INTERVIEW WITH SIDNEY JANIS, JUNE, 1967

Conducted by Helen M. Franc

In Preparation of the Exhibition (MMA 848)
THE SIDNEY AND HARRIET JANIS COLLECTION:
A Gift to The Museum of Modern Art, 1968.

and

the book: Three Generations of Twentieth Century Art
The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection of
The Museum of Modern Art, Published, MOMA 1972

N.B. This is the original typescript, complete with marginal notes, and Index of Artists Discussed, prepared by Helen M. Franc.

However, it is an unedited transcript.

Many portions of this transcript are published in the above MOMA book, and it suggested that the reader have it at hand when reading this typescript, and use them together.

7/5/67

TRANSCRIPTION OF CONVERSATIONS WITH JANIS: TAPE RECORDED JUNE 15 BY HELEN FRANC

[Beginning of Reel One unintelligible; from notes, Janis began by saying that about 1926, a year after his marriage, he knew the painter Ben Kopman who wanted to go to Europe and asked S.J. to lend him money for his trip. S.J. lent him about $250 against the security of about 39 of Kopman's paintings which he left behind in his studio.]

There were about 39 in the studio ; I had given him money, he went to Europe, he came back. Many months after he came back, he said he couldn't papay the loan; why didn't I adcept the paintings against it. And I did, we drew up papers and so forth.

(HMF: These were all his own paintings?)

These were all his own paintings -- all Ben Kopman. A couple of years later, Ben Kopman was taken up by J.B. Neumann. J. B. Neumann was very much concerned by the fact that I had these 39 paintings . He told me so and I said,"I'll be glad to exchange these paintings for one picture that you have." He said,"What picture is that?" and I said, "Paul Klee's The Actor's Mask."And he said, "Fine," so we made a swap. So I got the Paul Klee. In the meantime I had acquired two Klee paintings that I got when The Museum of Modern Art had their exhibition of Paul Klee -- in 1929, I believe it was; and one of them was this picture Im Grass. So I had these two paintings that I acquired out of the collection; and I think the J. B. Neumann thing came about six months after that exhibition, and so I had three Klees. Incidentally, the third Klee was called Tiergarten, and that picture I very generously let my brother acquire when he started his collection. I had started with Klee and I thought he might do the same.

(H.M.F.: So these Klees were actually the first...)

No, that's really not true; the first painting I got was a little etching, a Whistler, that Hansi and I got the year we got married...and that picture is no longer in the collection. And the first painting that we bought was a Matisse, Interior at Nice, which we acquired about 1927/28, and that picture I no longer have, but I can tell you a rather interesting tale of how that

picture figured in my acquisition of the Picasso Painter and His Model.- That picture was painted by Picasso in 1928, and in 1929 Paul Rosenberg, who lived in the same house that Picasso did, (or I probably should put it the other way, Picasso lived in Paul Rosenberg's house), on La Boétie, and Rosenberg had this exhibition with new works by Picasso. And in that show was the Artist ahd His Model and also the stunning Studio picture which is in The Museum of Modern Art Collection, which I think Walter Chrysler gave you some time ago. Well, the Artist and His Model was in that show and I fell in love with it, and I came every day to look at it. And I finally got together with Paul Rosenberg on it, and he gave me a very handsome allowance on the Matisse Interior at Nice , and I acquired this picture. After the deal was sealed, I asked Paul Rosenberg, "Why did you part with this magnificent ~~XXXXXXXXX~~ picture on a trade-in on the Matisse?" He said, "Janis, I'll tell you. The Matisse I can sell immediately, the Picasso I wouldn't be able to sell for thirty years." And I was the proud possessor of a great Picasso.

The 1912 Picasso, Nature Morte à la Guitare, -- that picture I saw for the first time in person at the great ~~XXXXX~~ Picasso exhibition in Paris at the Galerie Georges Petit in -- I think it was 1932. I just couldn't sleep over it. It belonged at that time to Marie Harriman who had acquired it from Pierre Loeb, and I got Marie Harriman to part with it and it became my picture. Incidentally, after I acquired the picture there was someone else who was after it , who called me and upbraided me on the fact that I overpaid for the picture, that he was negotiating for the picture for $500 less than I got it for.

Let us come to another picture, this 1914 Still Life, this dark and brooding picture which has been admired by many of the more serious art scholars. This picture here I acquired about that time , probably a year or two later, from Valentine Dudensing who had that wonderful gallery, on 57th Street, for years ;

and he gave it up and he's now living in France. At one time I think Dudensing sold some of the most magnificent French paintings of the early twentieth-century generation , to great collectors like Stephen Clark and The Museum of Modern Art. This picture here I bought from Valentine, and I remember one day I came in his gallery, after he had delivered the picture , and he said to me, "Your son must be a genius. " I said, "Well, my son is four years old , I doubt whether he is a genius , but you can tell me about it. " "Well, when my delivery man came back from delivering that picture, he said that when he came into the apartment the little boy opened the door and looked at the picture and said, 'Oh, Picasso!' and he began to play with his ball." He was very much impressed by it, so I said, "Well, that's very nice, but I really must disillusion you -- it's quite possible that he overheard the conversation that a Picasso picture was being delivered , and that was the extent of his genius." But I might add that just nine years later, when Conrad got the opposite role opposite "Junior Miss," in the play Junior Miss, he quit public school to take it and went to professional school ; and traveling , their first stop was Chicago, where Junior Miss played for a couple of months, and the first week Mrs. Janis took him to the Chicago Art Institute ; well, he was thirteen then. And he mounted the marble stairs, and he saw a couple of pictures, and he said "That looks like a Picasso, and that looks like a Matisse," and he went up to them and they were Picasso and Matisse -- and it's a rather interesting sidelight on children living with pictures and getting to know the signatures, so to speak -- the signature, without reading the signature. Well, I think that children growing up with pictures, even though they're not aware that they're noticing them, drink them in even on an unconscious level.

Well, we're on Picasso, so let's continue. This little picture here, the Seated Woman , a small Picasso, I bought from Picasso himself the very year of the exhibition at the Galerie Georges Petit, 1932. It was interesting because Mrs. Janis and I were going to all the galleries and we spent most of

our time on La Boétie because most of the interesting galleries were there; and one day we were in a little gallery on an impasse off of La Boétie and and there was a little fellow, a dynamic fellow, surrounded by other people listening to his every word , and Hansi said to me, "Who's that little fellow?" and just then he looked up and he saw my lips say "Picasso." He came over, and he shook hands with both of us, and asked why we were in Paris; well, we came to Paris to see the Picasso show; when did you arrive, well, we arrived yesterday; and when are you leaving, well, we're leaving tomorrow. He was very much touched by the whole thing -- "By all means, come to the studio." Well, we came to the studio; the gallery owner was right there and he was delighted to come along. And in our visit to the studio, he let me go through stacks of little pictures that he had on the floor , and out of that stack I selected this one, and he said it was a good picture and he told me what it would be, and I agreed and then he said, "I have to sign it." I watched his signature -- we both did -- and believe it or not, it took him about fifteen minutes to sign that picture; it looks as though it were done so spontaneously; and when he got through he said, "This has to dry," and he put it next to the sofa and we took our leave. I must add that I remember I was wearing a special kind of a tie with huge, mocha-color polka dots, and he kept looking at that tie ; of course, he was dressed in his painter's clothes . When we came back for the painting, about six hours later, he met us at the door and the first thing he did was put his hand on his tie to show me that he had a nice tie, also. His wife was there, who was very charming.

(HMF: Was that the first time you had met him?)

Yes, it was the first time I had met him personally, and it was a very interesting experience because he was a warm human being , and it was an unforgettable visit.

(HMF: Well, it's also fascinating for us to have this in conjunction with Jim Soby's great big one, which eventually is going to come to us too.)

Yes, I would say that this was the first idea -- or an earlier idea -- of Jim Soby's huge, marvelous masterpiece.

I think we can take some of these at random and skip about .

The early Chirico and the Dali -- I acquired both of those through Julien Levy from the Aragon Collection -- who in 1929 felt that collecting was incompatible with his Socialist ideas , and he gave up his collection, and I was able to acquire these two pictures , and at that time they were still inexpensive.

(HMF: Then the Chirico had not come from Lifar?)

(S.J.: No, this is not Lifar's -- not that I remember. I know that I got the Dali from Aragon.)

(HMF.:This is from the Chicago Arts Club catalogue.)

(S.J.: And they said from the collection of Serge Lifar?)

(HMF. Yes.)

(S.J.; Well, then I may be wrong on the Chirico, which I acquired after the Dali; I was under the impression that I got them both from the same source, but I won't dispute it. Now it comes back to me vaguely , Julien Levy handled both of these pictures and I bought them over a period of a month apart ; it's quite possible it came from Lifar and it's quite possible Julien Levy's records would show that.)

The Marcel Duchamp Bicycle Wheel No. 2 was a result of the Dada show that the Gallery arranged, I think in 1951 , and Marcel was very cooperative ; at this time he asked me when I was abroad if I would look for a wheel and a fork of the nature of the original one that he made and bring it back so he could assemble it, and I did that ; and the stool I think I got somewhere in New York, and we got all these things and Marcel built it up, and I set it up and we had it in the exhibition.

(HMF: Did you first get to know him when you worked on that early Surrealist show?)

I met Duchamp many years ago through Walter Arensberg. When he came to America as an artist in exile, we took up our friendship, our relationship, and we saw a good deal of each other; in fact, Hansi spent many hours doing the very thing that we're doing here - tape-recording him - and I think she had

some very interesting tapes on Duchamp, his ideas, his philosophy, and his painting approach, his techniques and so forth; and this material was helpful to both of us when we did the article on Marcel Duchamp for -- I think it was View magazine -- which is called "Marcel Duchamp -- Anti-Artist," which has been republished in Robert Motherwell's book on Dada and in other places.

We got to know many of the important artists in exile when they were here in New York, and Mondrian particularly came over to the house very, very frequently. Turning to Mondrian, the first time he visited the apartment, we had a party for the various artists who were here in exile including Breton and Ernst and Léger and Matta. Well, Mondrian came, and we had a lot of very attractive young ladies, and they gravitated toward Mondrian (who could cast that spell in his quiet way), but Mondrian was very busy looking at the collection; and we had hanging in the collection (and this was early -- it was 1940 or '41; it was the first party we had for the artists in exile and most of them had just arrived). He spent a lot of time looking at the collection, and there were one or two Hirshfields on the wall: The Girl with the Pigeons, which is here, and one or two other Hirshfields, and Mondrian came over to me and said, "Who is this man?" and I said, "He is an American primitive who lives in Brooklyn and he's been painting for a few years, and I have most of his things." And he said, "You know, with the exception of this Picasso" (he pointed to The Artist and the Model) "this is the most important man in your collection." So I thought that was rather generous, because there were a couple of Mondrians there, and he included his pictures as of the collection and as of less importance. Mondrian was one of the few painters I knew who was most catholic in his taste. We went to many exhibitions together, and he admired many things that were completely unlike his own, by little-known artists, and he would constantly surprise his friends.

Since we're talking about Mondrian and about Hirshfield, we should mention the exhibition that The Museum of Modern Art put on of the work of Hirshfield, I think it was in 1943, a couple of years after this conversation I had with

Mondrian; and Mondrian came to that exhibition. A very interesting little detail that might be added in connedtion with that exhibition , and I'd like to try to do it in the order in which the incident really happened. I met Hirshfield downstairs at the entrance to the Museum the opening afternoon of his exhibition , and he noticed the picture hanging on the main floor by Mondrian, and he said, "What is that?" And I said, "It's a Mondrian" and he said "Oh, I don't mean the picture -- who painted it? " I said, "It's painted by an artist by the name of Mondrian ." He looked at it again and he said, "What is it doing here?" and I said, "Well, it belongs to the Museum" and he looked at me and said, "They paid money for that?" Now, Mondrian came to the show, and he didn't share Hirshfield's lack of enthusiasm for Hirshfield's work . As a matter of fact, he spent a great deal of time studying the exhibition and went out of his way to tell me how great he thought it was. Incidentally, Mondrian was there with some of his New York friends -- his devoted followers -- who stayed rather discreetly in the background and had no comment to make about Hirshfield, and they listened rather incredulously to the statements made by Mondrian, in praise of the artist. Later that afternoon when we all repaired to the Garden for a little tea in honor of Hirshfield, there was a long table set there , and many people, and somehow Mondrian was at one end of the table, and at the extreme other end was Hirshfield -- a rather significant placement.

(HMF: Well, I think that from your scrapbooks and our scrapbooks, few shows that we have ever had ever got more brickbats.)

S.J. Yes, I think so, and it's a rather interesting commentary that a show like that should be so widely condemned; and I find that when that happens, there's something to it; it's an interesting situation. For example, at the Gallery, the best pictures that we have at the Gallery find admirers much more slowly than the pictures that are more acceptable. And many times, many of the pictures that I have in the Collection are the result of the fact that the Gallery was "stuck" with those pictures ; we couldn't sell them, so I bought them.

And in many cases, they were the best things that we had. A lot of people were over the impression over the years that I skimmed off the best things, but it's not so, on the contrary, I just waited for them to be awfully lonesome and then I acquired them.

The first two Hirshfields that he painted were The Beach Girl and The Angora Cat. I've written about this but I think I might mention it just in case that reference isn't noted , that these are pictures that Hirshfield painted over other pictures. In the Beach Girl he retained the face, which he pointed out the first time that I saw the picture, that it was his "dream girl." The Beach Girl was his dream girl, and he retained the face and I think certain modulations in the legs and arms , which he radically reduced in scale. In the Angora Cat, his second picture, whatever was underneath he only retained the profile of the lion and the decorative bauble on the wall above the cat's head.

On the Inseparable Friends, one of the largest pictures that Hirshfield painted, at the time that The Museum of Modern Art did its one-man show of Hirshfield (and incidentally the Museum included every picture that Hirshfield had painted; there was no selection, there were thirty -- it was not edited); this picture was in the show, and I had done a visual analysis of this picture , which Alfred Barr called a label, and and the Museum had a text on that picture, and I think it could be referred to; it's rather interesting because it brings in the various conscious and unconscious influences in Hirshfield's life -- the relevant feligious factors, and unconscious archaic influences , not to say his own business experiences in the cloak-and-suit business and the slipper business. I think I covered that rather extensively at that time, and I think that material might be available to you and we needn't go into it, at this time.

There are very interesting stories to be told about Hirshfield's sayings as he painted them, and the comments that he made on these pictures , and one of them, of the zebra family, which is not in the Museum collection (the picture belongs to the Miller collection in Columbus, Indiana) , he painted these zebras very painstakingly over a period of several months ; and when he got through one of his daughters called his attention to the fact that ~~they~~

they weren't leopard skins but they were snake skins; and he told me the story that his daughter said, "But daddy, these are snake skins, they're not leopard skins, " and he said, "You're right, my daughter, " and he repainted the picture. He painted them leopard skins -- and what did he use as a model? His daughter's imitation leopard coat!

Now, on this Hirshfield, which is one of the last pictures he painted, 1946, which was called by Hirshfield Parliamentary Buildings, it is in fact Hirshfield's rendering of a postcard that I sent him of the Sacré Coeur. When I was in Paris that year, I spent a great deal of time to find the kind of a postcard that would interest Hirshfield , and I made sure that it was of a perspective that gave the various heights to the domes of the Sacré Coeur , to avoid the usual presentation of this church by naive artists , which is head on. Well, this was a foreshortened angular shot and quite complex , and when Hirshfield got it he decided to use it for his picture,and you must remember that Hirshfield always started his pictures from actual pictures, either photographs or calendar prints or photochromos ; in fact whenever he painted a picture, for example the leopards, he asked me to go to the Library and send him photographs of animals from the Picture Collection of the Library at Forty-Second Street, and I used to go there every month and pick out different things on instruction from Hirshfield. And I'd send him these things and He'd send them back and I'd return them to the Library ; they were out on rental. So -- he did this picture, and he took the many foreshortened angles and heights of towers and straightened it out into a bisymmetric situation .

(HMF.: It would be nice to have a copy of the postcard.)

(S.J. Well, he had it and one day I thought it should be nice to have it reproduced alongside the picture, as I did in the book They Taught Themselves with this picture of the lion; and that lion reproduced in the book was the actual lion that he worked from, and it was a picture that I sent to him from the Public Library at Forty-Second Street.)

(HMF: You were a catalyst.)

(S.J.:No, I wouldn't say that, though I helped him in every way, I never told him what to paint ; I felt that was something we must not do.)

Another great painter, Vivin, he had done so many Paris scenes; and here is Le Panthéon, and he introduced his own perspective. It's really two-dimensional, but we get wonderful indications XXXX of the third dimension.

(HMF.:Did you know him?)

(S.J.:No, I never met Vivin ,)

(HMF: Did you know any of the French primitives?)

(S.J.; Yes, I met Bombois and a few of them.)

The Doriani Flag Day I bought from Doriani out of the outdoor exhibition at Washington Square. This thing was there, the canvas was backed by a warped cardboard and it was hanging on the fence , and I thought it was a very exciting picture.

The Sullivan Fourth Dimension which he painted in 1938; he was very much interested at that time in new ideas on Einsteinian space, and I think that was at the bottom of his desire to do this picture. When he completed it, he asked me if there was anything familiar in the picture , and I looked at it very closely and I said , "No, of course not, it was completely original ," and he said, "Well, I mean in the figure XXXXXX -- does it remind you of anyone?" and I said no. He said, "Well, that one person with his back to the viewer is supposed to be you."

I spent a great deal of time with Eilshemius ; I used to go to exhibitions with him and visit him after his automobile accident in his XX home, and a lot of these pictures I bought from him over the years ; and I must say that he had great confidence in his work -- he was almost alone in that! but over the years, I/might think that we say that he was justified in feeling that way. Incidentally, the small one, the Samoan picture, which is of an early date, 1911, I bought that out of the Henry MacBride auction at Parke Bernet and Henry MacBride was very pleased that I got it. He was great old gentleman, and Henry MacBride like Mondrian was able to like many things -- he was most catholic, and most strict in his taste in recognizing artists early; and he and Duchamp, I believe,

were the two who first called attention to the work of Eilshemius. Henry McBride liked so many different kinds of artists ; he really enjoyed it, and he kept young with it -- he was the youngest ninety-year-old I've ever met....

I'd like to duck into another generation for a moment and talk about Pollock and a few of the things that I remember around Pollock. There are many, and the time is too short to go into all of them, but perhaps some of these pictures might refresh my memory. The small picture here called Free Form was, I believe, in all fairness, a title that Pollock didn't give it; I have an idea that it was suggested to Pollock by myself . At any rate, this picture here, which is only 19 1/2" high, was the first Pollock painting we sold, at the Gallery, and we sold it as I recall for $275. We sold it to a gentleman who made me give him a guarantee that if he didn't like the picture he could bring it back and get his money back, and I did that. Many years later, this picture came up at auction at Sotheby's in England , and I bought it back for $14,000. I bought it myself. It got better over the years. That's a wry commentary on my own judgment when I sold it to him, for $275. But at that time, I was newly Pollock's dealer, and I was out to sell as many pictures as I could, and there weren't very many Pollocks being sold. The picture as you see is a skein or "drip" picture , and it's signed and dated 1946; and this was on the picture when it was brought to me in -- I think it was 1952; so that it's quite unlikely that Pollock could have made an error in the date because, number 1, his pictures were not in demand, and there was no thought about Pollock's drip pictures being superior to early pictures of Pollock and all that sort of thing ; and I'm quite certain-- and I have an idea that Lee Krassner might be able to authenticate this -- that it was signed and dated at the same time. Now, this is important -- the date is very important, it seems to me, because it really brings his drip pictures a year or two earlier than we have thought --at least, 1947 was the earliest date hitherto considered to be Pollock's first drip pictures ~~and this~~ . And this touches upon a lot of dubious criticism

written ~~XXXXX~~ by European critics about the work of Wols , particularly, where Grohmann wrote many years later that Wols began his skein, his drip, his L'artinformel in 1945 or '46. Well, it just happens that I knew Wols in 1945, and '46, and '47, and '48; and up to that time he had not done anything other than an extension of his Paul Klee-esque images in small format; and it was only when he was taken to his bed at the Hotel Louisiana in Brixen that he began, paradoxically, painting larger pictures. This was 1949. And in these larger pictures he began introducing a kind of a drip technique. Then there's another critic who wrote about the fact that Fautrier -- and Fautrier himself has written that he was the first man to do art informel -- and that he did it earlier than anyone else . The earliest paintings of his that we can find that belong in this category of expression are 1948; it is Haftig's picture.

(HMF: And one of the few artists who did have an influence on Pollock has been one of the most generous in recognizing how Pollock differed, and that's Masson.)

(S.J.: Exactly -- and Masson is another one of the few artists who had a broad approach -- a great intellectual . You know that Masson, when he heard about the first one-man show of Pollock being held in Switzerland, he was living in the south of France at that time, went all the way to Switzerland to see the exhibition, and when asked what he was doing he said, "I'm here to pay homage to my master." And that's ~~XX~~ a very generous thing, because Pollock was influenced by Masson.)

(HMF; And Masson wrote the Museum an extraordinary letter at the time of our '55 show in Paris , "Modern Art from the U.S.A." a most touching letter.)

(S.J. Well, yes, he was generous , he had so many ideas; my hours with him were exciting ones.)

I think I ought to go on from here because I think that this is rather important historically: At the time that I first visited Pollock I was taken there by Lee Krasner , and this was at the time that I was worked on my Abstract and Surrealist Art in America book; and I heard about Lee Krasner, that she was a Hofmann student and she did very good work, and I liked her early work

and she said, "If you really want to meet a new and interesting artist, I'd like to take you over to Pollock's studio," and I said fine; and we went to visit Pollock's studio which was on West 8th Street, a few doors west of the Whitney Museum. And there was Pollock, very sober, very quiet, I don't think he said a word all afternoon . He had two paintings that he'd done -- remember, this was 1941 or '42; I think it was '42. And he had painted these pictures in a kind of all-over technique , with heavy impasto, very much like the last pictures that Pollock painted, with heavy pigment. I liked these pictures very much, and I thought that they would be very interesting inclusions for the book; and I had a photographer come up and take the photographs a couple of days later ; and when I saw the photographs they didn't mean a thing -- it was an all-over thing, and there were no forms, and I was unhappy about the black-and-white situation.

I'd like to drop that for a moment and go back to my visit with Pollock ; After having left Pollock and Lee Krasner, I went next door to visit Hans Hofmann, to get an abstract picture from Hofmann. Well, Hans Hofmann at that time -- this was 1942 -- was painting in a kind of German Expressionist technique , interiors with willow chairs and tables with still life, and we worked there for a couple of hours to find something that would fit into the book, because Hans Hofmann was very interested to be included in the book ; and we finally came up with the conclusion that there was nothing there that was abstract. He said, "It's true, I paint from still lifes and subject matter , and I don't have anything that's abstract enough." I said that I must use something that would fit in with the general tenor of the book . During the course of this conversation, I said, "I just came from Pollock's studio -- a very interesting artist ; have you ever seen his work?" "No." "Do you know Pollock?" "No, I don't. " "Well, he's right next door; you should visit him." And he said, "Well, I will." About six months later, -- this of course has no bearing on his visit to Pollock -- Hoffmann called me up and said, "Janis, I've painted an abstract picture, and I'd like you to come and see it ; it's very colorful, and I think you'll like it. " And I came to see it, and I did like it.

And he said, "You know, it's so colorful, I'd like to see it in your book in color"; and I said, "Well, if you'll furnish a color plate, we'd be glad to do it," and we reproduced it in the book in color; and I think the date of that is '43. About ten years later, it seems to me that Clem Greenberg -- who incidentally wrote not long ago that this 1946 picture was the first drip picture that Pollock painted -- Clem Greenberg either wrote an article or arranged an exhibition, the substance of which is, that there was a Hoffman in the article or the exhibition , I don't remember which, which was a drip picture dated 1940. Now, if this drip picture of 1940 existed, I certainly would have seen it, because we went through the entire studio, and Hofmann himself said that he hadn't painted any all-abstract pictures, and I just believe that it was an error , and that either the date was misread , or it was put on in error later; but that picture was surely painted after the picture that I reproduced in my book on Abstract and Surrealist Art. And I think that needs to be straightened out, and I can only ~~XXXX~~ give my original version of it ; and at the time I visited Hans Hofmann, there was no thought in the air of drip painting whatsoever, either here or in Europe. Yes, there had been things done -- I think Picasso did an inkblob years ago which had something that might have looked like drip, and Zervos reproduced it and called it a page from Picasso's notes; and I think that other artists, Ernst, had introduced ~~XXXX~~ a kind of a drip technique which was once removed from a manual one ; it grew out of the use of a can that he had tied to levers and ropes , which poured out a kind of a form on one of his paintings that he did here in America ; but Ernst was always a great experimenter and he sowed many seeds along the line that might have been used. But I believe from my knowledge and from my personal experience with Pollock that his drip technique was a completely original thing with him and grew out of his interest in the work of Masson in the early '40s and came about as an original idea from Pollock, as his own original idea, which he expanded, and of course he made these huge pictures which flow together so beautifully, and this was the new image of the later '40s.

About the White Light which Pollock painted in 1954; it's one of the very few pictures that he painted at that time, because Pollock was somewhat stymied by the fact that he didn't want to plagiarize himself . There was great enthusiasm for his drip pictures, but he wasn't interested to repeat what he felt he had already done so consummately -- all the more credit to him. When he did this picture, we had it in our exhibition; it was criticized by a lot of people as not being as original as the other things that they had gotten to know and like of his ; but I think that as time has gone on -- and that's thirteen years ago -- that the picture has picked up a great many admirers; and for me, it's a great picture. I think that I should talk about this picture because this has something to do with the Pollock idea of titling pictures. I mentioned to you that Free Form, the 1946 picture, was a title that I probably suggested. Now , when Pollock painted White Light and titled it, these were titles that grew out of his own experience with the pictures and his own ideas around the pictures. I should go back a few years, specifically with the time that Pollock came with us, late 1952, At that time, as I pointed out to him prior to his first show that we held in November 1953, that he had painted Number 1, 1948; Number 1, 1949; and Number 1, 1950 ; and is he going to call this first picture that he painted in 1953 Number 1, 1953? I said that there's no image here; and it's confusing-- it would be confusing for historians . And he thought about this at great length, and all the while that he was painting these pictures, he thought about it -- that Janis doesn't like the ideas of numbers; and it wasn't a very original idea, because Gorky and other people had used numbers , and many people had used numbers, and it became a kind of monotonous thing , with no identification in the mind of the observer, in the mind of the historian, the critic; well, at any rate, just prior to the show, I would say it was about six weeks before the exhibition opened, Pollock sent his 1953 production to his truckers "Home Sweet Home." The pictures arrived that morning, and he came in with Lee --who was Lee Pollock at that time -- they were living in Springs -- and one of the first questions that came up was that Pollock said, "You know,

I've been ruminating about this idea of titling these pictures and I don't have one title." And Lee shook her head in despair. And just at that moment she was called away for some lengthy telephone conversation; and Pollock and I were left alone . We had these pictures spread out in the show room and he was studying them ; and suddenly he pointed to one picture and he said, "That picture is Sleeping Effort;" he painted to another picture and he gave it another poetic title; and I marked these down and I identified them as quickly as I could. And in the space of fifteen minutes he had given me at least fifteen beautiful, poetic titles. And when Lee Krassner came back from the telephone and I said, "Lee, the pictures are titled!" she was incredulous, and she said, "How come?" and I read off the titles and she said, "Marvelous!" Now, I think that this little three-cornered conversation can be verified by Lee and I think it should be; she may have forgotten it ,but I think that if it's called to her attention....To me, it was important , or rather interesting and important, because it was a parting of the ways from Numbers 1, 2, and 3 to titles -- and titles that really had a pertinence, that had a meaning for the artist and a meaning for the picture; and that's how we have Blue Poles and that's how we have Autumn Rhythm ; and the significant masterpieces of our time, instead of being called Number 2, 1956 or 1954 (in 1956 unfortunately he wasn't painting) we have these titles; and the little part that I played in that , I'm rather proud of.So that takes care of White Light. Unfortunately, Pollock wasn't to paint many pictures after White Light ; he had his personal problems, and he also had his artistic problems in that he wasn't interested to do it the easy way. This reminds me of the time that Lee Krassner told me about the huge picture that Pollock did for Peggy Guggenheim -- I think it was in about 1946 -- for her hallway . I visited the Pollocks (I used to visit them every few months after I got to know them); and I saw this huge canvas there , a blank canvas, and he looked at that picture for a couple of months , the blank picture; and one evening Lee Krassner retired and went to bed and Pollock was there staring at that picture ,and when she woke up in the morning that picture was painted. He had worked all night on that picture. That's her story -- she told me that at the time it happened.

It's a marvelous,moving picture; it's not a late drip picture, but it has a lot of promise in it (I think it's about 1946/ if not 1945); forceful -- I always called it a sort of dancing picture. Going into that hallway of Peggy Guggenheim, these dancers were on the wall there .

I have a lot of stories to tell about Gorky , but since they don't apply specifically to the pictures in the Collection, I think that we'll skip that for the moment , and if something occurs to me in relation to other pictures and other artists, I might bring in some of the very interesting things that Gorky used to say and think that had to do with great pictures.

Coming to Franz Kline; while we're on the subject of that generation: Franz himself was the salt of the earth and a marvelous guy who never could say no to anything. He used to get himself into trouble because he'd say yes, yes, and people would take him literally and expect him to deliver , giving a picture or what have you. When Franz painted these later pictures, he would talk to me when I visited his studio on the East Side, and when he moved over to West 14th Street; he'd talk about these white areas . Well, we think about Franz Kline as black forms on white, but he'd talk about these white areas "cutting into" the black. It's rather interesting because I know that years ago I knew some sign painters, and "cutting in" is part of their description of making letters out of a background; that is to say, if you have a white paper that you're working on, you "cut out" the letters with black paint , and the white letter remains. Here Franz Kline cut out the black with the white, in his terminology; and Franz many times spoke about the fact that the white juts into the black and creates tension. On this earlier picture, you'll notice that the whites are ivory-- it's much more noticeable in the painting itself; the picture which he did in 1954. At that time, Franz was not using the pure colors -- the tube paint -- that he did later on , and these colors have oxidized into a kind of ivory white; but you notice on the later picture of 1961, the whites have remained white because he used the tube white.

Speaking about painting a picture in one night, Franz Kline at the time that he

painted his largest picture that he called New Year's Eve Wall , it was a painting that he had done on New Year's Eve; instead of going out that night, to half a dozen parties, he painted that picture in that fury.

I'd like to revert back to Mondrian and go back to the time that he was here working on Fifty-Fourth Street near First Avenue, and I visited his studio and he had an old-fashioned studio which had sort of rounded corners on the doorways, which he blocked out with rectangular cardboard because the cardboard concealed the curve. I visited him many times, and this particular time , I came with a photographer because I was including Mondrian in the book on Abstract and Surrealist Art in America, as an artist in exile and also as a pioneer (there are two chapters that cover some of the work of Mondrian). On his easel he had this Painting with a Blue Square -- Composition 2 with Blue Square -- with the double date 1936/42; he started this picture in London and finished it in New York. The picture was photographed and reproduced in an article that I did for Decision in 1941; now, I'm wrong about the first comment about [???? the book ???] . I was visiting Mondrian with the idea of including him in an article that I had written for Decision called "The School of Paris Comes to U.S," and Mondrian and Léger were two of the four artists that I visited at that time; and he had this picture on his easel and the photographer was there and took this picture together with New York and some other pictures. At that time, before I left, he noticed that I admired this picture very much , and he said, "Do you think that XX you could interest someone in this picture?" and I said, "Well, it's a beautiful picture and I wish that I could afford to have it myself ." He said, "Well, the price is $250." Well, that was in 1941 and money was hard to get ; and I wrote my brother immediately and said, "There's a great Mondrian that can be had for $250 , and I recommend that you buy it ." I used to write to him from time to time when pictures appealed to me and I couldn't afford to buy them myself, and many times he bought them. And he wrote back in desolation that he didn't have the money. And in our conversation, when I was at Mondrian's

studio, I kept calling this the "Little Blue Island," surrounded by black lines. And about six months later he wrote me a postcard and said, "Were you successful in interesting someone in my "Little Blue Island"? The picture was ultimately inherited in the legacy, by Harry Holzman, and I purchased it from Harry Holzman -- and I hate to say at how many times the value of the original value that Mondrian had made! But that's perfectly all right.

Since we're on Mondrian, I'd like to go to the first Mondrian I bought, and this was my first meeting with Mondrian at his studio in rue du Départ in Paris in 1932. This was the Composition in Red and Blue dated 1933; well, I saw this picture in 1932, and I bought it in '32; and when I bought it -- we're talking about figures now, and I might just as well mention it -- Mondrian told me how many francs it would cost . It was my first day in Paris and I didn't know what that was, and I went to the bank and bought that many francs , and the banker took from me $70. I got back to Mondrian's studio, and he said, "Well, the picture isn't completed, I have to give another coat of blue to this lower area ." Now this is an area of about 1" by 5"; and I didn't get the picture for a whole year ! When I got the picture, Mondrian had framed it in his traditional Mondrian frame, and he wrote me a letter and he said, "I'm really sorry to see this picture leave my hands ; it was like a rose." Now, that seems rather far-fetched, but if we realize that we have two red forms attached to the vertical line , poetically I suppose we could make an analogy with a rose.

(HMF:Of course, I think that is so interesting about Mondrian; I never think of him as a "geometric" painter because he always worked from natural forms.) He was a great human being, and the human element was always there in his thinking ; when people say that Mondrian was a cold and strict painter, it's not true; his work, as he himself has said, is related to life . If we think about the architecture that followed the work of Mondrian, we understand that the architects like Mies van der Rohe benefited by the spatial problems that Mondrian had himself solved.

(HMF: Did you ever go dancing with him?) That was an interest you shared.)

(S.J.: I'm sorry to say, I didn't go dancing with him; in Paris of course it was difficult to go dancing because that was a sort of weekend thing for Mondrian, he was busy all the other times; and in New York when he was here, I was busy at other things; and at that time, although I had devoted a great deal of time to dancing early in my life , ~~XXX~~ at that time I had spent more time in the art world than I did on the dance floor.)

/END OF SIDE 1, REEL ONE/

When I went to Paris in 1945, and very early in 1946, to work on the Picasso book, which I coauthored with my wife, I spent a great deal of time visiting artists like Dubuffet and Giacometti and Brauner; and at that time I picked up this Brauner, of 1943, called Figure; and he told me that he had painted these pictures in tallow from the candles that he was supplied when he was in the Resistance; he was underground and instead of burning his candles he used it as artistic material. He made a whole series of very beautiful wax pictures, and this was one of the earlier ones, I believe. At that same time, Giacometti was doing very small, elongated figures , such as the figures in Les Hommes Qui Passent, the Giacomatti square -- the bronze piece that's in the Collection; but those figures instead of being this height, were about an inch or an inch and a half high. He carried these around in the palm of his hand and in his pockets , and he'd pull them out and show them to you; and he said "I think about these as being two meters tall, and they come out that big! " Eventually , he did them two meters tall and more -- but this was back in 1945 and '46, when he'd just begun on them. I remember visiting Zervos, and Zervos had a big sculpture in his home , I think it was by Picasso, and at the foot of it he had an inch-and-a-half Giacometti standing, one of the elongated figures/ I think that was an interesting wedding! Giacometti, indidentally, on that trip -- on that trip I took two or three Hirshfields to Paris with me to show to Picasso, because I spent nine weeks at Picasso's studio and had all the pictures that he had on hand photographed , and spent a lot of time with M. Sabartés who was most cooperative; Picasso had given Sabartés the carte blanche

on the Picasso subject.

to go ahead and show me anything I wanted. And I never got around to showing Picasso the Hirshfields ; but when Giacometti, Dora Maar, Brauner, Michel Leyris, XXXXX and two or three other painters and poets came to my hotel, on the Champs-Elysées at the Rond Point(which XXXXXX by the way was the only hotel in Paris which had electric light and some semblance of heat, in those late days of '45 and early days of '46),they came and I unrolled a couple of Hirshfields that I had -- I didn't take the stretchers, I had them in my grip -- and Giacometti particularly, after studying the pictures that were on the floor, began pulling at his hair and looked at his friends, and he said, "After looking at these pictures, you all look different to me!"That was the impact that Hirshfield had on Giacometti. I heard later that Sabartés had shown the little Hirshfields to Picasso, and Sabartés reported that Picasso was interested to see them. I didn't get any direct reaction XXX from Picasso himself on them, because I wasn't there when he looked at them.

Living in Paris at that time was a great hardship -- no taxis, no light, no heat; the streets were deserted at night , and the artists were very, very poor. There was also difficulty at that time to get paintings , to buy paintings in Paris and get them out of the country, because their Office des XXXXXXXX Changes situation was in a complete mess, and even two or three years later when I opened my Gallery it was impossible to do anything; one would wait all day at the Office des Changes to clear a couple of pictures .

Now, speaking about Brauner, whom I visited on this trip, the first time I visited Brauner he had been living in XX a little studio that belonged to the douanier Rousseau , or that was where he painted, rather; and after our visit -- he had shown me his earlier things -- I must tell you that at that time I was the possessor of a Brauner, I had acquired the Nude and Spectral Still Life in America in 1940 or '41; I believe he had painted it, I don't know whether he was in Mexico or South America or in Paris when he had painted it; but at any rate , I thought it was a beautiful picture ; I owned it and he was interested that I had it. And then I came away with the wax picture that we

spoke about before. On the way downstairs, we went through the back door into a kind of an alleyway there , and outside there, being thrown away that day, was a red canapé ; and it was exactly the color of the douanier canapé in the Yadwiga which is in the Museum Collection, which Mrs. Janis and I owned for a period of thirty years; my boys grew up in front of that picture and played football in front of it . At any rate, when Brauner saw this red canapé -- it had a familiar shape -- tears began to form in his eyes, and he was certain that Fate had placed it there, and that that piece was being thrown out the day that I visited his studio by someone who had picked it up out of Rousseau's studio after 1910 (this was 1946). He knew that I had the Yadwiga picture and , he himself a fatalist, believed that this was all ordained. But Brauner was always a mystic and looked for these unusual meanings behind everyday occurrences.

Now, about Jean Arp: I knew him for many, many years and used to visit his studio at Meudon at the same afternoon that I would visit Nelly van Doesburg. I originally became interested in visiting Meudon because van Doesburg had built a modern house where Nelly van Doesburg lives today, one of the early modern houses. I got to know Arp, who was always a very gentle, humorous and lovely person, and I sort of stammered through the German that I retained from high school and a little French. I was very much interested, to begin with, in his white-on-white reliefs. I thought that they were quite wonderful things . When I opened my Gallery in 1948, Curt Valentin had the sculptures by Arp and I was assigned the reliefs, which I admired very much although I didn't have any friends or clients who shared my enthusiasm. So I acquired these two quite early in the history of the Gallery -- the Constellation of 5 Whites and 2 Blacks of 1932 , which was the first Arp that I acquired, at the beginning of the Gallery career, and the other small Constellation of 1932 I got from Arp at a later date. Later , of course, when Curt Valentin died, Arp sent all of his sculptures and his reliefs to me , and we became the sole representative of Arp; and it was amusing at that time that I didn't take on artists who

were more desired on the part of the collectors than Arp, such as Moore and Calder and one or two other famous artists -- but I was quite happy to settle for Arp. I think Curt liked sculpture more than he did other things. And the last Arp that I acquired, the Poupée -- the Preadamite Doll -- of 1964, that I acquired in that same year, represents for me a new inspiration for Arp, but in line with his reliefs.

/NOTE: From here on owing to rundown of battery, a few minutes on this side 2 of ~~XXX~~ Reel 1 are unintelligible. Janis' remarks on Schwitters and Léger from longhand notes taken by HMF follow on page 40, and are followed by notes on a few other artists about whom he was queried on another day, without tape-recording./

JANIS REEL 2, SIDE 2 (Side One is blank; this side was used for recording).

Well, I thought I might mention that throughout our conversation I've been using the word "I" which is really interchangeable with "we," because throughout the early years, particularly, Mrs. Janis was very helpful and cooperated completely in the making of the Collection; in the later years, not so much. So that in the course of my conversation, I may use "I," inadvertently, to save time, but I really could say "Hansi and me"; so I hope that'll be overlooked. I don't mean to slight Hansi in any way because, as I say, she was most helpful in the formulating of the Collection in its beginning years, and later unfortunately she became busy with other things and became ill, so that she was unable to participate.

I would like to go back to my original trip to Paris the year of the Liberation -- the end of that year and early 1946; and at that time, Dubuffet was having his first exhibition at the Galerie Drouin in the Place Vendôme; and there I saw my first exhibition of Dubuffet paintings, and he had many things, particularly of the haute pâte period, of which the Girl with High Heels is a small but good example. Now, this painting I bought at that time, although I was very much absorbed with my work on Picasso, and I had just gotten through something like ten years of research and writing on American primitive painters. I went to see the show -- not that this had anything to do with the kind of primitive painting I had been writing about, and really because it had nothing to do with it, it was a rather difficult situation for me, because here we were dealing with a man who was a sophisticated painter who, like Picasso, had gone back to expression of archaic forms and did it very confidently; but rather difficult to take in view of my experience with artists like Hirshfield, John Kane, and what have you. But I ended up by coming home with this painting, Girl with the High Heels, which I bought from René Drouin for $100. Speaking about $100, I was there with a young lady who had begun to collect, and I strongly advised her to buy one of these pictures, at the same price; and she was very much tempted to do so, but she just didn't have the courage.

to go through with it -- or, I might say, didn't have enough confidence in my recommendation. But I know that many times she has mentioned to me how regretful she is that she didn't have the spunk to buy one at that time. Now, during the years that René Drouin did exhibitions of Dubuffet, and I think he did about three of them, I think out of the second one I bought this Portrait of Henri Michaux, this large picture which I thought was one of the strong pieces in the show. And then during these visits abroad, of course, I always popped in on rue Vaugirard where Dubuffet had his little studio, and from time to time made selection of pictures which he had earmarked for me; and the Short-Circuit Blue -- Corps de Dame was one of them.

(HMF: Excuse me; I have found another title for that one -- as Whirlwind : Blue Short Circuit;)

(SJ: I don't recall that title at all; I know that on the back he calls it Court Circuit Bleu - Corps de Dame. I think that's the complete title; I don't know where "Whirlwind" came from.)

(HMF: There was the word in French -- Tourbillon -- Blue Short Circuit, Corps de Dame; I'll have to look it up in our Dubuffet show of 1961.)

(SJ: Well, that may be so, but I'd definitely recommend that you look at what Dubuffet has written on the back of the picture.)

And I think you should also look at the still life, Table au Souvenir, of 1951-- it's a later year. That, I believe, I bought from Dubuffet when he was visiting in America. He had a studio in America for about a year -- or nine or ten months -- and it was in 1951, possibly some time in 1952; at that time he painted some fifteen or twenty pictures.

(HMF: So this was painted in America?)

(SJ: Yes. As far as I can recall, this was one of the fifteen or sixteen pictures that I got from Dubuffet while he was visiting in America. We saw a great deal of each other; he was here after all of the other artists had gone back to France, you know, the artists in exile; he came and he worked here just as though he were working in Paris; he didn't see a great deal of the city. We went occasionally to restaurants, but he was not really a man who loved urban life,

his devotion was to his painting and that's where his interests lie, and so I think he really didn't get to see too much of New York City. He wasn't interested in museums, he didn't go to exhibitions ; but my visits with him here at his studio -- I think it was in Waverly Place -- were very, very interesting. (We can definitely check on his exact address while XXXXX he was in America.)

So that rather covers us on the four Dubuffets that are in the Collection.

(HMF: Excuse me, I'd like to ask about the relation of this, if you know -- there are two portraits of Henri Michaux?)

(SJ: Yes. The other Portrait of Henri Michaux has recently been acquired by the Albright Art Gallery , which is a smaller and quite different version of Henri Michaux, but a fine picture, and also of the same date, 1947.)

Now , I have many, many stories to tell about Dubuffet, but unfortunately they don't cover the pictures that are actually in the Collection; and I think on those grounds we might pass by and turn to those things which pertain more directly strictly to those things that are in the Collection.

(HMF: Yes; the only one you didn't specifically mention is the later one, the '59 Assemblage, Baptême de feu.)

(SJ. Yes; that '59 picture is one that I acquired , I believe, from M. Varenne. I liked it because of its reference to the période botanique; and I think it's a very serious picture in which he has actually included vestiges of nature, growing nature; and he did only a few of these, only for a short period of time, in '58 or '59; and this is one of the several. The reason it's behind glass is that I believe the collage could be picked off by some sharp picker!)

So -- we will pass from Dubuffet -- and I'm skipping at random -- on to René Magritte. In 1951, I believe it was, I did an exhibition " René Magritte: Word vs. Image" and in that exhibition I had about 40 paintings, 38, something like that, which included the word and the image . That was the subject of the exhibition and I stuck with it. And out of the show, of the 30-odd pictures that were there, this was the picture that I thought was the best in the show, and I selected it for myself, many years later. That is

to say, I bought the picture from Dubuffet [sic; means Magritte] while the show was on, with the idea of selling it to an astute collector . He didn't come along; and so, in line with my thinking, I bought it. Now, this idea that Magritte had about incopporating the word which had really no direct association with the picture, but which had some metaphysical one, is a very interesting aspect of his art. Well, the exhibition that we did on "Word vs Image" was a dismal failure ; I think we sold one picture, and that picture was bought by Saul Steinberg. He still has it, and he's quite, quite fond of it. The other two or three pictures were bought by myself, and eventually two or three of them were sold and this one I bought, and that's that -- and thank Heaven someone didn't come along and get it instead!

Now to go back to some of our early shows: the Herbin show was an exhibition we did even before the Magritte show at the Gallery ,and that was in 1951... (HMF. 1953.)

(S.J. Was it 1953? I think we did them both about the same time.)

And this particular picture , Vie # 2, was in that show and very much admired; I wanted it at that time but didn't have the money; the picture went back to Europe and I bought it on one of my subseqqent trips to Europe. At that time I had been visiting Herbin at his studio , and he used to show me some of his early things , and the middle period things, and they were of absolutely no interest; then suddenly in 1949 and '50, he hit upon this image (this is a 1950 picture) where he really brought the tenets of Cézanne into play; and instead of the sphere, the pyramid and the cube, he has used the disc, the triangle, and the rectangle. In other words, he has reduced Cézanne to two dimensions, and he's introduced, of course, his own color which could not have happened at the time of Cézanne. But this has interested me, because if you really study these late pictures of Herbin, which are by far his best, they are made up of one of the three images that I mentioned ; and of course his introduction of brilliant color and optical play are a new, mid-twentieth century idea.

I think that he has been very much underrated and that he belongs near the top of the pure geometric painters.

On a very early trip to Paris, I found this Delaunay, Les Fenêtres, at a little gallery. It's 1912.

(HMF: When you say "early trip," what do you mean?)

(SJ.Oh, I would say this was one of the early trips as a gallery director -- that would be after '48; and I think this was about 1949.)

This picture was owned by a little gallery on the Faubourg St.Honoré, or an impasse off the Faubourg St. Honoré, and it was priced at something like $276 or some ridiculous amount. I lost no time in acquiring it ; and I must say it's a picture that stands up over the years

(HMF: We have a Synchromism show traveling now.)

(S.J: Yes, and the Macdonald-Wright show is at the Smithsonian.)

The two Macdonald-Wrights in our Collection are in the Smithsonian and they are going to be returned directly to the Museum.) And that picture, since you mentioned Macdonald-Wright, or rather Synchromism, that picture I bought at (Synchromy in Blue) a Parke-Bernet auction about 18 years ago -- the larger one of the two , the Blue Synchromy; and it's rather interesting that I bought the picture, and it went at a very reasonable price; and on the way out two different collectors stopped me and asked me if I would sell them the picture at a profit. Why they didn't bid on it, I'll never know! I wasn't through bidding by any means when I bought it. But sometimes it happens that way. I think it's a great picture . And having that picture , incidentally, in the same room with the Footballer by Boccioni is quite an experience. The Boccioni of course was painted in 1913 and this was painted in 1916; and I have actually found in the Macdonald-Wright forms that look like images , identical images, in the Boccioni. Now, the Boccioni picture is a running football player -- which incidentally will be magnificant next to the Muscular Expansion in Space, because it's exactly the same figure; but the figure now is running, whereas in the sculpture piece which the Museum has it's more or less a striding figure.

This picture here has picked up a certain velocity , and because of its velocity the muscles extend a little further and it takes on a slightly different form; but it is the same figure. And that is the subject matter of it. We have lots of differences of opinion with visitors who look at the picture and can't for the world see the running figure, actually his foot in action making contact with the football (it's an association football, it's not an American oval football so we would call it "The Association Football Player."). At any rate, in that particular picture of Boccioni, and I have quite a few things to tell you about that, that are rather interesting because I lived with it and discovered as I lived with it, now and then I will suddenly come up with a passage from the Boccioni in the Macdonald-Wright: the handling of light, the handling of forms,. The Macdonald-Wright picture actually is a seated male nude , and it's quite ambiguous, or I might say obscure, but it's definitely there , completely identifiable in every detail.In fact, I had a lovely lady visitor one time who pointed to the sex area and said, "Now, what is this supposed to be?" And of course the thing is so abstract that it's difficult to even begin to see that this is a seated nude model that Macdonald-Wright worked from. In the Boccioni, there are certain what I call "double-imagery," unconscious images by Boccioni, which repeats almost identically that very figure and the handling of light on that figure , and that's the thing that I think might be pointed out one day as an interesting conscious and unconscious influence by Macdonald Wright of the work of Boccioni.

This is confused but it is what he said!]

(HMF.:Macdonald-Wright had probably seen the Futurist show in Paris.)

(SJ: Oh, I'm sure he had,and this is considered one of the great pictures of the Futurist movement,he certainly knew this picture.)

Now, that picture was painted originally on a smaller canvas -- the Boccioni; and we speak in Futurism about the different ideas that the Futurists had, and one of them was the expanding surface of the canvas. And here we have actually the expanding surface in action, where the artist started with a canvas which is of good size and found that his subject-matter expanded beyond the limits of his original format, and he had to add something like twelve inches

on one side and nine inches on another side and eleven inches on a third side; and on each side he has added, and these have been sewn together. It's been very carefully done, and I had the picture relined when I got it, so that it's very firm and in a permanent state; but if we examine it closely we can see these seams where the artist had pieced together and added the necessary air and room for the expanding image that he got entangled with. So that it really is a literal presentation of one of their main ideas -- the interpenetration of form, is another, and kinetics, movement, -- but here we're confronted with the expanding form. When I was working on a lecture on the Pollock-Rothko generation, and I was speaking about the expanding image, and why the Americans of that generation used larger and larger format, because of the expanding image, I was reminded of this Boccioni which was done thirty years before, or thirty-five years before, where the actual canvas was not big enough. And I know that the artists of the Pollock generation were confronted with the same idea of needing a larger and larger space in order to create their image.

Speaking of your thought on the Guggenheim Museum and the Mondrian show there, there was one picture that we lent of the analytical cubist period, and it was a beautiful brown picture that was like a masterpiece of Cubism. And coming upon that picture in the exhibition was a terrible shock to me, because we had displayed that picture six months earlier in our show; because it was lighted there with fluorescent light, and it was no longer a brown, analytical cubist picture; it was green. And I was so shocked; the blues in the fluorescent light changed the browns to greens. And the only thought that occurred to me was, "What would Mondrian think if he saw that picture -- green, of all colors, his bête noire." Regretfully, I sold that picture before I had a chance to buy it -- but I never regret having sold things at the Gallery to various collectors and not having bought them myself; I can't buy everything, and selling these great pictures has only helped us; and it's a great advertisement for us to have sold these and to do an exhibition like the "5 Years" and the "10 Years" of great masterpieces that are in other people's hands, and that's perfectly all right.

[* This was during an interruption, remarks made while a phone call was being put through and tape was not running.]

None of my pictures appeared in those exhibitions , the "5 Years of Janis" and the "10 Years of Janis" merely because I was exhibiting at that time paintings that the Gallery had sold, to collectors and not to itself; so Hansi and I were left out of that.

Now, I want to say a couple of things about Gorky, at random. We spent a great deal of time together. I met Gorky in 1929 when he was teaching at the Grand Central Galleries , and working and very much interested, and always full of interesting stories, and a wonderful person to go to exhibitions with because he came up with such inventive discoveries , whether they were only paintings done four hundred years ago, or 150 years ago like Ingres, or Picasso or Cézanne or Seurat, or what have you; but he always had interesting things to say. And when my book on Abstract and Surrealist Art was turned down by one of the authors, for the reason that the work was too difficult, after having seen the photographs, Gorky called a meeting at his studio, of all the artists whose work I had selected. They all came to this meeting; Stuart Davis was there , and many many others, and there was a long evening of discussion and bitter words about critics not seeing the point, and all that sort of thing; and Gorky always used to have the expression that "he misses the point" -- many times he used to talk that way about Hans Hofmann, for example, and say that "Hans Hofmann's pictures are all full of bumps and holes." Well, another publisher became interested and the book proceeded, and I don't believe I've ever mentioned this meeting at Gorky's studio ; but it was a very gratifying thing that they took up the cudgels in defense of the ideas of the book and the work that was in the book , and it gave me renewed encouragement to get another publisher, which happened in the next year; and it was done by Reynal and Hitchcock, who wefe very important at that time. Later, Gorky came to the house many times and admired some of the pictures, and I remember his comment on the douanier Rousseau at the time I bought it. He didn't know that I had bought it, and he came into the house and came upon it as a surprise , and he was really speechless ; and he had to say something

so he said, "I like the bigness of the moon." I don't think he approved of the picture, but I must say this, that when I met Gorky a month before he died (we met on Fifth Avenue, we hadn't been seeing each other because he'd moved to the country , he'd gotten off and really done his most inventive work away from Fifty-Seventh Street, and away from friends like ~~XXX~~ myself, and other artists, and he really found himself when he got away from Picasso and Miró who had him) ; the thing that he said to me when we met on the street was, "I must come and look at your Rousseau again."

Well, this Gorky which is of the years when he was no longer in New York but painting by himself and doing marvelous things , 1945, the painting Pastoral, and it represents Gorky with his new imagery, which for me is quite exciting and ~~XXXX~~ prophetic of what was to come, between '45 and '60.

(HMF: Was Good Hope Road his address?)

(SJ: Yes, Good Hope Road was Connecticut, I believe. You see, he was both at Connecticut and in Virginia; but he did his best work I think in Connecticut. But he worked in both places. He lived in Connecticut not too far from Masson and Calder -- we all know that.)

At any rate, this picture belongs to that period and I'm very happy to have it. And the drawing, which is called Summation , was probably the beginning of the huge drawing Summation now in the Heller Collection . It has the same images in it and the same composition, and I think it's interesting in that it was the stepping stone to probably his most famous drawing.

Speaking about Calder, when he first saw The Artist and the Model by Picasso, he looked at it a long while and then he turned to me and he said, "~~XXXXX~~ "Why did he spoil it by painting that profile in the center of the picture?" So I said, "Calder , that has a very specific meaning for Picasso in relation to the ~~XX~~ making of the picture and the idea of the picture and the sense of the picture." telling him something
"Well, it spoils the picture; it doesn't belong there." So I began t~~XXXXX~~ about it, and he said, "Well, you know, each man to his own." And that's the way I feel about it.

But I always felt that Calder was a kind of a primitive, in that sense; that although he painted and he sculpted and created things in a very sophisticated direction, he was basically a primitive ; and that would be the reaction to XXXXXXX a painting by Picasso by, say, Hirshfield for example. But Hirshfield couldn't go that far, because he probably wouldn't have been able even to recognize the profile . And speaking about Hirshfield and his appreciation of other painters, when he first visited me , he saw the douanier Rousseau's The Dream and he didn't say anything; but a couple of years later, he spoke to me in a very confidential vein; he took my arm and he said, "Janis,you know you have to make a strong showing ." And I said, "Yes?" He said, "Yes; you know that picture that you have with the shrubs." And so I said , "Is it a large picture?" "Yes, it's a large picture." "Is it a Rousseau?" "I don't know the name of the picture, but it has a lot of shrubs and animals in it, and it has a naked lady in it." He said, "Now, that naked lady is swollen, and you have to make a strong showing; let me correct it." I had a difficult time getting out of that! It's nice -- that innocence is nice. But it was really remarkable about Hirshfield, speaking about him, because I did go to museums with him, and he asked me to; and at one time we went to the Brooklyn Museum (he lived in Brooklyn) and he saw an exhibition of paintings by early twentieth-century Americans . And there was a Karfiol nude there , and he said, "But look at this picture, Janis; this girl here -- it's dirty , it needs a bath!" And in that same exhibition there was a very academic type of painting there , realistic and uninspired, a photographic copy, you know, in the photographic vein; and he looked at that picture a long while and he said, "If I could meet this artist, I would shake his hand!" So you see his point of view had nothing to do with what his mind's eye saw; his eye was exposed to the magazine, to the postcard, and the banalities of the late nineteenth century in decoration and what have you; but when he painted a picture, and he looked actually at the subject that he was painting, obviously he didn't see the subject, because the subject was in his mind, with his mind's eye, and that was the thing that was recorded on the canvas and not the picture he was looking at. That was only a sort of a

springboard for these ideas that he had in his own mind.

(HMF: But of course Rousseau always considered himself a realist. The same attitude.)

(SJ: Yes, he was a realist and Cézanne was something else. He once said about a Cézanne, "If he would only let me finish that picture!" The douanier Rousseau said that about a Cézanne. And it's rather interesting that Hirshfield is a wonderful parallel in that he is an artist as original as Rousseau, at another level, ; the douanier's work was poetic and lyric , Hirshfield's is archaic and powerful, so that artistically their results were unalike, but they thought very much alike, and they were both people of the people , they belonged to kind of a common culture , a popular culture, and they saw things more or less alike. And that is the true, untouched Autodidakt. He goes to the museum, he sees these things, and these things can't possibly touch him; he's either too thick-skinned for it or, as I said before, the image is too clear in his own mind , of what he's going to do. And I've heard many of the Autodidakts say, "I have the picture painted in my mind before I sit down to do it." And I think that saves them, thankfully.)

I can't think of anything now other than probably going into the third generation (the Collection covers three generations) and talk for a moment about one or two Pop artists. Now, on the Dine, of which you have only this installation shot, of the New Realists exhibition that was held in '62, at the store that we rented because we didn't have enough space here at the Gallery, these Five Feet of Colorful Tools hanging on hooks along the top of the canvas -- the picture is now in storage, and I think that this photograph will help, how these saws and hammers and screwdrivers have to be attached, and in any event everything is indicated on the picture itself. And I'm saying this simply to be helpful to the person who installs the exhibition, so that he'll know that the directions are there, just in case the artist himself is unable to assist . This photograph will be helpful, and I should imagine that when the piece gets to the Museum, it will be photographed then, and then you'll have a permanent record of how these tools hang; because they cast certain shadows and all the directions are indicated on the painting itself.

Now, the Pastry Case by Claes Oldenburg I purchased at the time that Mrs. Janis was ill and in the hospital. I purchased it out of the Green Gallery exhibition which I think was held in 1961.

(HMF.: Well, this particular one is dated 1962.)

(SJ. Then I bought it in '62. That was the same year we did our show; it must have been earlier in '62.)

It's such a luscious picture and I always sort of drool over it; and when I have little visitors coming to the house, some of them want to be picked up so that they can examine closely these chocolate cookies and ice-cream sundaes and what haveyou; so we get a lot of pleasure -- not only the grandchildren but some of the neighbors express a marked interest in this piece .

And now with the adding of the important Black Vinyl Fan , which is at present at the American Pavilion at Expo '67, I think we will have two great Oldenburgs quite diverse from each other -- one hard and in color, and the other soft and in black ; and I think they will show -- you might say in capsule form, since they're only two of them - a great gamut of imagery in the work of Oldenburg.

The new Wesselman that I've been waiting for for some time , Lips with a Cigarette, is also a new image for Wesselman, and I think it promises some interesting things for his next show, which will follow within a year.

As for the other artists, I think that I should say something about the Segal, the portrait that he's done of me standing before a Mondrian painting on an easel. This Mondrian is the picture that I spoke about before, that I bought on my first trip to Paris , my first Mondrian. And incidentally, I think the second Mondrian to come to America of all the Mondrians in America; I think that Philip Johnson had already acquired a Mondrian of the same year, 1932, this is '33, but the same year that I bought it; he had already acquired a Mondrian, and I think a year or two later he gave that picture to The Museum of Modern Art. So that at this time the MOMA has in its collection, including the Janis Collection, the two first Mondrians to come to America.

N.B. AHB Jr. says not so -- points to Société Anonyme which had one in 1926

This has just occurred to me now. It's amazing when we consider that there are more Mondrians in America than there are ~~[illegible]~~ in all the collections in the world, and probably more Mondrians in New York City than there are in all the collections in the world. Well, there is an exception, and that is in The Hague, but those are early Mondrians ; there are no late Mondrians among them--they're landscapes and certain things of the Cubist period, but in the main they belong to the earlier work.

Now , Segal got the idea that he would like to have me standing in the ~~[illegible]~~ periphery of one of the pictures in the Collection , and we hit upon this picture; and we were thinking about how it would be installed ; and to make the picture of the sitter for the portrait standing arbitrarily in front of the picture -- it could be any picture, done at any time; and he decided ~~[illegible]~~ to tie the whole thing up in such a way that it would be inseparable; so that he ended up by placing my hand on the frame of the picture -- you'll see it as you leave -- it just came in today from his studio -- and the sitter (or the stander, really) is contemplating the picture; so that there is a tie-in between the picture and the sitter ; and there is also, I've just discovered today, because this is the first time I've seen it -- there is a marked rapport between the figure and the painting; and Segal has caught ~~[illegible]~~ that sympathetic rapport. It hit me immediately upon seeing it. Beyond that, it's an interesting thing how he's composed his open spaces and closed spaces, and I think it is a very successful thing. The thing that touches me of course is that it's a Mondrian to which I feel very close, having lived with it since 1933. Of course, it's been lent to many, many exhibitions in the interim; and now it's incorporated in the work of an artist of the third generation. So that is that. Incidentally , Marisol called today and she said that she was working on, of all things, a portrait of me. I don't know what it's going to be like -- I have no idea --

(HMF; It will be like Marisol! We know!)

(S.J.: I'm keeping my fingers crossed; whatever it's going to be, it'll be interesting, I'm sure.)

(HMF: So the portrait is a portrait of you?)

(SJ: Yes.)

Now, there are other things that are in process at various other artists' studios, and it's really too early to talk about them; but while we're on the subject of portraits of myself, Andy Warhol is doing a series of portraits on small, connected canvases --panel canvases -- that will cover the gamut of seventy years of my life beginning at the age of about two or three, or even younger. He has a series of portraits, and he said at one time that he wanted to work out a portrait for each decade, making it seven portraits which would repeat itself; but he has since expressed the desire to have many more than seven, which he repeats probably in many colors or black-and-white, and so forth . So that he is working on that, and he told me just day before yesterday that it will be ready by the end of June. I will be abroad, but I look forward to seeing it when I come back. I hope it doesn't get out of hand in dimensions ; but anyway, for me it sounds like an interesting project. I hope it's as interesting to Warhol; if it is, it'll be a good picture.

(HMF: Which was the first of this generation that you became interested in?)

(SJ.: I think that I bought the Oldenburg first, and then the Dine. And then the others came along.) (Albers spoke -- he's not of the generation we're ~~talking~~ talking about, but he was in yesterday and he spoke about his picture which he calls Broad Call; it's a Homage to the Square , and he was describing the changes that the reds impose upon each other within the composition, and he was very fascinated by it; and he thought that he would, in the legend that he generally places on the back of each picture, that he would include the changes that he has discovered in the reds as they come in contact with other reds; how they become either cold red or warm red; it's still the same red; and how these changes take place due to the shape of the form and to the boundary relationships as one color bounds the next. And speaking about that kind of thing: when we had our Ellsworth Kelly show, and this takes us to the Kelly picture that he is finishing for me, the picture that interested Albers most (and he came here the opening day when Kelly was here)

was the one called Spectrum 2 . (Incidentally, Kelly is finishing Spectrum 3 for the Collection.) And he was pointing out to Kelly how the colors -- and each color within the panel is the same -- it's the same color -- but how that color changed as it came in proximity with another color, so that we got for example a light green changed to a darker green as it approached another color, depending upon after-imagery and certain optical dynamics . When Albers came in he apologized and said, "I can only spend five minutes"; he spent over an hour discussing this color problem with Kelly. Kelly had hit upon it rather unconsciously, whereas Albers over the years has really studied it and refuted the long-accepted theories of Chevreul, who was the great nineteenth-century discoverer of the interaction of color.

(HMF: That will also bring us logically to the other Klein -- Yves KXXRKXX Klein and the monochrome.)

Yes -- well, the Yves Klein monochrome I only bought a few years ago, but I was very fascinated with his blue paintings-- I think he calls them "international blue." At any rate,this picture here was in California, handled in California, and I decided to add it to the Collection when I acquired it. I never met Yves Klein, although he was here in America and had a beautiful show of his monochrome blues at Leo Castelli, eight or nine years ago, and he was here for a couple of weeks at that time; I didn't get to meet him but I know that Hansi did, and Hansi was very much fascinated with his personality and his ideas and his thinking. He was very much interested in jazz , and she was writing her book on jazz at the time with Rudi Blesh, and they got to know each other

(HMF: Alfred says sometimes, "I like extreme positions.")

Well, I would say that that's most extreme; but you know, in looking at that picture in different lights at different times of day, it has a wonderful kind of mystery. The blue is so intense; but it has different penetrations of intensity, and these vary under different lightings ; and I think, that though I never had the picture at home, living with a picture like that one can never say that it's just one color blue,Because it's limitless in its possibilities.

(HMF: That should bring us, possibly, to talk about Rothko.)

Yes , well, Rothko's things, though they had nothing to do with Yves Klein, and vice versa, they had a great deal to do with luminosity; and the very quote moody unquote Rothko that I have -- that's the description the artist gave it -- has in spite of its darkness and its moody quality a great deal of luminosity; and they become sort of walls of light. I know that when we had our two or three Rothko exhibitions at the Gallery, that one felt himself sort of swimming in that light. You got into a small room where we had hung three or four large pictures , and each picture dominated a wall, took up a whole wall. You were walking into an environment there of light, in which the spectator levitated -- he was really bathing in that light.

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Recall that Side 1 is blank.]

INFORMATION FROM SIDNEY JANIS FROM NOTES TAKEN BY HELEN FRANC (SUPPLEMENTING TAPED INTERVI

IN JUNE, 1967)

Schwitters: SJ never knew Schwitters, but on his early trips to London after the war got to know quite well his friend Edith, who had quite acollection of Schwitters, mostly of his English period. Also in 1948-50 he acquired quite a few from Berggruen. Once he went with Bergruen to an auction in Frankfurt; up to then, Schwitters had been selling for about $25 apiece and SJ was willing to go to $50, but the prices went higher; nevertheless he did acquire some at the auction. Afterwards a leading Swiss museum man noted that Janis had been bidding, which the Europeans had not yet begun to do. The Schwitters which SJ did not acquire at auction he bought subsequently from a dealer; over the years, he bought over 200. The six in the Collection were very carefully chosen to indicate what he regarded as the essence of Schwitters' ideas; although Schwitters in some of his late work anticipated Pop developments, SJ did not feel these examples as pure as his earlier style.

The Famiglio he believes he acquired at auction.

Léger: SJ met Léger in Paris in 1928 and visited him yearly. When Léger came to America as an artist in exile, and Janis was working on his article on the School of Paris artists in the U.S. for Decision, he also visited him at his studio in New York, where he had on his walls works dating from '39, on paper, which he had brought with him and which were early studies for the Plongeurs series. Léger's U.S. sojourn served as considerable stimulation to him and this SJ feels is reflected in the Plongeurs . A few years later, Léger moved into Herbert Matter's studio at Tudor City; he was a great chef and had been working for two days or more on a pot-au-feu for a party he gave, but Janis who was among the guests was so distracted by twenty or more huge Léger paintings on the walls he could neither talk nor eat--though nobody else present seemed to notice them! (SJ suggests that Matter may have photos of his studio at the time Léger occupied it and had these paintings hanging there.)

Dali: When he first came to see Illuminated Pleasures in America he said that

he was glad Janis owned it. Over the years, he has frequently interceded personally to have it lent to various exhibitions.

Van Doesburg: Nelly van Doesburg considers SJ's Contre Composition Simultanée one of the artist's best works.

Ernst: SJ acquired Birds from Pegeen Guggenheim about ten years ago in Paris, when she was broke and needed some dollars.

Fahlstrom: This was acquired only a short time ago; it is one of a series.

Kandinsky: SJ bought Lightly Touching many years ago and regards it as one of Kandinsky's most severe and classic works of the 1931 period, in a style which influenced some of the Op artists much later.

Lissitzky: Only remembers that it was very inexpensive when he bought it!

Vasarely: The idea expressed in Capella is one of great interest to SJ -- the juxtaposition of the circle and the square, and different variations which reciprocally induce spatial dynamics.

de Kooning: Each was acquired out of a relevant gallery show; de Kooning said of September Morn, "I think it's my best in the show."

Matta: Acquired Paysage from Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century shortly after it was painted. SJ has always been particularly fond of Matta's early work.

Rosenquist: SJ acquired Marilyn Monroe [illegible] prior to the opening of the Gallery's "New Realists" show in 1962, and Rosenquist was quite incredulous that Janis wanted it; he kept shaking his head and saying, "This is too much."

Still: This was one of two paintings that SJ had marked in his catalogue of the Still show at the Albright-Knox c. 1960; at that time it was not for sale. Later when it was offered to SJ he did not hesitate to get it. Though it is signed "Clifford" which supposedly indicates something about the date, SJ thinks the date of 1944 is "optimistic."

Tobey: In 1942, Tobey had his first one-man show at the Willard Gallery and expressly asked SJ to write the catalogue preface, which he was pleased to do. In that preface, Janis spoke about Tobey's special contribution which he (SJ)

called "white writing"; he thinks this is the first time this term had been mentioned in print. About four months later, Tobey painted this picture for Janis and gave it to him with the title, White Writing.

Torres-Garcia: SJ thinks that the one-man show which he gave Torres-Garcia at the Gallery was the first one-man show of the artist in the U.S. It was entirely of Pinturas Constructivas and t[illegible] the one in the Collection was acquired at that time. He had made all the arrangements with Torres-Garcia, who himself arranged for framing, attended to having the paintings dispatched by shipper from Uruguay, and then died; so that the show which he himself had helped organized turned out to be the artist's memorial exhibition. SJ mentioned Torres-Garcia's friendship with Mondrian and active editing of Cèrcles et Carrées.

July 8 '67

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