasion was -- and there were maybe thirty people in the room, which for us was an extraordinary number. Not that the house wasn't big, but my mother's great quest was to give my father as much peace as he could have, so usually it was just the three of us at dinner, night in and night out. So thirty people, for us, was an enormous gathering, and she couldn't forget Bill coming in and looking around the room. He rubbed his hands and said, "Well, well, well, isn't this cozy?" She was laughing at herself at the same time because she was amused by him.

There are, I'm sure, lots of stories like that. Among the trustees to whom she was very close and whom she admired greatly were Eliza Parkinson (as, of course, was my father, who worked with her so closely, as it were) and Louise Smith. Certainly, Blanchette Rockefeller was among them, too. I don't have the chronology in my mind, but I think Blanchette stepping to the fore, to the presidency, came after my father's death [1972].

In many ways, my mother was a very good sport. She was somebody who had a lot of talent of her own. She had been an editor when they met in the bookstore of Marshall Field & Company in 1931. He was traveling through all of the United States, eighteen cities, with an exhibition of Mexican folk art that he had organized at the behest of the American Federation of the Arts and the Carnegie Corporation. He hit Chicago with this show. Actually, I can't remember if it was at the Art Institute or the Field Museum. I think it was the Art Institute, which is sort of surprising ["Mexican Art," the Art Institute of Chicago, 1931-32]. At the same time, one of the children's books he had illustrated was published. It was written by Elizabeth Morrow, who was the wife of Dwight Morrow, ambassador to Mexico, and Anne Morrow Lindbergh's mother. They had gotten to know each other very well in Mexico. She was a delightful writer, and he illustrated a book called *The Painted Pig*, which she wrote. Then he illustrated another book, to which he actually contributed words as well, called *Mexicana*. There was a third book, in which she wrote the lyrics to songs that were composed by his brother, Eberhardt d'Harnoncourt, who was still in Austria. My father illustrated that, as well. It was an animal alphabet, which is actually one of the things I hope someday they will republish, with somebody doing the songs. It was one of the great ways to teach children music.

Anyway, he was signing these children's books in the Marshall Field company bookstore, and the head of the bookstore went crazy because her best Christmas customer walked in the door, and she would only buy books from her. She didn't want to leave these young, foreign authors (apparently there were a couple of others) by themselves, because she knew what havoc they would wreak. So she called up the house magazine, called "Fashions of the Hour," and asked the editor of the magazine to send someone down to look after these young, foreign authors. My mother was working there as an editor, and she was a recent graduate of Wellesley.

My mother came downstairs and the rest is history. They were married about two years later.

They had to square both of their parents. His very Catholic, elderly and devoted mother, in Austria, was panicked that he was marrying the daughter of Al Capone. It was Chicago. My mother's Presbyterian faith was bad enough, but it was Chicago, "painted women," and just the image that scared her. You can imagine. Both of her parents were still alive then, and they couldn't figure out at all what she was doing with this ne'er-do-well Catholic man, with a title, a monocle, and a bunch of Mexican folk art. Anyway, they persevered, and everybody was happy. Legend has it that they were married twice, once by a priest and once by a minister. As my mother said, her mother had a faint heart at the last moment and didn't come to the wedding, but she cooked them a very good dinner.

My father had been working in Mexico, but he then moved to this country. He took a job at the Department of the Interior, on the American Indian Arts and Crafts Board, under the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and was there for approximately ten years. He also taught at Sarah Lawrence.

So they were in a number of places, and my mother traveled quite a bit. It was great for them. Now, retroactively, I can see that I hadn't appeared, because it meant that she was really able to travel to Indian country, and be part of a lot of his life.

Then a variant of the great American Indian exhibition in '39 ended up at The Museum of Modern Art. Of course, the person who was so key in both of their lives was Nelson Rockefeller. Some things I remember and some things, I'm sure, are legends, but somehow I don't believe that Rockefeller and my father met while my father was still actually living in Mexico.

SZ: You don't think so?

AD: They left in '33. This is where I'm rather hazy, and I would love to spend some time digging it up, because I think there were a number of trips that were made to Mexico,

which Nelson was very much a part of. This is after my parents were in Washington, when my father was working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I think he went quite regularly to Mexico. He had many great friends, most particularly Miguel Covarrubias. Miguel was my father's best friend from Mexico, and this remarkable man called Frederick Davis, who was many years my father's senior, was kind of his surrogate father and benevolent uncle. He, of course, was an American.

SZ: Was he a collector?

AD: Well, yes. I think he became more of a collector over time, and I think my father probably had something to do with it. But when my father and he started out together, which was around 1928, he had a store of colonial antiques in Mexico. He was involved with the Sonora News Company, which often had these curio shops attached to it. When he and my father got connected, he sort of took pity on my father, because he had arrived in Mexico with no money.

SZ: What got him to Mexico, in particular?

AD: Again, I'm recounting something of a family legend. I will give you (I know there's a copy in the MoMA Archives) a copy of the Geoffrey Hellman profile of my father that appeared in the *New Yorker*.

SZ: I have it.

AD: I think that's fairly accurate, partly because they check their facts. My mother, however, took great umbrage with a couple of things. I think what she was most upset about was the characterization of my father as an aristocratic courtier. He was aristocratic and he was diplomatic, but she felt that that made him sound as if he were in some way sycophantic, which, God knows, he was not. Diplomacy is one thing; sycophancy is something else. I don't know if he would really have known the meaning of the word. My mother would have known the definition. He might have used it, and not been quite right about it.

Just in a nutshell, he was born in Vienna in 1901. He participated in the last great years of Vienna, when Vienna was, in many ways, the center of the intellectual world. What moved me so much, ten years ago, was reading for the first time the book by Stefan Zweig -- *The World of Yesterday.* It is from the perspective of a Jewish intellectual, and a Jewish child growing up in that world. Yet, I recognized almost everything that he said, because it was the way my father described it. So, to me, that was an extraordinary. I hadn't read it before, and there are lots of books, wonderful ones, that describe pre-World War I Vienna. Another thing is that 1918 was so decisive. During those four years of war, even though some of those were very hard, the empire was still together. It was a very, very international world. So my father grew up in a very sophisticated milieu. He went to the University of Vienna. He actually got a degree (he couldn't figure out why) in chemistry.

But let me get back to Mexico. He was the youngest son in a very big family. There was a younger daughter, his very close sister, Renata, who was at that time unmarried and really willing to stay with his mother. His slightly older brother, Eberhardt, the composer of the "Bird, Beast & Fish Animal Alphabet," was already starting a big family. He couldn't move, he couldn't go anywhere, so my father was the mobile one. I also think there was a would-be fiancée called Trudy (I don't remember her last name; I could probably find it somewhere among my mother's papers), whom the family was just thrilled to get him away from.

He read in the newspaper that chemists were wanted in Mexico, so he took a freighter. He sold several things that he loved very dearly -- a Dürer print, and an original manuscript of a poem by Rilke, which I think was a remarkable thing for a young man to do, and he shipped off, and he arrived in Mexico. Of course, nobody wanted any chemists. He said, "But I read it in the newspapers," and they said, "But, Señor, why would you believe what you read in the newspapers?" which you still could say.

Anyway, he had a hard time. He did sketches of tourists outside bullfight rings, etc., etc. Somebody eventually found out about him, recommended him to Fred Davis, Davis hired him, and they became very, very good friends. That's what started his

trips across Mexico looking for colonial antiquities and folk art, which was his own passion. That's what his specialty became.

SZ: Mexico was a magnet for a lot of people, including, if I remember correctly, Porter McCray.

AD: I think you're probably right. It's a phenomenon that also runs through the trustees of the Philadelphia museum, many now long gone -- Henry Clifford, for example, who was a curator here and a collector. There was a whole generation of people fascinated by Mexico. I may be wrong, but I thought the Mexican interest was on the part of Monroe –- I think of him as more *Mon*roe than Mon*roe* [Wheeler]. (*Mon*roe is how my father used to call him. I denied that my father had an accent, of course, because I heard it all my life. Then I'd hear him on the radio and think, "Who *is* this man.") But it could well have been Porter. I think of Porter as someone totally focused on East Asia, but that's obviously something that came later. Certainly, Porter's life was on the international side of the Museum. I think the whole Rockefeller family's passion for, business in, but more than that, interest in the economic development of, Latin America was a very powerful force, and something that my father very much believed in.

I should look again at the books that have been written about Nelson Rockefeller's folk-art collection, which was divided, I think, between the San Antonio Museum and the Mexican museum in San Francisco. Nelson's daughter, Ann, knows a great deal about his passion for Mexico and folk art. She probably knows the answer to that, because it would be somewhere in both of their papers. But, obviously, by the time of the 1940s, I think they were quite good friends. So it was Nelson's suggestion that my father go to the Modern and take this kind of newly-invented job, which had to do with international relations.

SZ: Was he close to Porter, as well? You mentioned your mother was.

AD: Oh, yes, very close.

SZ: How well did you know Porter?

AD: Very. I loved Porter. I went on in my own life and became a great fan of Japan, friend and fan of Merce Cunningham, John Cage, Jasper Johns, and that whole group. Porter's endless appetite for the avant-garde art, whether it's Isamu Noguchi or Robert Wilson –- we just share many strains of interest. It was always very strange for me, because I met a lot of the artists of a certain generation through or because of my father. Mark Rothko, whom I remember meeting once in my father's office, was very amusing. There was a moment -- and I don't think I've ever said this to his son -- when Mark Rothko and my father thought it would be great if the two of us had a romance. I can just see these fathers plotting.

Anyway, that's my early memory of actually meeting Mark Rothko. Often the world is very -- different sides of one's acquaintance turn out to be close kin. Isamu Noguchi's sister was a wonderful woman named Ailes Spinden. She was married to a man named Dr. Herbert Joseph Spinden, who was a very distinguished archaeologist/anthropologist. I think of him as being associated with the Brooklyn Museum; I'm terrible at remembering all this. So we knew both Ailes and Noguchi from the early, early days. Frank O'Hara and I met once or twice, but I think of him as a tragic, shooting star. I knew Alicia Legg all my life. I also knew Bill Lieberman, Riva Castleman, and Bernice Rose. Arthur Drexler was a very good friend of both my parents, and I considered him one of mine. Of course, we go way back with Mildred Constantine, whether we call her Mildred or Connie. John Szarkowski, Emily Stone, and Grace Mayer were great friends. Of course, it was Captain Steichen, as we all called him, who ran the photography department. When we did the Duchamp show in '73, Bernard Karpel was, of course, still going strong, and provided a magisterial bibliography.

SZ: Did a large part of your parents' social life revolve around the museum?

AD: Absolutely. That's what happens with museums. I can think of very few museum directors, museum curators, museum people who aren't socially involved with their institution. Trustees are slightly different, but often not so much. Museums are very passionate organizations with a mission. They pull people who are attracted by collections; by art; by the education mission; by civic spirit; by all these things.

They're particularly fascinating to me because they require a great variety of expertise –- conservation, curatorial scholarship, exhibition design, publication conception and design, writing, editorial, and public relations. Yes, you could say this is true of all organizations, but it's the presence of large collections that spreads the responsibilities. That, in some sense, makes it different from a performing-arts organization. Because everybody somehow, however far they roam, rotates around these works of art and the whole universe of artists. In museums, there are art historians, artists, and collectors; then there is the general public, and the kids that are educated. Then there are the city officials.

But museums, particularly in big cities and in places where there are large audiences, populations, collectors, and artists, are just very intense. So it's amazing that anybody who works a lot at museums has a big life outside the museum. I think of The Museum of Modern Art as being a very absorbing life, because of its outreach, exhibitions, and connections with other museums around the world.

Of course my parents had very close friends from both their lives. There was my father's family in Austria, which was very close. There was my mother's family in this country. There were, in my mother's case, lots of college friends. She grew up in Milwaukee and then went to Wellesley. She had one sister, called Malcolm (believe it or not) Collier, a younger sister who was an anthropologist and married to one as well. Her husband, Donald Collier, was the son of John Collier, who was the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, at the time my father took the job.

So that was just one of those things. That friendship with Joe Spinden, Ailes Spinden, and Noguchi was just one of those things where two sides of one’s life ended up parallel. My parents had friends from their days in Washington and, again, especially Miguel Covarrubias from Mexico -- Miguel died very early, alas. That was a great blow to my father, because I think of it as being in the mid- to late fifties. I never really knew him that well. I just heard all the fabulous stories about him. They had a wide range of friends, but I would say the lion's share of their social life was wound, one way or another, into the Museum.

The other side of the Museum, again, is this international focus, which he made a great contribution to and was very passionate about. One of the questions people sometimes ask is, what was his specialty? I would say he had two or three, one of which was just "museumship." But he never thought of himself as (and he wasn't) a scholar. He was somebody who saw an extraordinary amount of art during the course of his life, and you certainly could say that Native American art was one of his greatest loves and specialties. He was never the scholar that Eric Douglas was [Douglas collaborated with RdH on “Indian Art of the United States”]. He loved working with colleagues who had spent their life both in the field and reading.

For example, there were very distinguished Mexican folk art specialists of his day. Dr. Atl, a kind of wild artist, was actually the person who might have done this traveling exhibition, and then ended up not being able to do it for one reason or other, so my father was asked to take it on. And Miguel Covarrubias, who was also this kind of omnivore. But folk art is one of the things that comes very strongly from his Austrian background, because Austria is rooted in a very deep and interesting folk tradition.

SZ: But he did develop an interest in and passion for modern art.

AD: Oh, yes, he did. Again, I don't think that he would have thought of himself as a specialist in anything. He always deferred to Alfred for his unparalleled knowledge of not only the past -- 19th-century Russian painting, for example -- but also of 20th-century art. The same was true with Andrew Ritchie, Bill Seitz, Bill Lieberman, or Bill Rubin. His approach to modern and contemporary art was, not surprisingly, through the artists. He really loved artists, and he didn't see much difference between a great Navajo silversmith, a great Mexican folk artist, and Sandy Calder. That doesn’t mean that he didn't see Sandy Calder as a really extraordinary modern artist. I just mean that his relation to artists was very directly attached to what they do and how they do it, and he had a huge respect for everybody's individuality.

His great love, aside from all the rest of it, was installation. He loved nothing better than installing a show and trying to make the work of art, as he would say, speak for itself.

SZ: Which he was apparently really great at.

AD: Yes, he was really great at doing that. It's so interesting to read various critiques about installation now and before. Consider that wonderful trajectory that Jim Sweeney made through the Modern. Jim was a great "installatateur." His gift lay particularly in the field of these beautiful, simple, severe, white spaces in which Brancusi, Mondrian, or Calder's art looks so well. My father, I think, was more of a polyglot in some way, but he was also less of an art historian than Jim Sweeney was. He just adored doing the Picasso sculpture installation. If I have the delight of inheriting any two things from my father, I would say they are a delight in artists and their company, ideas, and view of the world, and also a huge pleasure in installing things. I enjoy just seeing things look one way, and then doing it differently and seeing them look another way.

I had a wonderful experience with Georgia O'Keeffe after my father died. I was at that time working at the Art Institute of Chicago with Jim Speyer, who was a great friend and admirer of my father, as my father was of him. That was one of the great treats, to work for Jim, because he was a student of Mies van der Rohe, and a master of installation, which is something my father had told me. So I was eager to go and work with him. I spent some time with the O'Keeffe installation at the Whitney. O'Keeffe, of course, was a person of enormous visual acuity, which comes out in her paintings, and she had very strong ideas of exactly how this show should be installed. Even though what she was doing was beautiful, I thought it would confuse the public completely. She wanted to see her work in a way she had never seen it before, which is completely understandable, because she was bored with the way it had been presented. So I would stay at the museum until 7 or 8 o'clock at night, until after she'd gone home, and I'd move a few things around. She would come in the next morning and say, "This is not the way I left it." I would answer, "I was just trying something…" Anyway, it worked out. It was not exactly the way she would have done it. I was a kid; what did I know? But something in my father's life must have emboldened me to do that. And something in my admiration for her must have gotten through, because she didn't make me change everything back.

SZ: You mentioned last time that your life had intersected three distinct times at the Modern. I know you talked about one, when you were a child, and the second time, when you went out into the art world, but you didn't get to the third intersection.

AD: The third intersection is everything since then. I wasn't thinking of a particular time. When I came to Philadelphia for the second time, there was a period of time when everybody was hard up for exhibition money. I thought it would be wonderful to do an exhibition of art since 1945, because that was something the Philadelphia Museum of Art had so little of at the time. And, of course, the Modern had one of the great collections. At the same time, the Modern was very thrilled and eager to have a show from Philadelphia of some of our great works from 1900 to 1945, like Leger's *The City*, for example.

I returned to Philadelphia in the summer of 1971, having been in Chicago for two years. So it was either in 1971 or 1972 that we did this exchange, and the shows, I'm pretty sure, were on at the same time. It was a wonderful confluence of trustees -- Bill and Babe Paley were here; our Sturgis Ingersoll, who was president of the [Philadelphia] museum; Evan Turner was director of the museum at the time. There was a wonderful group of people from here who went to New York, and from New York, an equally wonderful group of people came here.

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **ANNE D'HARNONCOURT (AD)**

INTERVIEWER: **SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

LOCATION: **111 WEST 50TH STREET, NYC**

DATE: **6 OCTOBER 2004**

BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1

SZ: The last time we were getting into your contemporary involvement with the Museum, and you said there were three phases of your intersection with the Museum at this period. The first, obviously, was as a child. Then you talked a little bit about that when you had just begun your career, and we never got to the third.

AD: Well, of course, I can't really remember whether I talked about the collaboration between my museum and MoMA. I first came to the Philadelphia Museum in the fall of '67 and I left in the late spring of '69. Then I came back in '71. I'm pretty sure I talked about the exchange exhibitions that Philadelphia and The Museum of Modern Art did, between our early modern collection and the Modern's contemporary collection. It was actually just a great moment, a moment which the trustees of both institutions felt was a very, very worthwhile thing to do. Certainly, in Philadelphia's case, it was very inspiring to our desire to push forward with a contemporary collection, which I had just vestigially gotten started.

The other, later, collaboration was between myself and Kynaston McShine, and between, therefore, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art, on the big Marcel Duchamp retrospective in 1973, which was really a terrific project. It was very demanding and ambitious. It opened in Philadelphia and then went on to the Modern. Then it traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago, but Chicago wasn't a real partner in it, in the same way. I think they were just very thrilled to have it, and that was, as you can imagine, a very lively interaction.

The Modern published the book, which was a bit late, which drove everybody crazy. It was late for Philadelphia, but it got there in time for MoMA. I think it was late at least partly because it was a very complex and ambitious book, and I'm happy that it actually ended up staying in print for some twenty-five years.

That was, actually, terrific, and again, both institutions felt great about that collaboration. It made a lot of sense, because Philadelphia has the greatest collection of Duchamp's work, including two pieces that can never travel because of their fragility. They're permanent installations. And the Modern also has the superb group of works by him. So the two of us worked together and kind of covered the waterfront. We had fabulous loans from everywhere else, and we roped in a lot of contemporary artists to think about Duchamp and pay tribute to him in various writings and, in a couple of cases, a drawing or something like that. So that was probably, I guess, the most extensive collaboration that we undertook, certainly during the time that I was curator of modern art. It was a ten-year period, because I had come back to Philadelphia in 1971, and in 1981 -- or, I'm going to say, it was actually the summer of '82, to be correct -- I became the director of the museum, and had to leave my wonderful job as curator and my first love -- which was the field of modern, contemporary art -- and move into a much larger field, which I have enjoyed immensely.

My connections to the Modern were, in a way, wide and deep because of knowing so many of my father's colleagues as well as so many trustees, from my childhood. Then, over time, I got to know the next generations of those trustees and colleagues, not to mention members of the International Council, which has come to Philadelphia a couple of times. The museums have continued, I'm delighted to say, to have a very terrific relationship in terms of loans back and forth between us. When Philadelphia did the big Brancusi exhibition that was done by Ann Temkin -- who is now, of course, a curator in the Painting & Sculpture Department at The Museum of Modern Art –- we were able to borrow extraordinary sculpture from the Modern. In a very collegial way, at the end of that exhibition, which had started in Paris and then came to Philadelphia (it was only on view in Philadelphia in the United States). We lent a group of our things, and a couple of other things stayed on from Paris, as I

remember, and went to MoMA. So there was a kind of departing salute of Brancusi to New York before that exhibition was over.

Now, obviously, there has been sort of a sequence of directors. I have certainly known all of them. The very short tenure of Bates Lowry, whom I then knew in various later incarnations as well, who, alas, has recently died. I didn't know Bates that well, and the man who succeeded him, John Hightower, I knew also, although I haven't seen John much since that time. And, certainly, the whole generation of curators that succeeded those with whom my father worked, or who overlapped with him.

In the early days (and I'm sure I've said this already) I felt a very close connection with Porter McCray, who continued to be a great friend, and we continued to share a lot of interests, including the work of John Cage, Japanese history and contemporary art, and the work of Merce Cunningham. Another person who didn't live as long but whom I continued to see outside of the context of the Museum was Monroe Wheeler. But that's also true of trustees like Eliza Parkinson and some of her family, and many others.

So, it's been kind of a continuum. There's never been a time when I didn't feel that I knew, really very well, and was very fond of, and very impressed by, and very interested in and affected by, in many ways, The Museum of Modern Art family. Certainly, now that Ann Temkin, having been in Philadelphia for ten years or so, is now back at the Modern, where she had one of her first runs at a museum during the 1984 Paul Klee exhibition, the cycle seems to continue in a very productive way. I've continued to know both trustees and staff, and last night was very honored to be one of the honorary chairs of a salute to Aggie Gund by the Municipal Art Society of New York. Aggie, I think, is one of the great figures of the art world, in general, and The Museum of Modern Art in particular. Of course, I really got to know her long after my father disappeared from the picture.

Another person that I've thought of with such admiration was Dorothy Miller. As a young curator, one of the things I wanted to do was some shows of very contemporary art. But I also knew that, unlike the Modern, the Philadelphia Museum

of Art is a kind of comprehensive, full-service museum which has to do exhibitions of Asian art, early European art, and costumes. The Modern, of course, is really focused now on the 21st century, as well. So I knew I wasn't going to get too many windows to do as many shows as I might have wanted to, and I took a leaf from Dorothy's wonderful book of the idea of doing "Ten Americans," "Eight Americans," "Sixteen Americans," and did an exhibition called "Eight Artists," which was huge fun. I had hoped, of course, that it was going to be one of a series. It turned out not to be, largely because I became director a while thereafter, and I didn't have a chance to do another one.

If I look back, I'm so amused. Chuck Close was in that exhibition, and Mel Bochner, and Jess [Collins], who recently died in San Francisco, and a remarkable textile artist called Adela Akers, who was then in Philadelphia and now, I think, is on the West Coast. It was my attempt to embrace the widest numbers, the widest range of ways that artists were working, doing very, very different kinds of work; people coming out of a conceptual frame of mind; people working, as I say, in these giant, kind of wonderful, coarsely-woven textiles; Jess, whom I don't know is describable, but certainly belongs, in a way, to the sort of surreal, literary mode of making these very rich and embedded images of thick paint or collage.

Anyway, before I did that I spent a lot of time looking at all the catalogues of Dorothy's shows, which were such an example for a whole generation of curators -- the mix of artists, the inclusion of women in those exhibitions, the sense of a kind of catholic taste and approach, which I thought was just so important. And the fact that Dorothy only died last year, I guess, was sort of shocking in a way, because it's the continuity, the freshness of her ideas, and the idea that you would ask the artist to write a brief statement for the catalogue. Which I did, although we didn't really have a catalogue, we just had a newspaper, because at the moment we didn't have much money to do anything.

I think I've had the great opportunity to look at The Museum of Modern Art from a great many different perspectives, and I sometimes get them very confused in my mind. Obviously, they overlap, so my familiarity with individual people and my awareness of the evolution of the institution itself has certainly, over time, gotten

more diffuse. There are many more people deeply involved with the Modern that I don't know as well now as I would have in the '70s or even in the '60s. On the other hand, I know them in a very different way. I know them, really, as equals, or people junior to me. So it's a fascinating evolution.

SZ: What is your sense of the way in which the Modern has moved, through, what is it? At least three generations now? It's certainly standing at a very important threshold at the moment.

AD: It is. It's obviously gotten much larger. The new building (which I have every sense, from seeing it, inside, very briefly, and looking at the outside very recently) is going to be very, very beautiful. I have a sense that the continuity at the Modern is very strong, and that what you have is a kind of a branching out and an enlarging of the field, because, obviously, a century and four years is a lot longer than the twenty-nine years that was the field when the Modern opened, when Alfred Barr took his flying leap into space with the trustees. But I also think, clearly, one of the things that seems to be happening -- which I think is happening in museums around the country -- is that there's an overlapping, a creative overlapping between the different fields that the Modern represents. This is, of course, what is happening in the world at large; that architecture and design, and drawing, and printmaking, and photography, and painting and sculpture, and film -- that all of these fields are being taken by artists, and artists operating in several of those fields simultaneously are doing work that falls neatly into none of them.

And that's not unique to the Modern. That's really something that is affecting every museum that collects modern and contemporary art. So my sense is the excitement has grown on the part of the curatorial staff and the board about both new art and what that art comes out of; and, also, the excitement that has to do with really looking for and trying to present the best of the most exciting. And with that comes the need for different kinds of space; the need for different kinds of installations; the need for networking, and galleries which you never would have needed twenty years ago.

But I don't really have the sense that the mission has changed that much. I think one of the things that, clearly, was a great leap of invention was the relation with P.S.1, and the use of the period of time in Queens was also tremendously inventive. That's not something that's happened at the Modern before, partly because there was no impetus for it to happen. I don't think the Modern (and I may be very wrong, because I just may have missed a beat somewhere along the way, because I have had some other things to focus on) has had that kind of really big, creative partnership with another institution, like P.S.1, or done something like this. It's not unlike what happened in the creation of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, in which there was the temporary Contemporary in one neighborhood, and then all of a sudden there was the museum, and then the decision, well, do you keep doing one and keep doing the other?

I also think the internationalism of the Modern and the concern for exhibitions, and exchanges, and interests in other countries is still clearly something that's going strong. And, as I say, I'm not inside the institution in my head, as I might even have still been, to some extent, in the '70s, even though my father had died years before that. And, you have to remember, also, my mother lived for a very long time. She just died in 2001, in August, and she would have been a wonderful subject for you to talk to. She always felt very restrained about her conversations about the Modern, because she was deeply, deeply loyal to the entire institution -- not only to my father's memory, but to the trustees, to the staff -- and I think she was always worried that she would exaggerate something a little, or would make some kind of remark that could be misinterpreted later on. So she felt that it was sometimes safer not to say anything.

But she kept very close track. She adored the place. She did move to the Philadelphia area in 1982, just around the time I became director, but she did live in New York for a long time after my father's death, after I had moved. See, I moved in 1971. I was married to my husband, Joe Rishel. We came together from the Art Institute of Chicago to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in 1971, but my mother continued to live in New York in the same apartment building, 333 Central Park West, which had also been an apartment building in which a number of other MoMA staff lived, including the Ritchies, the Selzes, and John Hightower and his wife. My

father loved the building, and he was always extolling its virtues. It was rent controlled for a long time, and had wonderful apartments.

My mother made an enormous effort to put as much order as she could into my father's papers, at least to make sure they were in the right places. All the things, obviously, that had to do with MoMA that she could lay her hands on, if they weren't already there, went to the Modern. Then a whole swath of things that weren't directly related to the Modern -- and I'm pretty sure she and the succession of the very thoughtful archivists went through this together -- went to the Archives of American Art, so they have quite a collection of things. There's still a body of material that's particularly related to his time working for the American Indian Arts & Crafts Board, in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was before he came to New York -- between about 1933 and 1942, something like that -- and that material is still largely in the Department of the Interior in Washington.

SZ: For you, with your first love being, as you said, putting together and hanging shows, how did you decide to make the transition to administrator? I know you still do a little curatorial work, but it's a much different thing to be an administrator of a large institution.

AD: It is a much different thing. I think this is maybe an inherited trait. When I was offered the opportunity at Philadelphia -- and if my memory serves, I was offered it twice; the first time I thought, "I have much too much to do, I'm still going strong, I don't want to take on something that's even larger and more complicated, because I'm just getting into this" but the second time I had such a sense of investment in the institution as a whole and in museums' mission in the world. I obviously felt very strongly about that, and in international relationships between museums, and museums as a force for change in society -- not particularly because of what they do, but because art is a force for change in society, in one way or another -- in education and all other kinds of fields. I just found the opportunity to get involved in this sort of comprehensive museum, this kind of museum with so many different fields about which I knew much less, that it would be at the same time a different kind of work, and a lot more -- well, not a lot more work but in some ways a lot more work -- and more responsibility, for

sure. But for me, it would give me a chance to see if I couldn't work with the Philadelphia museum and help it go to another level of realizing its potential.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art, like a number of great, older museums across the country, represents a totally different model, a totally different way of being from something as energetic, and focused, and purposeful as The Museum of Modern Art, or, even, other museums of related character, like the Walker Art Center. Any museum that focuses only on, or very largely on, 20th century art is clearly going to be a very different museum from one that has comprehensive collections. Everything about them is going to be different. What interested me was having very energetic, contemporary voices in a comprehensive art museum, which Philadelphia had a fabulous base for having, yet, because the base was largely collection driven, there hadn't been very many staff people who had an opportunity to do that.

So I believe in investing a great deal of oneself. If there's a place which you love and which interests you, which, obviously, is contributing a great deal, you hope, to the community you're in and to the world at large, the opportunity to lead it and help move it forward and realize its potential is fantastic. That's why I did that. But I don't say that, at intervals, I don't get very wistful about wanting to see more and have a chance to do more, either in the contemporary field or in my field, because I do.

SZ: You mentioned the museum as a force for change, and I was thinking of John Hightower's tenure. There was a lot of political unrest, and he sort of got caught up in that, I guess using the institution in a way, believing that it should be a force for change, but in a little bit of a more activist way.

AD: Yes. I'm not talking in a political sense, at all. I'm talking in a much more gradual and profound sense of simply the expansion of people's minds and interests over time. I'm talking about something that, in one sense, is as simple as introducing to a class of adolescent kids from North Philadelphia, who have never had the opportunity to be in any cultural institution before, seventeen visits to the museum over the course of a semester -- working with artists and exposing them to the collections, and letting them discover more about who they are. That's what I mean. I'm not talking about museums on the political, cutting edge. I think that's something that museums find,

that we can't be all things to all people. Agendas aren't what we're about. But I think that as the 21st century gets going, it's very clear that the visual arts are something that are enormously important to people; that it's a very visual culture; that the quality of people's visual experience is more important than ever; and that museums, as the places where encounters are offered between visitors and visual experiences of great quality, become more and more important. I'm really, deeply convinced of that.

This is sort of an odd thing to say, but it's probably true of the history of the Modern and true of the history of a lot of other museums -- very often it's kind of a breakthrough in relationships between peoples, or between countries, when there are art exhibitions that get exchanged. People have a chance to see what other people are doing and thinking about. It's where a thaw begins, if you will. That's an old Cold War term, but, nevertheless, probably holds true.

SZ: And the impact of the new technologies?

AD: Well, I think that just gives us all in the museum business and the art world a lot more responsibility and potential. Because the possibility of having images from your collection in everybody's living room -- as the computer monitor becomes the television set and vice versa, there is the opportunity to have people see what they could be looking at in person -- that's hugely powerful. It used to be thought, obviously, that this could be a deterrent, and if you could find it on the Internet and print it out, you'd never come and see it in person. There doesn't seem to be the slightest indication that that's true. That would be like saying if you saw Greta Garbo in a great film, that you wouldn't be totally thrilled to see her in person. It sounds like an odd thing to say, but I think, actually, it's the reverse. I think the electronic world and the world of being able to look at good images and all of that on the Internet only increases the thirst that people have to look at the real thing. There's no sign I have seen that would indicate otherwise. Where museums have been able to develop robust, deep and wide websites, you don't see the museum attendance going down. Websites may be going up in visitation, but that's because they didn't have them a while ago.

SZ: And it doesn't affect the attendance.

AD: It seems to be quite the reverse. Quite the reverse. I think it's a huge opportunity. But it's also an opportunity, like everything else, that you have to think about. What's on the web? How good is the information we're putting out? In how many languages? We've now published our handbook to the museum in English, obviously, and in Japanese and Spanish, and we would like to publish it in several other languages. So that says to me, "Whoops. As we think about the web, we'd better realize that a lot of web users are not English speakers." We don't want people to end up only speaking English all across the world. And since art, in a way, is a kind of language of its own, that's another whole issue.

I would definitely -- because I don't ever want to find myself quoted as saying museums are a force for change without being clear what I mean -- I use that phrase, I think, in a very, very different way. Unfortunately, I'm probably mimicking it from some other voice or voices which mean something very different by it than I do.

SZ: Well, that's why I asked.

AD: Thank you. [Laughter]

SZ: The only thing I have left on our agenda goes back to what you said about the next generation of curators, after your father's retirement, if there's any way you want to weigh in on that.

AD: Just that I know a number of them very well. Bill Rubin is still very much around, and I think of Bill as an extraordinary force in his own right, and somebody who had such a vision of what he wanted to do and was so totally devoted, particularly, to artists whom he believed in passionately. I think that's a very important part of the Modern's being -- that sort of passionate belief in the artists, and working with artists, if they're still alive, to understand their work and to talk about their work. It's interesting to me, because many years ago I spent a couple of years in London at the Courtauld Institute (I just happened to be very lucky). The English art world has obviously grown a great deal since then, but it's always been very intense, and the artists in

England have always had a very important role in museums and in scholarship. I was there between '65 and '67. Sir Norman Reid, who was the director of the Tate at the time, had himself started as a painter. Sir Lawrence Gowing, who died some years ago, was this extraordinary specialist in Turner and other long-gone artists; he was a passionate painter himself, and one of the greatest teachers I ever ran into. I had a professor, John Golding, at the Courtauld, who was, on the one hand, a great specialist in Cubism and the work of Picasso, Braque and Juan Gris, and at the same time a very wonderful and thoughtful painter, which he still is.

So, that was an aspect I have always thought of as very important -- the sort of relationship between institutions and artists, whether it's formalized or informal. I think it's been something that the Modern has had very strongly. My father, certainly, just adored a whole variety of artists, whether it was Sandy Calder, or Mark Rothko, or Baziotes -- a whole array of artists, each very different in his work and approach. He loved Hans Arp and being involved with the Arp exhibition installation. I think all the generations of curators -- curators and directors, in varying degrees -- have had that kind of relationship. I'm thinking of Bill Rubin and his relationship with Frank Stella; Kynaston and his wonderful relationships with various artists.

Actually, when I was talking earlier about the Museum's directors, I should just add that Dick Oldenburg, who was a great friend, did, I think, an extraordinary job at the Museum, considering that he came out of the publishing world. He was totally devoted to the institution, and he was somebody, you know, who knew about the artists in a very immediate way, because of his closeness to his brother, Claes, yet they're obviously two totally different people, with totally different ways of being and thinking.

I think that's a very important part of the Modern, and I'm sure it always will be. Not only does the museum show artists' work and get people to think about their work in different ways, but also the succeeding generations of artists use that amazing resource and then do their own thing. That's a very powerful part of it. Coming full circle to the beginning of this interview, my father's closest friend when he was in Mexico was the artist Miguel Covarrubias, who was an extraordinary mix of collector, connoisseur, and scholar, as well as an artist -- a brilliant caricaturist, creating

wonderful, wonderful drawings of all kinds of subjects. And at the same time, my father maintained wonderful relationships with folk artists and craftsmen in small villages outside of Mexico City. And then, when he got to this country, he spent a lot of time with Native American craftsmen. He was very, very close to a variety of artists. Coincidentally, I am wearing, today, a bracelet made by Ambrose Roanhorse, who was one of his best friends among the Navajo artists, to whom he became close. I think this just continued right on.

The fact is, in an odd way, it was those creative juices that my father saw very clearly. I think it would surprise Mark Rothko to be compared to a Navajo silversmith, but, nevertheless I don't think it would displease him. I think the roots of creation, and this sort of passion for form and creating something beautiful, run very deeply in any artist, whether they're folk, or academically trained, or doing something that nobody's ever seen before.

SZ: Well, you know, this might be a nice place to stop, as we've come full-circle in this way.

END INTERVIEW