**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

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| **INTERVIEW WITH:** | **ALLAN MCCOLLUM (AM)** |
| **INTERVIEWER:** | **CLAIRE DIENES (CD) AND LILIAN TONE (LT)** |
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**BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

CD: I am here with Lilian Tone. We are at the Museum with Allan McCollum. It's December 7th, 1999. I guess I'll start at just the very beginning and ask you to tell us a little bit about your background, where and when you were born.

AM: I was born in Los Angeles, California. My father was from New York. My mother was from Texas and Oklahoma. I grew up in the suburbs of Los Angeles in a town called Redondo Beach and moved to New York in 1975.

CD: Had you come to New York prior. . . as a child, considering . . .

AM: No, I hadn't. I'd come to New York in 1967, I believe, for a short visit. And then I'd been in an art exhibit in 1972 and I'd come that time for that exhibit at the Sidney Janis Gallery. And then I came for the Whitney Biennial in '75. I'd been in that show. Then I moved here in December '75.

CD: Where and when was it that you first became engaged with art and chose to make it the focus of it your life?

AM: Art itself, as a concept? As a discipline?

CD: As a discipline and even maybe just more practically, when did you start making things?

AM: I came from an artistic family. In fact, there were very few people in my family that weren't artists of some kind or another. My father was an actor and a model when

he was a child and he worked on Broadway. My mother was an artist and a singer. She sketched as a hobby. My grandfather, on my mother's side, was a draughtsman and a, kind of, frustrated cartoonist. So, I learned to draw from him and from my uncle who was a television celebrity in the late ‘40's and '50s named Jon Gnagy. And Jon Gnagy had a television show called “Draw With Me.” And it was very, very popular in the '50s. So, I would visit Uncle Jonny and he would teach me drawing techniques and so forth. I never learned very well or very much. But those were my basic teachers, my grandfather, my mother and my uncle.

CD: So, it was definitely encouraged?

AM: It was very much encouraged. Most of my family are musicians but Jon Gnagy's wife was also an illustrator and my other uncle's wife was also an illustrator and had a regular newspaper column where he drew pictures of sea life. He was an oceanographer. His wife was a potter and a painter and did all kinds of artistic crafts. And my other aunt worked in a pottery factory. My cousins were all artists of one sort or another. Mostly musicians. . .

CD: It's in your blood.

AM: But it was in my family. Yes. My grandmother on my father's side was an actress and a singer. . . what do you call it, sort of a jazz singer in nightclubs in New York. I was not encouraged to go into business or anything like that. I was more encouraged to go into the arts. . . something artistic.

CD: Had you pursued any of these other avenues, singing, or do you play an instrument?

AM: I don't. No, I leave that to my brothers and my sister who are all musicians, and my mother and my grandmother who was a piano teacher. And both my aunts taught Spanish guitar. I turned towards more, what they would consider more commercial, you know, which was to become an artist who tried to make a living as a fine artist. And I discussed this with my uncle Jonny who had chosen education and illustration as his career. But he told me, well, he'd hung around with the abstract

artists of the '40s and he was friends with Ben Nicholson, he told me, and he could have made that choice but he decided to choose to educate people, try to raise the confidence of people who didn't think they knew how to draw. So, he went into education and mass media. He was the first. . . one of the very first people on television in the '40s because his show was so simple. It just involved him and a kind of easel with a drawing paper on it. It was a very simple show to produce, inexpensive and, sort of, arresting. What was the question exactly?

CD: When was it that you specifically decided to become an artist?

AM: Oh, yes. I did try to be an actor for a while. I even went so far as to get headshots. I was in high-school plays. All my teenage years I wanted to be a special effects man in the cinema. It was a hobby. I had my own movie camera, which was an eight-millimeter camera and shot little films thinking that one day I would do this as a career. But I think as I learned how demanding emotionally acting was and how demanding technically being a cinematographer was, I moved into something that was a little less stressful. So between my high-school -- I graduated from high-school in 1962 -- and between there I mostly just did a little acting but never for any money. And I then did a lot of odd jobs, working in restaurants--And I traveled to Europe-- And it wasn't until 1967, five years later, that I decided to be an artist. I didn't go to college or art school so my learning was actually. . . . I decided to develop some kind of skill so I went to restaurant management school at a technical school and they also had what you'd call a catering school and a fashion design school and all other kinds of building trades and air conditioning repair and so forth. So, I met a girl in the fashion department in the school cafeteria where I worked and she turned out to be an artist's model who modeled for John Altoon, who was a very well known artist in Los Angeles at the time. And I didn't know who John Altoon was and she explained it to me very quickly and she taught me -- we dated -- she taught me a few things. She taught me about [Robert] Rauschenberg. She taught me about John Cage. She taught me about Vija Celmins and California art.

CD: How did she teach you, through discussions, did you go to museums together, galleries?

AM: Through discussions. And I believe we went to some shows together. She shouldn't have done this but she was too naïve, she took me to her group therapy once, which was a group therapy that Milton Wexler had organized for John Altoon. I don't know why she took me to her group therapy but nobody complained. Apparently, after we left, they all gave her a lot of trouble, like, "Why would you bring a friend to your group therapy?" But in any case I met John Altoon that way and he did erotic drawings and was very popular in the L.A. arts scene at that time. So, I think just because of the interest she developed -- I already was interested in art a little bit, I had been, kind of, a hobby painter and I had taken art classes in high-school and my family had encouraged me but I went on to. . . . I think after learning what I had learned from her and mostly through my interest in Rauschenberg and John Cage, I got very excited about the possibility that I could be an artist and chose that as a career pretty seriously just based on that.

CD: So, the idea of becoming an artist wasn't daunting to you in any way?

AM: Well, I think it had been up until that point. But up until that point what I knew about art and modern art I mostly learned from television and movies. And I have to say, as you probably already know, the movies especially from that period paint a pretty weird picture of what an artist's temperament is. I think up until then I felt that to be an artist you had to be half-crazy and hyper-sexed and like to throw paint all around and like to express yourself in intensity, in throwing things. I don't know what I thought but I figured I'm not that way. I'm sort of premeditated, methodical. I'm more philosophical. I'm more reflective and, you know, I don't have. . . I'm not a good dancer. I'm not a good performer. And I think abstract expressionism involves a kind of performance. It just wasn't in my temperament to be so spontaneous and have all of these thoughts. And they don't teach you that art can also be [about] using a ruler and thinking about something for two years before you do it. There wasn't this kind of conceptual approach to art making at that time, or at least it wasn't represented that way to the public and I had never heard of Duchamp, for instance. So, it wasn't until I discovered John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg who

were all about spontaneity but through chance, not through emotional gushing. And there, I think, as a certain type of person that was very appealing to me because it fit my own philosophical outlook much better than the idea of some sort of a mystical true subject that regurgitated out of your soul as you were painting or something. So that suddenly I realized there was a place in art for people who weren't these other type of wackos. And there really are wackos like that in the art world but I find mostly they're wealthy. No, wait a minute. I don't know why I said that. I don't know why I said that. I mean it's a model that still functions in the art world. Especially in the '80s we saw a lot of artists who became expressionists and played the part of that kind of painter. But I'm very glad to have discovered a train of thought that sort of bypasses this kind of surrender to. . . I don't know. . . to expressionism. So, I think at that point I thought this is something I can do, and I really felt it very seriously and really went towards it in a do or die fashion. Once I decided to do it, it wasn't a hobby, it was what I wanted to do. And that would have been the spring of 1967 somewhere around in there.

CD: And what did you do?

AM: I got a job. Oh, as an artist?

CD: At that time, what did you actually do to become. . .

AM: Well, I started off sequentially falling in love with different artists, you know. And I think Vija Celmins was the one I was most enchanted with at first. And, of course, Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. And then I learn about [Roy] Lichtenstein because, of course, you could learn about him by reading *LIFE* magazine or *Time* magazine. He wasn't unknown in 1967 and I think my first painting was, kind of, a cross between a Roy Lichtenstein and a Vija Celmins. And I think after that I started using chance procedures and imagery. I tore up newspaper to create collages with my eyes closed and then xeroxed them without looking and cut them into little rectangles without looking and painted each one as a painting. That was like the first series I did. It must have been two months after I became an artist. I still have one or two of them. What was the question? There was something else I was going to say.

CD: What did you do. . .

AM: Oh, yes, what were the first things you did?

CD: Or, not necessarily made. . . but how did you promote yourself? What were the next steps you took?

AM: Well, because I hadn't gone to college I felt I was behind. In a very naive way looking back, I think I decided, "Well, if I'm going to be a contemporary artist, maybe I can get by without knowing a lot about art history because if I go back to school and learn technique and art history I'm going to be learning things that were important ten years ago. And if I want to know what's important now maybe I don't need that background, and maybe I should skip that because that will put me so far behind because I'm already twenty-two, and everybody I know my age is out of school already. So maybe I can just read a lot. So, I read a lot. I went to museum shows. The Pasadena Art Museum at that time was very active and they had -- at the time Walter Hopps was Director and then I believe right. . . or no, maybe it was John Coplans at the time -- and he put up some excellent surveys. Well, the one I remember was Lichtenstein at the old Pasadena Art Museum, very influential on me to see his work and. . .

LT: Not the Duchamp retrospective put together by Walter Hopps?

AM: No. I didn't see that. When was that?

LT: I believe in '63.

AM: Well, then I must have just. . . . Must have been before the spring. . . [laughing]. But I didn't see that. I did see the Lichtenstein. And, of course, you know, one of the wonderful things about Lichtenstein is that you can be a non-artist and look at that work and think, "I can do that". And in the same way that I came from my background with Jon Gnagy, I mean, [Andy] Warhol and Lichtenstein for whatever else they were, they certainly weren't hard to imitate. It didn't take a lot of sensual

skill, maybe some technical skill but not a lot of sensual, emotional skill. It was more an art of choosing what to paint than learning how to paint so much. And this suited me as an artist who hadn't studied. There was also the artist Wallace Berman who was influential on me at the time. He was very popular, still is. I mean, he was a very well-known poet and collagist and I guess you would call him Fluxus at this point. I don't think he was, literally, but that kind of an artist, including Ed Kiennholz and Billy Al Bengston. There was a group of artists including probably Vija Celmins. So, he did a lot of works at the time using a Verifax machine. You have to understand that there really weren't photocopiers back then the way there are now. The 3M company had developed a Verifax. It was a inexpensive type of photocopier. I bought one for one hundred and fifty dollars, I believe. It took two sheets, a negative and a positive and the paper was thermal, meaning it was heat sensitive. It wasn't at all based on optics like it is now. So, the photocopies were very fugitive and so forth. Anyway, Wally Berman had bought a photo Verifax machine in the middle '60s, I guess and so I imitated him. I went out and got what was essentially the Verifax machine of that moment. It wasn't Verifax exactly but it was made by the same company. I forget what they called it, 3M. I bought one of those. I used the same technique, the thermal transfer paper. And I started using the photocopier to reduce imagery into black and white. The first time I tried to get any work shown, I put those pictures I told you that I made from a collage I cut up into small parts that I had done with my eyes closed tearing stuff out of a magazine totally imitating a Rauschenberg or Cage -- more Cage than Rauschenberg -- and took them to the movie theater thinking maybe they would show them in the lobby. And it happened to be the movie theater where [Michaelangelo] Antonioni's *Blow-up* had just finished. And I had seen that movie maybe five times thinking I could learn about what it is to have an artist's studio and so forth. It was a very mysterious movie at the time. The manager almost gave me a show. Finally he said, "You know, you should have brought these when *Blow-up* was playing because that would have been perfect." But he said, "But they're not framed." I stood my artistic ground, I said, "They're not supposed to be framed. They are supposed to be literally canvas on wood. They're not supposed to be looking into a window or pictorial space. They're an object. . ." But he wouldn't buy any of these objects, so he turned me down.

And anyway, so I guess the first real positive thing I did was get a job working for an art handling company in West Hollywood. I was living in a trailer at this time in Venice Beach, in a mobile home. My job was to pack art, to store art, to install art in people's homes, to sometimes work with museums on site, to go to collectors, take works to museums, go to dealers, take works to collectors, and vice versa. It was the kind of art handling company that handled contemporary art more than anything.

CD: So, there was a real artistic purpose to this kind of job.

AM: Yes, I knew I would learn a lot. Turned out most of the people that worked there had their MFAs. In fact, the woman who owned the company was related to -- what's her name? Who started the Dwan Gallery -- you don't remember who I'm talking about. . . . Virginia Dwan.

LT: Virginia Dwan.

AM: She was related to Virginia Dwan. So the interest in contemporary art was in her family. So that was what the company favored. So, I met all the dealers, many, many of the curators locally and all the art handlers, of course, and preparators at all the museums and universities shows. Picking up works back then from the artists. . . Ed Ruscha, I remember prominently. Sam Francis. Billy Al Bengston. Actually got to know all of them by sight so they'd say hello to me and so forth at openings. So, that was a lucky smart move to meet people. And I also learned what you don't learn in art school. I learned how the physical side of the museum works. I learned more about how something winds up in a collector's home, what its life is like there. And I got to see the backs of all the paintings. I worked with other artists that went on to. . . . I worked with Barry Le Va, for instance. We were often sidekicks on the trucks. Jack Goldstein worked at this company. I'm trying to think of who else at this time. Many others, Laddie Dill, well known in L.A., at the time, became well known. I can't remember who else right now but people that went on to do other interesting things. I learned a lot about painting. I became interested in Michael Fried and. . . the foremost critic. . .

LT: [Clement] Greenberg. . .

AM: Greenberg, a little bit. I wanted to learn about that, the conflict between the literal and the visual and the pictorial. And I was reading Rosalind Krauss also because she was writing in *ArtForum*. And *ArtForum* magazine was located in Los Angeles at that time. So I might be doing a job for John Coplans and reading an article by him the next. So, I think I have to say he was helpful. He came to visit my studio once and suggested a list of books that I could read and I wrote them all down and I read them all, for instance. So, I learned this way without the help and the hindrance of a mentor artist.

CD: Why did you leave L.A. to come to New York?

AM: Well, I was doing very well in Los Angeles actually. I was living off my work for a few years there in the early '70s. I was showing with Nicholas Wilder and Claire Copley, and they both went out of business. The Pasadena Art Museum closed. There was kind of an economic downturn, a recession. Many galleries closed. Nobody was buying my work. The museums were not open. The museums weren't doing anything for artists of my generation. There was nobody offering any critical response, outside of Peter Plagens, who had very specific views of his own that didn't include anything outside of painting. I think I was moving more and more towards conceptual thinking and philosophical thinking that didn't involve how paint got layered onto a canvas. I got depressed actually and I think I thought, "Well, if I move to New York at least there will be a lot of like-minded people there who think critically and, whether I can sell my work or not, it'll be a more challenging crowd of people." I mean, I remember thinking that, that there'd be more critics there. Because you read in the magazines, you start thinking even the cab drivers in New York are smarter than the artists in Los Angeles. [Laughter]. It's in your head. I mean it's completely not true but you think this. You're overly impressed with New York. So, I rented a truck and I gave up my studio and I moved all my work. And I went around to all the galleries I had worked with at the art handling company, which was called Cart and Crate and I picked up art from Margo Levin and Nicholas Wilder and Larry Gagosian, and a number of other galleries in Los Angeles at the time. And it paid for the truck and I moved to New York for free,

essentially. Then I went and delivered all this artwork to [Leo] Castelli Gallery and other major galleries here. And what happened was when I made the delivery to Castelli, there was a man there named Brad Gillaugh and he was the head of operations at shipping and installations and so forth there. And I think he was very impressed because what I was taking to Castelli was something somebody had given to Castelli that was not even solicited and somehow it wound up with Nick Wilder and he said, "I have had this thing here for months. Could you please take it to Leo?" I think it was just his sweet way of paying me fifty dollars to do something and helping me out. The gallery was, kind of, laughing at me that I had spent such care taking this fake kachina doll, or whatever it was, that somebody had given me. Some of the gesso had come off and I had put it in a little envelope, taken very good care, dated it. . . . And I don't know what else [laughing]. They were so impressed that I had done that on such a silly thing that he offered me. . . . He said, "If you ever or need a job, give me a call." I didn't, but I continued to know him for a while. Eventually in 1979 I did call him and got a job there. Before that I worked at another art handling company in Brooklyn and I met a lot of artists the same way. I met some of the dealers that way. A lot of them I knew already from my own career. So, I wound up working at a lot of different institutions. I worked as a guard for the Whitney Museum. . .

LT: Before you worked here?

AM: Yes. And I worked at the Asia Society for a little bit. And I did a lot of work at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum. . .

CD: Doing. . .

AM: Doing registration, technical condition reports and packing.

LT: But not at the Whitney.

AM: No, at the Cooper-Hewitt. At the Whitney I was just a guard. But I also worked on and off at the Queens Museum doing preparations. And I built crates because I knew how to do that. So, I remember I built some crates once for Paula Cooper

and I'm thinking back to all the things I did. I worked the Voilà bakeries for three or four months. So, I learned a little about the New York art world in the same way although I knew much more about it to begin with. And I didn't get a show of my own until 1980.

CD: Do you remember your first visit to this museum?

AM: I'm afraid I don't. I know I must have come here in '67 and I have to say I associated the MoMA with a, kind of. . . with the '40s, in my mind, the '30s. The '20s, the '30s, the '40s. I missed the *Information* show, for instance, I really wished that I had seen that. But outside of that I never felt there was anything there that was contemporary. And I think I was much more focused on seeing contemporary exhibits. And I lived way downtown. I wasn't like some artists that memorized every room and what was in there. I wasn't like that. Brad used to work at the Modern and he would tell me about it. Brad at Castelli was the packing and shipping. . . no, was packing, shipping and registrar at the Modern for all foreign loans during the early '70s. So, he told me a little about it, I remember. Also, you won't believe how poor I was. Just the idea of paying money to go into a museum was one of the things I, kind of. . . to see work that was, I guess in my mind, outdated. And I lived in Soho, so there were plenty of galleries growing up around me all the time. Honestly, I didn't visit the Museum very often and if I did I don't remember them ever doing a show of an artist I was really wild about or excited by, in which case I would have come.

CD: How did you come to work here then? Was that just another round on your. . .

AM: They called me. I think Eloise Ricciardelli called me up and said, "We're looking for part time. . ." You know they were going to do the Picasso show, the Picasso retrospective in 1980 and they were looking for additional preparators to help their own staff. And I was, I think, recommended by the Cooper-Hewitt and also by the Asia Society. So, they called me and invited me to come work.

LT: So, what was the chronology of the institutions you worked for? You worked for the Whitney first?

AM: When I came to New York I think my first job was working for the bakery. . . in 1976. Then they discontinued their Danish pastry line.

CD: [Laughter]. So, you quit.

AM: No, they had to lay me off. They continued to make fantastic croissants. That's what they are known for. They are very well known now. At the time they just started.

CD: What is the name of the bakery?

AM: Voilà. All the deli's have them. They are made with butter. And so, I have to say I had a number of jobs working in industrial kitchens. I spent two years working at Trans World Airlines doing all the meals you eat on the airplane. That was while I was learning to become an artist. I was also working at TWA in the industrial kitchen. I had studied that in school. Okay, so then the Whitney, I believe, was after the bakery had closed. Then that was only six weeks for the [Alexander] Calder exhibit. I was hired as adjunct.

LT: So, these were all temporary jobs.

AM: This one was.

LT: None of them were permanent.

AM: Well, no I was never a full. . . . I mean at the Cooper-Hewitt museum, which came after the. . . Well, let's see, you asked a specific question, let me answer it. After I was a guard at the Whitney, I went to the art handling company, which was the same name, it was still managed by the same people but they had a small fairly dysfunctional space out in Queens that never took off but I tried working for them. And that's where I met Robert Coates, by the way, working at that site. So, Robert Coates wound up working here, as the head preparator for the Architecture and Design company [sic Department]. Then after that I started working at the Cooper-

Hewitt fairly regularly and I became actually -- what are they called? -- a full-time intermittent. I don't know what they called it. I mean I was the regular intermittent. So, they always called me and a few other people. So, we worked there for two years maybe. But whenever they needed people I was the one they called. I was a Smithsonian employee. But the Smithsonian loves to use part-time people.

LT: That was art handling too?

AM: That was art handling. Well, what you have in an architecture and design museum. Mostly though I was not a preparator, I was attached to registration. So, we did unpacking and packing and condition reports. It was very extensive because sometimes we would have condition reports. I remember one time my task was to look at nine hundred different pencils to see if there was any damage when they came in and then if they'd been damaged when they went out. Nine hundred pencils. And there were all kinds of jobs with huge quantities of beads, bracelets. . . . And I had a box which must have had ten thousand bracelets in it all from India, and I had to look at each one and count how many were broken. It was ridiculous but as with most museums and especially working for a professional [one] like the museum. . . like the Cooper-Hewitt, working for Bernice Rose –- not Bernice Rose, what was her name? Well, I used to work for Betty Beaumont who used to work here. She had been a Registrar, Acting Registrar, for a number of years in the Registrar in the '70s. Then she went to the Cooper-Hewitt. I learned a lot of my art handling techniques from her, which she had learned at the Modern. Then Cornelia Rose came from the Victoria and Albert [Museum] in London and I worked under her and learned a lot. In order to be able to make sure they can get loans, of course, they work really hard, just like the Modern does, to return things in better shape than when they came in. It's quite an ordeal because sometimes it seems so unnecessary but it's partly promoting the museum and giving the museum a good reputation for handling things well. Because once you lose that, you don't get loans. And this became our responsibility, to make sure that everything went out better than when it came in. You know, the packaging. . .

CD: And it was the same situation here?

AM: It was the same situation here. Exactly. And I think that's why they called the Cooper-Hewitt to look for part-time preparators. After I did the temporary thing at the Modern, I went on to work at the Cooper-Hewitt another few years. Until around '85 I worked there as a regular intermittent.

CD: How long were you here then? Just a few months?

AM: Not even that. Maybe six or seven weeks?

CD: Were you working directly for Eloise?

AM: Let's see. . . . I guess I must have been. I mean, Eloise must have been the one who hired me but she also hired. . . . But I was, of course, a preparator, and I don't know that Registration takes. . . . I mean, I don't think I was hired exactly as a preparator. I think I was more like a registration technician but I worked all day with the preparators. So, I never was quite clear on how everything got subdivided in the Museum. I remember I was not allowed to pound a nail in the wall, for instance, because of union rules. And the one time they wanted me to help Robby [Gilbert Robinson] hang a painting, you know, the preparator, I had to get permission from the union. I had to sign a contract. It all happened in about fifteen minutes but I had to go through this just to walk across the room to hold a painting so Robby could pound in a nail. That was really a large part of my experience, seeing how divided things were in a large professional museum. It was something I had never been aware of before. I'm sorry, what was the question you asked?

CD: Oh, well, I was asking about Eloise. . .

AM: Oh yes. I worked with Eloise but I was attached to the preparators which were run, at that time, by a man named Peter McIntyre. I remember especially Harvey [Tulcensky] and Al, who's not here anymore. Harvey is.

CD: Al?

AM: Al Tate –- no, not Al Tate [Albert Steventon?]. He's not here anymore. He was old at the time but I really liked him. But who I related to most were the other part-time preparators that were hired at the same time. I remember there was a woman and I don't remember her name, a bleach blond, a great woman [Maureen Duffy or Eleanor Belich?]. She was in charge of packing and shipping. And this job turned out to be a very dramatic job and that's why it is so impressive. It was an international exhibit meaning. . . . It was a retrospective for Picasso. So, that involved bringing art works from around the world and that included behind the Iron Curtain. So, what we did even had political implications. There was even fear of sabotage. There was fear of who knows what. The insurance values were extremely high. So, they had hired a man just to oversee the operation as if it were like a military operation. So, we all answered to him. And I wish I could remember his name because he was the boyfriend of a girl that had been in the John Altoon group therapy session. This man's girlfriend had been in that therapy session! Janis was her name. I don't want to say her last name. And she talked about him. Not anything deep but I remember that I knew a little about him. So, when I met him I recognized his name. He was a great guy but very serious. And the reason he had to be so serious about this was the political risks, borrowing works of art from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the high amount of money involved and the high demands of the international insurance policies and so forth. We worked, all of us including the regular staff, we worked around the clock often because it was. . . . Not only was it unpredictable when things were going to arrive but also because it was just. . . the whole –- what do you call it? I want to call it a caper but it wasn't a caper –- it was like a military operation. It was necessary to keep people guessing when things were going to arrive because the insurance values were in the millions and millions of dollars. So, there was a certain amount of subterfuge –- what's the word? –- secrecy involved in when things were going to arrive. And, for instance, there would be two trucks sent to the airport and then they would make it unclear which truck the painting was on, and the two trucks would come different routes to the Modern. One would arrive with nothing in it and one would arrive with the painting it. We weren't. . .

LT: And you never knew when to expect it?

AM: And we never knew when to expect it. I remember Pete McIntyre and a number of the other permanent staff sleeping here at night. Pete had a sleeping bag. They would undress and sleep down there in the room. It was all kind of exciting and thrilling and then there would be guards with guns and people hanging around when all the work was unpacked. Actually working as a registration technician, I was very serious. It was during this period when the press was paying. . . you know, the show was being highly promoted. It was a big show. And so, the press office was constantly bringing dignitaries from all over different countries to meet William Rubin, to watch the unpacking. The newspaper would bring cameras to watch us take things out of crates. I remember at the time I refused to work with the camera on because it would make me so nervous. I was afraid I was going to drop something. So, I remember that being really annoying when the press people came out to. . . . I was very scared I was going to break something. So, I stayed out of all the pictures. Some of the preparators loved being in the pictures. I remember I met some interesting people that became life-long friends actually during this period.

CD: Were there other artists?

AM: Other artists, yes. I met Tom Lawson, for instance. Tom Lawson, at the time, had just started publishing a magazine called *Real Life*. He was kind of a spokesperson. . . . He was a Scottish artist who had come to New York in ’75 or 6 or something. He had become a kind of spokesperson for a certain generation of artists at that time, that you know of as the ‘80s artists now. He was good friends with Sherrie Levine at the time, Robert Longo and a group of artists that wound up being the Metro Pictures Gallery where Tom also showed. Before that he had written about them. He was writing for *ArtForum* at the time and he also had been friends with Helene Winer, now the Director of Metro Pictures. At the time she was director of Artists’ Space. So, Tom had curated a show there of Scottish artists and he was just a wonderful, wonderful man, and still is. He is now the Dean of Cal Arts and he was publishing his magazine in what would be the first time you’d see anything written about certain artists very often. Sherrie Levine had done the cover in 1979. First article anyone had written about Mike Kelly, for instance. I published an article there in 1980. And this is what happened working with Tom at the Modern. I met him. I told him I’d been writing an article on Matt Mullican. I had been

working on it for two years. I didn't know why. I just loved his work. I'm not a writer but I thought someone needed to write an article about Matt Mullican. Nobody knew who he was at the time –- I mean, the public. So, I made the mistake of mentioning this. . .

**END TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

AM: So, anyway I had this article that was sort of half finished and while I was working at the Museum, Tom said, "You've got to finish it for the magazine and I'll put it in the magazine." And I didn't take him seriously but he would call me and say, "Listen, the deadline. . .", and "You've got to get it done." He acted like I'd agreed when I hadn't. That was the way he was. I finally finished the article and it did get published.

Who else worked here at the time? Valerie Smith who became friends with Tom also and friends with me. She wound up being a curator eventually at Artists' Space. Now she is married with two kids. She's married to Matt Mullican. So it was a little crowd. And I'd known Sherrie Levine and Louise Lawler. I'd had a number of friends but I didn't know Tom and I didn't know he'd been writing about some of these artists. So that was a major event for me to become friends with Tom Lawson, an important thinker I still think. And we're still friends. We did an interview and a book together later. So, that came out of working here. Also, Pete Omlor was one of the temps that came along. I had known Pete since 1979 because I had a job coordinating a project for Jennifer Bartlett one time as a free lance art handler and Pete worked with me on that project. And we'd also worked together at Cart and Crate a little bit in Queens. Did I mention that I worked at the Queens Museum?

LT: No.

AM: Yes, I worked at the Queens Museum as a sort of regular temp also somewhere in there.

CD: Did you enjoy that kind of work?

AM: Oh, yes, I did. I enjoyed it because I learned and because it influenced my work. I think my work was becoming more and more about the display of art and about the art object as an object that is exchanged from one place to another. I was becoming influenced by Daniel Buren quite a lot and Mike Asher and other artists whose work was kind of about how the art world achieved its authority in choosing what art gets shown where and how. I became interested in these kinds of things. So, in '76, '77 I developed this path with my own work and I had become friends with Louise Lawler and I think through her I met a number of people like Craig Owens and Douglas Crimp and Sherrie Levine and a few others that I'm not thinking of right now. We were kind of a group because Louise had worked at Castelli and I had done a lot of part-time work for Castelli doing installations too. And Janelle Reiring worked as Registrar at Castelli and I worked for them and I worked partly for her. So she wound up being Helene's partner. I'd known Helene from Los Angeles. She's from L.A., so, there was a logic to these people in my experience. And Tom was in addition to that and Valerie whom I met here. I worked with Pete a couple of times so I know we wound up working together, and he's still here. He was wonderful to work with. And then Bob Coates with whom I'd worked at Cart and Crate in Queens wound up here in Architecture and Design. So, I had lunch with him often during that period and because we were working around the clock and there were hours would go by where we would do nothing. It was really fun. It was like telling stories. I remember Tom, one time, and some other staff member, took off and went to see a movie during work hours and I'm thinking, "There's a Picasso big delivery that's going to come", but, of course, nothing came and they went off to see a movie. I remember that. It was very relaxed because everyone was overstressed and overtired as can be. But this was more, I think, more stressful than usual. I mean not only were you worrying about the design of the exhibit. I mean William Rubin, who I gained a lot of respect for. . . was. . . I can't imagine him not being under incredible stress. It was as if the entire world was watching what he was doing. And also here was Dominique Bozo, who was Director –- he's not living anymore –- he was Director of the Picasso Museum in Paris. What a wonderful guy. And he worked with us all along. Part of our job was

helping William Rubin by holding paintings up. And he'd say, "Higher. Higher. Lower. Lower." This kind of thing that preparators do. And then we would have to watch this happen. I can't remember exactly but we had to take them out of the crate and give them to the people that did that. But we would always have to stand around. So, Bill Rubin. . . . We not only learned about how intensely skilled he was at exhibition design, which I really was impressed with, and how much he thought about it and how much energy and seriousness he put into it, but also what a great, what an intellectual he was, what a historian he was. I think this is really lucky in my life: we weren't there for him to lecture to, we were there to help him but what happened because it was such a famous show, was that these people –- I don't know who they were, dignitaries, curators, patrons board members –- [were] always showing up and he would do a little talk about whatever was going on in that room that we were working in. And, so, just working with him I must have heard him do about ten little mini lectures on Picasso. I have to say that before I started doing this job I had sort of thought of this Museum as the Picasso museum, and I kind of felt even critical of the Museum in that sense because I. . . I remember joking. . . I remember when they called and asked me and said they were doing a Picasso retrospective, I remember laughing, thinking, "Oh, another Picasso exhibit." And I remember thinking the Museum should be laid out like: "Before Picasso", "Picasso", "After Picasso", "Like Picasso", "Unlike Piasso", "Sort of like Picasso". The Museum seemed so focused on Picasso that it had become a bore. And there were so many other historical lines you could follow to cover the twentieth- century. But this Museum seemed so focused on that. So, I was very derisive in my mind about the Museum's mission because it seemed to be just to make Picasso as famous as possible, and those who imitated him and those who were influenced by him. But when I got here, I just have to say being led around, following William Rubin and listening to him talk, I learned quite a lot. And I remember feeling very differently after the exhibit, feeling much more much symp. . . . much more understanding why he was important, in what way he was important and I developed a. . . . I continued thinking about him for a long time after that. It didn't change my opinions about the overstressing of Picasso but I did learn more about what was important about him and how fantastic he was. Because the show, it covered everything and he wound up talking about everything. And sometimes he would give us talks too. Or he and Dominique would discuss things and you'd

overhear all this. So, it was a great experience. If I had been an art historian, what a great experience it would have been, but it was for me too. So, it did influence me. It did teach me. Because I hadn't been to school I felt privileged. . . and overworked. We all felt overworked, especially the full-time staff. We came and went but they were the ones who were getting all the overtime, of course, but that involved really spending the night here so many times. I think Mr. Oldenburg, Richard Oldenburg. He was around. . .

We saw him a lot. I remember at one point, and this was sort of silly in a way but sweet in another, he invited all the preparators and registrars and everybody who had been working on the show down somewhere to the basement or some room I can't remember, maybe the auditorium, and he had stacks and stacks of the new catalogues –- they had just arrived --, and he gave us all catalogues and he gave these long lectures about. . . . You know how the Modern gives these lectures like, you feel like you're involved in something so important, the way they do that. He made us feel like we were really involved. The first real, the first major this and that. Got us all riled up. I remember him saying, "You can say looking back years later we. . . I was there." I remember him saying that [laughing]. Kind of Churchillian.

CD: Did he have any sort of reputation among the staff?

AM: I wasn't here enough to know about that. I remember thinking he was very appealing, an attractive, generous looking man. My impression was that he was very aristocratic in the best possible way, and generous of spirit. That was my impression. I don't know if it's true or not. I was, of course, impressed that he was related to Claes Oldenburg, and always wondered, well, what kind of family was that. Did they help each other in their careers, I wondered. I remember that was very strange to me. I remember feeling that both he and Claes Oldenburg had a funny connection. But also William and Larry Rubin. I remember thinking, "It's so funny that these related people, they covered the dealers, the artists, the director, and the curator." These four people that were all related thinking. . . I mean, I was always very curious as to how things happen, who paid for what, who's in charge, whose interests are being favored or privileged over others, what kind of elitist

activity is going on. It really did seem odd that all these people were brothers. It did seem like an old boy system somehow operating that I didn't really -– not old boy, what do they call it? Anyway, there was something going on that I wasn't sure was totally correct. But nobody ever said that it wasn't. But it did seem odd to me as a, kind of, worker, artist thinking, "How did everything get so tied up between these four brothers?" I'm right, right? I mean, this was the way it was at the time. It doesn't seem that way now. It's not that way now. But there was that then. I was aware of that. Never knew what to make of it. Nobody ever explained to me what I should make of it.

But at the Cooper-Hewitt, I was, sort of, shocked often about the influence of museum board members or museum directors and on what gets shown and on how much of that influence is personal. And I think the Modern is probably known for being. . . for functioning this way less than any of the other museums. But I had some interesting experiences. One at the Whitney. A dealer, an art dealer, a private dealer who had bought some of my work in the early '70s tried to, coincidentally, offered to give it to the museum, the Whitney Museum, while I happened to be a guard there. So, I walked down to the basement for lunch or something one day and there was one of my paintings on the floor, rolled up. And I saw it, recognized it and I went to somebody, one of the curators I think I knew, Barbara Haskell or someone, because we were from L.A., and I said, "What's that doing there, my painting?" She said, "Well, you know, Jason McCoy, this art dealer he's trying to give it to the museum." And I said, "Oh, great." She was kind enough to get together Patterson [Sims] and herself, and I don't know who the other one would have been. . . Richard Armstrong. Anyway, three curators came to my studio to look at my other work to help them decide whether this piece should be in the collection. And at a certain point while I was a guard, they said, "Well, your work's in the collection. That's great. We've decided that it's being acquired." So, when the job was up, because it was a temp job, one of the guards had retired and I went to the employment department -- what do you call it, the person that does the hiring?

CD: Personnel?

AM: Personnel. And I said, “Can I apply for that job?” And she said, “Oh, I’m sorry, you can’t.” And I said, “Well, why not?” She said, “Well, the museum owns one of your paintings.” And I said, “What does that have to do with anything?” She said, “Well, the rules are that we don’t acquire works by employees of the museum because if we do then all the employees get jealous and they want their works. . .” All the preparators and all the guards and all this, and all the curators, whatever, would be wanting their works in the collection. So, I lost the job, basically. She said, “You have to decide. If you want to be in the Museum, that’s good for your career.” It turned out six months later they sent the work back to me, by mistake, because they didn’t want it after all. So, I lost the job for no reason in the end. And I remember thinking well, goddamn, the President. . . . This show, the Calder exhibit that I was guarding. . . almost seventy-five percent of the works were owned by the President of the Whitney Museum and I’m sure all the rest was owned by her friends and so forth. I remember feeling that class distinctions were so clear and the inequality of the staff to the. . . . I guess that’s normal but I don’t think I’d really seen it functioning in a really concrete way until that moment. And then when I worked at the Cooper-Hewitt, I remember there were objects we did condition reports on that were only in the collection because they belonged to some certain well-known financier or some well-known business person or political person. I remember the wedding dress of the Governor was in there and I remember everyone saying, “Nobody wanted it but it was the Governor’s wife’s and we had to say yes.” And I realized this goes on in all museums. You wind up taking things because you are going to get something else or because the person can do you political favors or whatever. I remember the curator there at the time. She was putting together a wonderful show called “Patent Models” and they were models. . . . People who had made patents had turned in models of their machines to the patent office. And the Smithsonian owned thousands of the models and they did a show based on the Smithsonian’s storage. But her grandfather had invented something and she made a very special, huge kiosk in the lobby focusing on just her grandfather’s invention. I mean, nobody else got 1/20$^{th}$ of the space her grandfather did. So, I’m thinking. . . I came to the Modern, sort of expecting this kind –- I don’t know if it’s corruption but it’s definitely a kind of nepotism or something. . .

LT: Conflict of interest?

AM: Yes. And I remember that's why I would notice, "Wow, there's the art dealer whose brother is the director, who's the head curator and the director's brother is the artist. . . ." I remember wondering about that but seeing no real evidence of that. In fact, what I really loved about working here was that there didn't seem to be a whole lot of snobbery I had experienced like at the Cooper-Hewitt, for instance. The curators there were furious when something changed physically in the building and preparators and the registrar wound up having lunch in the same lunchroom as the curators. They were furious and they protested. And I remember the curators wouldn't get on the same elevator with us. I remember at the Whitney, the guards ate in the dressing room. So, you might be eating there next to a naked man shaving. The curators had their own special little room for eating lunch. I remember here, thinking, "My God, everybody eats in the same room." The feeling was so democratic, so open and so willing to listen. It was a very different, wonderful experience in that sense. So, I think some of my suspicions about museums were a little bit diffused working here. But at the same time, the division of the Museum into different departments was sort of horrifying, realizing how you couldn't do anything until a certain union person came over. The electrician had to get permission to do this, that we're half the time standing around for some union spokesperson to sign off on something happening before it could happen. There were all these different departments that competed with each other in terms of whose. . . . If you swept they'd say, "Put down the broom. That's not your job." I'd want to sweep between opening each crate to get the foam beads out of the way. But you can't do that. That was strange to me.

LT: Was this less about departmental divisions than unions?

AM: Well, I think my understanding about departmental divisions was involved too because there was always waiting for somebody because people there weren't allowed. . . . I don't remember any specific cases. I remember, of course, I've had experiences since then where there were always stories about this. I remember when I've shown here in group shows I've been aware of that, having to find out that the curator cannot touch the light switch or adjust the lights, and the people

who hang the work can't adjust the lights and the people who adjust the lights can't pick up a broom and the people who pick up a broom can't move your crate. . . . This was quite a distinctive. . . . In my experiences working in rather small museums this wasn't such an issue. I mean it wasn't a big issue at the Cooper-Hewitt if I picked up a broom even though I wasn't in the union, the janitor's union, or whatever they have there. It was more practical in the sense of, "Let's just get the job done." Here it seemed very. . .

CD: It hindered. . .

AM: Oh, totally. I think people wound up being paid in those few weeks, probably thousands of dollars just to stand there and wait for some Museum person to go get permissions from some other department. "Can we take this frame off and put another frame on?" That, of course, I learned too here, working here. The Modern has, you know, probably rules about how to show works. A drawing comes in. It's taken out of its original frame and put in a special frame.

LT: Not necessarily.

AM: Almost. . . Well, the way we were explained it happened so often. A lot of this involved. . . . Yes! You're shaking your head.

LT: No, that's not my experience.

AM: Well, maybe it was. . .

LT: But maybe it was then. . .

AM: . . .different generations. It was nineteen years ago.

LT: Yes, it was.

AM: You know they have different frames for every department. The photography frames are white, I think The Drawings Department is waxed walnut. The Graphics

Department is something else. That MoMA look, the molding that goes around, everything lost its history. It just, sort of, became suspended in modernist space when it came into the Museum. That was the way it seemed to me and there were very few examples where collectors really demanded the frames stay on. I think. . . I admired them: that was the frame it came in, that was the frame it was put in in the gallery when I got it in 1945. I want it to be in that frame. But this was very, very common then. Ask people because I'm not just making this up. Things being re-framed was also a big issue. When things would come in they would be framed or re-framed and really some of them. . . .

I mean I remember the frame that came in from Czechoslovakia was so elaborate and had an extremely elaborate security system on the back with all these wires and plugs and little switches and things. And because that's the way it had been installed, they wouldn't let the Museum touch it. I remember that. So, you'd have this strange, big, gaudy, frame. So, they had to respect the collectors' wishes but they were, the Museum was, very adamant about this from what I observed and what I was told. So, that was odd to me. I remember thinking that in their desire to create neutrality, so that you'd look at the work in an almost ahistorical way, that they had, sort of, removed a sense of place, a sense of time, at the same time. I remember feeling: I don't know what the answer is, but I don't know if that's the right way to look at art. But there was this interest in this, sort of, timelessness of modern art and especially pushed by the Modern in its installation habits and its design and its making all the frames neutral which, I thought, was [a] very distinctive tradition. You haven't run into that in anything. . . This was my impression as the person who was unpacking things because the first thing –- the decision that had to be made at that point [was]: we got to measure it and make a frame. And that's all. So, my recollection was that this was more often the case than not. Maybe it's changed.

CD: Did you go and see the Picasso show after it opened?

AM: Oh, yes. I took my mother and went and saw it a couple of times. I did really enjoy it.

CD: Were you enjoying the Picasso's as they were coming in?

AM: Oh yes, especially since they were coming with this kind of history lecture along at the same time. And I hadn't known the breadth of this man's career and talent. When you see a retrospective it can really change the way you look at an artist's work. It was a very educational exhibit. But maybe it's sometimes more fun while you're installing. You learn more in a way. I think I learned more than if I had just come in as a viewer because there were all these experts standing around, talking about: "Oh, yes, that was when this girlfriend was so-and-so, and he had just showed at such-and-such and he lived. . . and the critics said this and this and this." They were gossiping, Dominique and Rubin and others.

CD: Is there anything else you can say about Eloise Ricciardelli or any of the other Museum staff members you were working with or around?

AM: I think Eloise walked to work from the teens or something. Walked way up town. Do you know where she lived?

LT: She lived on 16th street.

AM: She walked to work. I remember that.

LT: She walked to work, back and forth, because she said it was the only exercise she got.

AM: The only exercise she got. I really liked Eloise. But I remember, boy, how tough she was. Nothing else could be on the elevator when there was a painting on there. I remember her getting really mad, not really mad but very forceful when she caught someone from the restaurant with a. . .

LT: Tray?

AM: . . . a tray of something from the kitchen. And somebody had a painting [laughing]. Everything stopped. And she gave this long lecture and hauled out the people on

the elevator. I remember that. I was impressed with Eloise. I remember there were these two. . . I remember this as a new experience for me. There were these two interns and the woman who was in charge of packing and shipping -– no, not packing, she was in charge of directing trucks, what do you call that? –- dispatching. She was given these two interns. And she explained to us, I don't know if it's true but she said these two kids, they were around twenty years old, didn't know how to do anything but we had to hire them because they were the children of a donor or something like this. I remember they were the two snootiest human beings I had ever met in my life. And they were supposed to help. And they apparently thought this was the lowest thing they could be asked to do, to do physical labor in the basement. They probably thought they were going to be going through the archives and serving coffee to. . . . I don't know what they thought they were here for. They were stupid and rude. I just remember the first time I ever actually saw somebody turn their nose up at me. Literally, like the expression, when they say, "Someone turns their nose up." And I spoke to the girl, this blond, wispy, waspish girl, and she literally turned her nose up and turned her head to the side and didn't answer my question. I had never seen anyone do that in my life. And that did remind me of working at other museums where you often were working with curators who grew up on 5th Avenue and in four years they went to some local college and learned about art and then came back to 5th Avenue and that's all they knew about the world. And this was often my impression. And these two were like that. But, boy, I didn't feel that way about Eloise or anybody else. Even the curators at the Museum seemed like they were in the real world. And I didn't feel that way at the other museums always. So, it was a great experience actually.

I came to the Museum with a little bit of hostility, I have to say because, part of it was, my uncle who I mentioned who was on television, Jon Gnagy. He taught a way to draw that he had learned from [Paul] Cézanne, he said, where everything was based on rods, cones, cubes and spheres. His goal was to teach people who didn't think they could draw that they could draw if they used this system. So, he would say, "People say 'I can't draw' because they can't draw a straight line" and then he'd say, "Well, I can't draw a straight line and I consider myself an artist. When I want to draw a straight line, I use a ruler." He would talk like this. So, he

had this system. One day at some point, The Museum of Modern Art Education Department wrote a letter to *The New York Times* putting down my uncle for his teaching system, who was on T.V., just saying, "This kind of rigidity in teaching just teaches people to do landscapes and dog portraits." They were right about that but they made fun of him in the press. And he had to write back an equally churlish letter about that he was there not to teach people how to be. . . that they learn that on their own but I want to teach them how to draw. And he was very angry and hurt by this. That experience in my family. . . . I did have a kind of attitude about The Museum of Modern Art's idea of free expression and kind of promoting a certain way of looking at art that didn't involve a ruler [laughing], and that didn't involve education, and that didn't involve the working class and the common people who might want to learn to draw a barn and a tree. That attitude was in my mind at the same time, too.

CD: Did you take advantage of any of the services that the Museum had to offer, like the Education center or the Library, the films?

AM: No, I don't think I did. I remember there being a great show I saw –- you asked me what shows influenced me. I did see a show in the early '80s of Ray Harryhausen, the special effects animator, of whom I had been a fan since the early '50s and I had written my high-school term paper on his special effects and three-dimensional animation. And they had a wonderful show of his models in the theater lobby. I don't think that was when I was working here though. But I remember. . .

LT: It was '81.

AM: It was '81. I was so happy to see that kind of art being shown here, something to do with media and something that related to me as a child. Outside of that I have to say there was no one single show that bowled me over except the Picasso show because I learned from that but I don't think. . . I was very thrilled at the Sol LeWitt exhibit. When was that?

LT: In 1978.

AM: And I was happy to see the Richard Serra exhibit [1986]. I mean these were contemporary artists showing and that's what I was interested in. It isn't that the strain of modernism that the Museum collects doesn't interest me, it's just that I feel like I'm being pressured into being more interested in it than I should be. I think there's pressure in this Museum to appreciate a certain line of artists, and a certain theory of history. And it's quite readable as pressure and you feel it. And I don't think it's so much anymore that way but it certainly was back then. So, there was a little resistance, yes, I think, to coming to all the exhibits because of the pressure, that kind of moral authority that I didn't like. Seeing the Richard Serra show and the Sol LeWitt show really was . . . And I did come see the Robert Ryman, for instance. I mean, I did come see these kinds of exhibits. I kind of skipped a lot of others.

LT: Joseph Cornell was in 1980 as well.

AM: Oh, yes? I don't remember that.

LT: Do you have anything else?

CD: Well, maybe. I have questions regarding "Museum as Muse" but I don't know if you wanted to ask anything before we move on to. . .

LT: I thought about asking about exhibitions that you were included [in] here. Like Bernice Rose's show of contemporary drawings, *Allegories of Modernism* [1992].

AM: I enjoyed that show a lot. It was a survey show of the early '80s. It was the first show I had ever been invited to in the Modern. I'd had work purchased by the Modern. But this was the first time I was in a specific. . .

LT: The *40 Plaster Surrogates* had been already acquired.

AM: Yes, they had been acquired I don't remember when but before. So, I often wound up in the permanent collection room. I remember it was nice the Museum sends you a little notice saying your work is up. I don't know if they do that anymore.

LT: Yes, they do.

AM: They do that? It's so great. I remember getting a little note saying your work is installed right now so you can come see it. So, I did once or twice. I can't remember the year of that acquisition but it was Kynaston [McShine]. . . And Linda Shearer, was the one I worked with on that.

LT: It was '88. . .

AM: It was '88.

LT: . . .that it was acquired.

AM: So, in '89 I was doing this drawing series, and it was a series that involved making thousands of unique drawings using a kind of system to produce these emblems. I think Bernice Rose liked this project and asked me if I would do a project for the Modern for this show that she was doing. I made a special edition of nine hundred drawings and the reason they were special, I guess, is because I took this experience which Lilian wants to argue about. . . . I took the drawing frames [laughter]. . . . I'm joking.

LT: I don't want to argue about this! [laughter]

AM: The Drawings Department has a special kind of frame. It just amused me that they all had their own frame. I mean it seemed to me that all the departments had their own type of frame. It seemed to underscore the divisions. And, of course, they were criticized. The Modern's been criticized for these divisions because often that would wind up, say, where you would have [Aleksandr] Rodchenko's photographs shown in one context and his paintings in another and the poster. . .

They were never shown at once because the Museum was divided. You weren't allowed to do shows. . . . Somehow it just never seemed to happen. And this was a big criticism aimed at the Museum, especially by the crowd of people I frequented.

So, I decided to do the special drawings for the Modern. I called the Drawing Department and found out exactly the kind of frames they used and the mat board and what color and what kind of wood. . . That's how I know it was dark walnut, waxed dark walnut. Before I had been using black lacquered frames. Turned out walnut waxed was much cheaper. So, I had all the frames done that way. So, I did the exhibit, in Museum of Modern Art colors with gray tablecloths on a bunch of tables with the drawings set up with the MoMA frames. So, I remember doing that show with her. The thing I remember [that was] especially funny –- and I won't mention names –- but I remember Bernice came running into my room. I was in the, what you often call the Projects Gallery. She hid behind a crate because there was someone she didn't want to see. [Laughter]. And she stayed there for a long time. I really liked that woman. That's where I learned you couldn't adjust the lights without this person's permission, and that often asking the curator didn't do any good. You had to go speak with the preparators and so forth.

CD: You did that then?

AM: Well, I had a new assistant. She was right out of school. And her idea was that to get something done you went to the top. And I had told her a million times this was not going to work at The Museum of Modern Art [laughing] but she tried it. And it didn't work. So, finally, on that job here she learned that you don't go to the curator and say, "We need the lights adjusted", or "We need to have a certain kind of hanger", or "We need another hammer", that you go to one of the guys who. . .

CD: Who actually does it.

AM: . . .who actually does it [laughing]. You ask him and that's how you get it. I remember it was a real learning experience for my assistant at that moment. But the show didn't have any theme outside of just like what's been going on in the last two or three years. They were special choices that Bernice had made and maybe others. I think it was just Bernice. It didn't have a theme.

But then I was invited to be in a show that. . . The still-life show curated by Margit Rowell. That was a few years later, five or six years later. I was in that exhibit as

well. That show had a kind of loose theme. Well, I don't want to say loose, I don't know how Margit thought of it but objects that might relate to the idea of still-life and genre of still-life painting. And so I had a large *Perfect Vehicle*, no, three large *Perfect Vehicles* in that. And I remember not being happy with the way the room was titled 'Simulationism', or some other kind of journalistic name that I had nothing to do with, in my mind. But somehow it had become an overused term in the magazines. Why the Modern chose to use that term, I don't know. But I guess you have to call a room something. I remember being disappointed in that. But all in all, I thought the contemporary room was the best looking room in the whole exhibit, in my impression, but, of course, that's what I like, contemporary art. I was very happy to be in that exhibit. And it still seems to exist, that exhibit, on the Internet. When I go on the Internet and look myself up, which apparently is called ego-surfing [laughter], this page always appears. You know, the pages and reviews of this show. So, maybe it was one of the first shows the Museum put on the Internet. I don't know.

LT: And how about Museum as Muse? What did you think of the show? What did you think of the inclusion of your work in the show?

**END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

**BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

AM: Well, I was extremely happy to be included in that exhibit. I think it was the first time in my memory that an exhibit was done at the Modern that I really would have felt left out of if I hadn't been in it. I thought it was a wonderful recognition of a certain strain of contemporary artists that hadn't really been isolated and given a name –- not that they should be –- but there had been shows of this generation of artists everywhere in the world except New York. So, I was pleased that the authority was lent to this kind of museum critique of artwork that was involved with analyzing the functions of a museum in relation to its art in a very specific way. Many of the people in the exhibit were old friends. I think there was a feeling of camaraderie. As I get older this happens more and more. You realize the people you've been working with, you've been working with for twenty years, twenty-five,

thirty years. And you feel familial. In this show I had, kind of, a familial feeling, that I belonged there. Some of my heroes were in the show. Some of my friends were in the show. Young and old. An ex-assistant was in the show. I felt at home in that exhibit.

LT: I'm surprised to hear you say that because it was such a heterogeneous group of artists. When you talk about one generation, what are you referring to?

AM: I'm referring to a certain strain of thinking about art as having certain meaning because it's in a museum. And this strain of thinking that would go back to Duchamp, that would recognize the site of the museum as a part and parcel of what the artwork means, and that this is accomplished through the intention of the artist. So, [Marcel] Broodthaers would be significant, and Duchamp, and [Daniel] Buren and Michael Asher. And I would call it a. . . What would you call it?

LT: A lineage?

AM: Well, yes. I don't mean like a chronological generation. I don't know what you'd call it. But they are all fairly recent, these artists. The first two I mentioned no longer living but all the rest of them. . . Daniel Buren was in the late '60s. I think some of the work was from the '50s, wasn't it? Who were the '50s artists in there? I don't know. Anyway, they were certainly from the early '60s. Richard Hamilton. People who made art about being in the museum, the experience of being in a museum, what kind of ideology the museum reflects and creates, whose interests are addressed and whose are not, the politics of meaning with regards to whose money backs the museum, who the imaginary audience is. Sort of psycho-analyzing the museum, as Andrea Fraser might have put it. Sort of artists who recognize that certain objects wouldn't exist if it weren't for museums, which I think is a real strange thing in itself that museums generate objects to go in museums. And there have been a number of generations of this. Daniel Buren would be one generation and then following that would be say Louise Lawler and then maybe me –- I don't know how people would think of it –- and then following that would be a generation of Fred Wilson, Andrea Fraser. I'm mentioning my friends but . . . And then there are others who are interested in the romance of the museum. The

museum as a legitimator. The museum as a social site. I mean read the press release. I think that was what the show attempted to do and accomplished to do what it set. I think you could give other lineages to my work but the lineage I'm usually fit in I don't like. And this was the first exhibit. . .

LT: And what lineage is that?

AM: Well, I mean people will overly focus on one aspect of my work. Like they'll say it's a work about commerce. Well, I include the possibility as commerce as part of the meaning of my work because I think all artworks, you look at them knowing they are expensive. So, I've always thought that's got to be part of the work. You can't pretend it's not there. I think I was one of the few artists that focused on that in the late '70s. I don't remember that being a focus of Daniel Buren. So, I thought, commerce, you can't pretend it doesn't exist. All of these museum shows, and even gallery shows pretend they are museums, that there's no commerce. Commerce is kind of x'ed out. Certainly because museums are non-profit and museums are supposed to be ethereal and aristocratic. And money you don't mention and so forth. And yet, of course, it makes it in the newspaper every time the museum buys a six million dollar artwork but this isn't the first thing you read in the catalogue [laughing]. You don't read how much it costs. So, I remember feeling this was left out. But a lot of other things were left out, too. The social space, the exchange, the events that surround, the issues that Louise Lawler has been addressing and discussing and thinking about. And Daniel Buren before us. But because I was interested in commerce I've often been grouped with artists who did work that was specifically and only about consumerism or industrially produced objects. I've been in shows that were about the mono-chrome painting. I've been in shows about kitsch. I'm horrified by the shows I wind up in sometimes. The idea of the artificial. The idea of simulation. I mean, not that this isn't in my work but the train of thought I'm following, those are just little tropes. Really the direction of my work involves a kind of analysis of a social situation. So, I felt whether The Museum of Modern Art sees my work that way or not I'm in the show with the right people. At least that possibility is being allowed. I don't remember feeling. . . . Outside of shows I've been in in Europe, I don't remember ever being in an American show that really –- except maybe *The Forest of Signs* in Los Angeles,

that was a group I appreciated being in because it was open but it wasn't a historical show as much as this one was. So, it was interesting. . .

LT: It was more of a survey show.

AM: Yes, it was more of a survey show of the interest of Mary Jane Jacobs and Anne Goldstein. I loved being in that show but it didn't try to trace things back to the '30s and Surrealism or Fluxus or Pop. I mean it didn't have that feeling to it. So, I felt Kynaston's approach was more analytical, more historical and yet in a narrow way that I felt added something to the work, not always but in some cases added a dimension to my work anyway that isn't usually spoken of in the press or in the coffee table books that you see.

LT: Can you talk about how your work is informed by museums?

AM: Sure.

LT: You frequently use the word 'collection' in titles. .

AM: I did used to call my shows "collections" and I think I was just borrowing. . .

LT: Your shows or your work?

AM: My shows. My first work in New York was called *Collection of the Artist*.

LT: But how about your work?

AM: My work I sell as collections too. Yes, because I'm interested in ways in which art objects have identities in many different ways. One of them is being part of a collection. I was sort of representing collections as an idea of a collection. Sometimes I would have shows that focused on the idea that everything was for sale. I did a show once that was meant to look like an installation photograph. And it was called *Installation View* and it was all in black and white. It was designed to look like an installation photograph. That was all in the mid '80s. Those were

surrogate projects. I've done shows of artworks that were taken off of the television screens so they were art works that led you into the metaphysical universe of copies of copies of copies. But I think the most specific work where I'm really addressing museum habits was where. . . I would say the first one was the Pompeii Dog, the dog from Pompeii, the sculpture of a dog that was found in the ashes. When Vesuvius exploded in 79 A.D., it made a mold of a living dog that was tortured and died. The archeologists in the 19th century found the cavity and filled it with plaster and it gave the dog. I remember feeling: well, it's funny that the museum's job is to protect and maintain unique objects and that's part of why museums exist. But it's interesting that they will sometimes confuse objects that are copies with objects that are unique. And I remember thinking those dogs and those people are copies. They are not the real dog. They are copies. And I thought this about fossils. They are copies already. It's interesting that museum practice sometimes gets confused at what it's doing. To make a copy of a Picasso sculpture would involve –- well, it wouldn't happen –- it would involve a huge amount of money, care and contracts and agreements and so forth. But when a piece is a copy of something like the Duchamp copies of the urinals, for instance, or the fossils of a dog, it seemed to me: why are these treated like museum objects, art museum objects? So I thought, O.K. this dog, it's a one of a kind caste but it's a caste. And it's being kept as if it were an original. So, I went over to the Vesuvius Museum in the present day Pompeii and they let me make a copy of it. It didn't hurt the original caste and it was no more original than the copy they had. So, in a sense I was kind of saying, "Look let's not get our fetishizing of the original, our fetishizing of the unique, to go so far that we are starting to fetishize things that could be copied." I thought everyone could have a copy of this dog. It's a fabulous archeological object. It's moving. It's emotion. It's scary. It's creepy. It's beautiful. It arouses so many different feelings and yet here it is housed in a museum basement. And I think I find this to be the case often that things in museums do wind up being secretly held almost protected to such a degree that they are not providing the pleasure or the interest that they could have for people at large. I don't want to mess with copying someone's original artwork. Let Sherrie Levine do that. But I did feel that objects that were copies that were in museum collections could be copied in special cases. And I wanted to point out that there was an

ideology that kept us from recognizing that certain things didn't need to remain unique to remain precious. This was my personal agenda.

This is something I often thought about just the same way I had done thirty-five thousand of these little objects called *Individual Works*, which are all unique, there are no two alike. My thinking at that time was [that] we overvalue the unique but actually manufacturing unique objects is not difficult. I used no computer. Nothing. I just came up with a little system, like a knitting system and produced thirty-five thousand unique things. I thought this kind of is a way of reflecting on the idea of the unique and why do we value it, why do we overvalue it? And maybe there's some kind of ideology, I would say a class ideology, that keeps us wanting to maintain objects to be unique because a certain class of people wants to identify with uniqueness and feel special. Therefore, they want to house and maintain special objects. So, they seek out and give value to special unique objects and they turn their back on common objects and mass-produced objects. What's the ideology on this? Isn't it kind of maintaining of the aristocratic outlook? So, it's not that I don't think people should do that but I do find it very strange when they get things that could be reproduced mixed up with the things that can't be reproduced and keep them hidden, keep them trapped that way. The fossil works were a kind of meditation on this, what I felt was a dilemma.

LT: But also the *Lost Objects*. . .

AM: The *Lost Objects*, the dinosaur bones. Interestingly, dinosaur museums make copies of their bones all the time and exchange them. I personally think they should be selling copies of huge dinosaur skeletons on the market. I think people would like to have them. If they mass-produced them they probably wouldn't be that expensive. I, not even being in the museum–- I mean not even being in the natural history museum business or world –- I know where I can buy a skeleton of an allosaurus for something like $20,000 assembled. Now that's. . . . You can pay a lot more than that for a painting by a twenty-five year old artist. And it's more mysterious and more shocking in many ways. I've been interested in why, how hard the museum world and the art world seeks to maintain this extra preciousness, where it isn't always practical. Limiting editions, for one thing, is a

way of maintaining preciousness that does not necessarily have any meaning outside of just limiting the preciousness. If I could afford to make three hundred objects and I only make twenty because I want the price to be. . . because I want them to be unique and valuable – I mean I want them to be rare. That's weird. That's not necessary. It's only necessary because of the economics of the art world. So, I'd like to see where the economics which I think are a reflection of a class system, I'd like to see where they screw up, when they do something that's so illogical that it's hard to explain. I think the dog was a good example of that. It's a copy. It's not the original. Why are we protecting it?

LT: Is there no distinction between a natural copy and a human copy?

AM: Well, there's a humor and an irony in that. Of course, there's a distinction but I mean because of course, if it's a natural copy. . . . Well, I don't want to go into the other ways of thinking about it but yes, I think copies that are naturally made compared to copies that are man-made, comparing the two produces is an interesting train of thought. And I've been following that train of thought. I don't know what to say about it more specifically. You know, I think, "If I make one object I can sell it to the museum for $30,000. If I make two of them, the Museum is probably not going to buy them. If I make ten of them, the gallery won't even handle it. If I make a thousand of them. . . I couldn't even get Woolworth's to take it." [Laughter]. There's a logic to it that only makes sense if you understand the way the class system works, I think. We pretend that the logic is something else. We'll say we can't make twenty lithographs because the plate deteriorates. Well, everybody uses metal plates and other kinds of things now. There are ways to make a multiple, to make more. The logic of mass-production is the more you make things the cheaper they can be. So, this is a threat to the people who follow the logic of the unique and the special and the rare. And it's always the museum's job to maintain value.

Even this interview, in a way, is a way of validating the Museum's collection. And this is part of the job of the museum to constantly validate, revalidate, revalidate their own collection. So, they will do things like bring in the artist to curate shows

like that program where the artists came in and curated shows from the collection. . .

CD: *Artist's Choice*.

AM: . . .and talked about how they were influenced by this artwork. And this program in itself, you have to think of it as revalidating and revalidating the Museum's choices and their own collection. It's necessary. It's interesting. It's great to follow but the energy could be put in a lot of different directions. This Museum seems very protective of its own collection and its own choices and that's great. But other choices could have been made. I don't know. All I'm saying is that a museum creates its own world, its own reality and continues to revalidate and revalidate and it can become very rigid. What I see of the Museum in the last couple of years is it's evolving out of the rigidity of the past generation. It's very exciting.

CD: So, you were saying something about the future of the Museum or, at any rate, how the Museum is changing over the years. . .

AM: I just get that sense, yes. You wouldn't have seen –- what's his name –- the Picasso head? You wouldn't have seen Maurizio Cattelan walking around ten years ago or even five years ago, I don't think. I think this is the kind of openness that seems to have kind of. . . . I don't know if it's just curatorial, or just Painting and Sculpture or one department or one director's influence. I just don't know. But my feeling is that. And seeing the beautiful. . . Rirkrit [Tiravanija]'s piece in the garden. These things which don't all fit into the idea of the pure modernist space but suggest. . . are in the social space, in the critical space. No, I don't think I've seen this kind of thing going on. Well, I know they have jazz concerts and things people come to on dates and things like that. But I wouldn't have expected to see this five or ten years ago. So, I guess my impression is a little more interested than I personally was before seeing these young artists, younger than myself, being. . .

This certainly wasn't happening in my generation, as I recollect, any kind of special projects as elaborate as Rirkrit's or even as elaborate as Maurizio's. I don't remember seeing anything like that. Am I wrong? I mean I'm older than you. . .

LT: You mean commissions?

AM: Well, my feeling was a kind of reverence for history when I would come in here, a kind of reverence for history of the twentieth-century. I remember that was the feeling that seemed to be expected. The only sort of guerilla type of things you'd see. . . . Well, when I was working here, working on the Picasso show, I remember all of the benches and tables and some of the sculpture bases and all of the things that the viewers sit on the galleries, somebody had gone through and has these little cut out photographs of somebody's male genitalia. I assume it was the artist, and he stuck them under everything. Nobody knew about this performance piece, or whatever you call it, except the preparators. But we were always cracking up because everything we'd lift up had these pictures of male genitalia. Little pictures, like that big. It was sort of hilarious. Officially, nothing like that would ever. . . .And I compare that to Maurizio walking around, or his actor walking around with that big Picasso head, which was so funny to me because it was sort of right on, and the ghost of Picasso. I can't imagine anything like that happening with William Rubin here. [Laughter]. Maybe I'm wrong but I don't think so. I'm guessing that's a younger generation of curators.

CD: Do you have a sense of what the next phase of the Museum should bring considering the expansion and the merger with PS 1?

AM: You mean what would I like to see more of or less of? Well, this is purely personal but I like the idea of art exhibits being educational. I don't feel that bringing in kindergartners and third graders to look at the shows should be the main thrust of an education department in a museum. I don't know what the Modern does towards education. I know they publish a lot of wonderful books. But I'd like to see the shows being a little more seriously educational, in the sense that a scholar might come in and feel educated, a graduate student from a major university might come in and feel educated instead of the education department always aiming towards people who know very little about art. I mean I think that's important too but I think even those people should recognize that there's more to art scholarship than just putting up shows where everything has color or everything is just people. I think that's a bad direction. I'd like to see things becoming more scholastic in a way.

LT: Are you responding to the exhibitions we have on view right now?

AM: Well, of course. Yes. I think this is one of the. . . . This is not a good example of an educational exhibit although I know it seems to have been designed with that idea in mind. I don't think there's anything to learn from that show. But with calling it *People, Places* and *Things*, it almost sounds like it's designed for children or business majors. It's like something you'd see in an art appreciation class in high-school. I miss this in all museums. So, I would like to see scholarship. You see it when you visit the archives here. I've done that. I've visited the archives a little bit and I know that the Modern keeps wonderful records. I don't know if they exclude anyone from visiting the archives. . .

CD: The Museum Archives is open to the public.

AM: But I'd like to see more of the archives on display.

CD: You would too? [laughing].

AM: Really? I just went to a show, I don't know whether you've seen it, at the Ira Wallach Gallery at Columbia University that Benjamin Buchloh did of Robert Watts and Allan Kaprow. And I came away feeling so inspired because there were so many archival things and little things and experimental things that the artists had done. In a room of less than a thousand square feet, I came out feeling like I knew more about Robert Watts than anyone who hadn't seen that show, and Allan Kaprow. I came out feeling how incredibly important they were, and this was because the installation was designed to really educate a person who already knows something not educate somebody who knows something. I knew who they were, I was influenced by them both but the detail, the fullness I felt, I know I wouldn't feel that way walking out of a normal museum show where things are really. . . where the curators and directors have to focus on entertainment value. I mean we all know this. If there's more space I would like to see it used more for archival information which the Museum has been so good at maintaining and saving. I always like to see what young artists are doing. That's important too. As

an artist, the more shows the better, I guess. [Pause]. I know that all museums face these funding problems. I know the reason for these blockbuster shows and so forth. But I know that education has to be addressed. I would say that if I were in that field I would push for. . . Education doesn't just mean educating people who don't know anything about art, it can also mean educating people who know a lot about art and still need to know more. I think would be something I would push. I would do more international exhibits. I would probably. . . The Museums is doing very well with young artists' exhibits compared to the way they used to. I think that's interesting too. I think if there were money, I would like to see more serious one-person exhibits, retrospectives of artists where you come out knowing something. I think those are important. I don't know what else. I'd like to have the job of deciding all these things. I don't know the issues.

CD: I'd like to go back to *Museum as Muse* for a moment and ask you a few questions about the web site actually which. . .

AM: Oh, yes.

CD: . . .which has sort of educational component. Maybe you could tell us about the genesis of the web site. How were you approached, how did it develop?

AM: How I was approached was I got a call from Lilian Tone whom I had never met before. She told me that the Museum was getting involved in some artists' web site, and would I like to do one? Why did you call me? I guess it was because I had done a web site once before. I had. . . Stadiumweb, Stadium -– Ron Wakkary at Stadium -– had done a web site with me. .

LT: I don't think it was because of that because I didn't know about it.

AM: You didn't know about it?

LT: Kynaston McShine and I were working on a short list of artists whose work we thought would be appropriate for the web.

AM: Oh. Well, I would like to know what your thinking was, why you thought my work was appropriate for the web. But I did enjoy it. I really had been very interested in Internet communication in my own work. I use it to develop exhibits now. I develop projects using the Internet. I make proposals using the Internet. I make reports on my projects on the Internet so people will see what I'm doing because sometimes it's not accessible to New Yorkers. So, I've been enjoying using the Internet also for research, finding out about objects and interesting things in the world. . . So, yes, I took the job. I wanted to work with Ron Wakkary with whom I had worked before. I also had my own web site where I printed many catalogue essays and texts and reviews about me. I was maintaining that all on my own. I learned HTML language. I don't work with a gallery in New York so I wanted there to be site where people could go to learn about my work because I didn't have a gallery handing out texts or slides or whatever. So, I had done that for my own career purposes and educational purposes. A lot of students. . . I get mail. Yesterday, today I got an email from a teacher at Michigan State saying, "Thank you so much for this" –- no, University of Michigan, sorry –- saying, "Thank you so much for this archive because you learn." But I had never done one that was supposed to be an artist's project type of thing outside of the one Ron did but he had sort of thought of the idea for me. It was, sort of, mirroring a project I had already done. He said, "Let's do it on the Internet with PDF files." Handouts. Anyway, do you know what PDF files are? Portable Document Format files that you can download and print out yourself. So, I had done a lot of brochures with my dinosaur bone project, dinosaur footprint project called *Natural Copy*. I had used the term copy to refer to the footprints which were the natural casts of the dinosaur footprints and the photocopies which were texts about the dinosaur tracks. So, I played with the word copy. And he said, "Let's extend that." It was his idea. I was very happy to see all that on the Internet. So, anyway, you're asking how did that happen. Lilian called me and asked if I had any ideas so I put together some ideas I had had in the past and thought up a few new ones and tried to utilize Ron's skills with databases and designed a project and proposed it to them and they accepted it.

CD: Why did you decide to focus on the *Plaster Surrogates*?

AM: Well, I had been invited to be in the *Museum as Muse* exhibit and that was the piece I was putting in the exhibit. So, my logic was. . . . Well, my approach to the Internet was as a source of storing information and retrieving information and finding out information. I'm not one of those people who says, "Let's make an animation," like a lot of artists do who are very clever technically. I like the Internet because of the way it changes our thinking about information. So, I wanted to do something about information. Rightly or wrongly I felt the most logical thing would be to do information about the very artwork I had put in the exhibit. Maybe now that the exhibit is down and that site is still on the web. . . I don't know if I wouldn't have chosen to do that if it hadn't been the Museum as Muse show going up at the same time. I probably would have done something that functioned more autonomously. But, in any case, this was my judgment then and I stuck to it. I made it about that piece. I decided, because I had worked in so many registrar situations, I decided to make it in the form of a registrar's report that, kind of, went a little mad. I don't know if you've seen the site. It starts out kind of describing the work, its provenance but then all the assistance who helped do the painting, where the paint came from, who was the company that made the paint. It could go on indefinitely. In addition to that I added, because I figured you couldn't understand one artwork, the artwork that I was talking about, if you didn't understand all the other artworks. So, I posited that philosophical question: how do you understand one artwork without understanding all the others? So, I even created a section that attempted to mimic the idea. . . that attempted to symbolize all other artworks by allowing artists to put their own artwork online. So, I was hoping to get a semblance of all other artworks in the world, obviously represented by a small sampling. But it was offered free to any. . . . It still is online where anyone can put on their artwork with a minimum of web experience. As long as they have an image online, they can fill in the little form online and it just goes on. I especially liked the idea of, kind of, playing against the grain. You have an institution that's basically as I've heard it described [pause]. . . What's that word that Craig [Owens?] used –- a meritocracy. You know that the Museum operates as a meritocracy. I, kind of, felt I could open up another element within my piece that was so anti-meritocracy, that it. . . . Well, I just wanted to see if it would pass muster in the Museum, if they would allow that. And I was very pleased that they did. Because it was very much not a Museum of Modern Art type of thing. And I think it could be. I don't know what anybody thinks

of it here but I certainly enjoy looking at all those artworks that are not in The Museum of Modern Art or that are not even contemporary art, they are traditional portraits or whatever, or even people who design shoes. You see all these things on there. In a way, I was trying to depict the whole context of my artwork, that [it] was legitimized by all of these things and also by not being all of these other things. So, I, kind of, got carried away. I still add things to it now and then. It's set up so that I can. . .

CD: It's a living site.

AM: It is, yes. I don't suppose I could do that forever, but I'm enjoying it. I'm perfectly happy doing it. It doesn't take a lot of work to maintain. The only problem is some of the artists sites go out of date and then I have to write them and say [that] your pictures are out of date, put on new ones. Or sometimes they've moved and their email addresses don't work, so I have to take it off. Little things like that. It's minor maintenance and the Museum's paying for the technical maintenance of the site. As long as they can afford to do that, I'm happy to maintain the content side.

CD: So, the two are complimentary, that is the artwork that was in the gallery and the website.

AM: Yes.

CD: Do you see the website as an artwork in and of itself?

AM: [Pause]. Well, it's not the normal kind of artwork that I would make. I think it's more a supplement to my artwork than a. . . . I mean, I do all kind of things I think of as supplements. I do pictures from television that have what look like plaster surrogates in the background. I'm known for this but I just give them away. They are not anything I sell as an artwork. The supplements. . . In this way I'm imitating an education program. When I did the dinosaur tracks I had all. . . twenty or so handouts that explained what the tracks were. They were part of the exhibit, part of my work but in a sense they weren't. They are used by other museums now because they download them from the website. And they are used by high-school

teachers teaching paleontology. They have a life outside the museum world. I also just did a project where I produced seventy booklets about the phenomenon of lightening and how it creates objects in the sand when it hits the sand. It was an interesting idea about creation. I thought it led to some interesting train of thoughts. So, I did about seventy booklets on a project. [Interruption].

Well, I was just saying I did seventy booklets printed in mass about this other little scientific phenomenon and about my project. I just did another project where I did these copies of fulgurites, which are objects created by lightening in sand. I created the lightening myself with a rocket engineers' help. I duplicated the object ten thousand times. Then I overdid the didactic supplements into seventy booklets, which go in addition to a catalogue to, sort of, over explain everything about the work. And then these booklets can be used educationally afterwards. So, it's part of the artwork. It's part of the artwork. I guess I think the objects themselves are really more the artwork

CD: Will you continue to use the digital medium in this way?

AM: Absolutely. I enjoy it. I think it functions really well in relation to what I am doing. I'll also use printouts because I think at this point recognizing that the art object obtains its value, its meaning, its significance, its influence through being legitimized by texts, archives, opinions, provenance. So, I'm trying to do the whole thing. I'm trying to make the object and all that other stuff at the same time instead of waiting for art critics and so forth. I'm duplicating the idea of the text and the object that the text gives meaning to. But I'm doing it in a way that's sort of a little bit outside the art world so I'm not really competing with critics or anything. But I'm trying to present what that looks like. My recent two exhibits have been objects and all these texts that go with the objects that give it meaning shown in the same room. It's kind of a series of projects that I'm working on now. So, yes, I will continue to use the digital medium and the one you were taking about was just an over. . . a surplus of information you need to know about that *480 Plaster Surrogates* collection. So, it's part of a series of works I think of as didactical, supplementary information. They go with the work but, by definition, I'd had have to say they are not exactly part of the work, they are part of the process that I involve

myself in in making artworks. And they are important because there's a kind of parody, a parodic aspect to them as well as educational. A little bit of parody about how many words do we need to describe an artwork. Does the more paperwork and the more writing and the more text make the artwork more valuable or more meaningful? I think it probably does. But I want that to be acknowledged and recognized in the work itself, that it's offering itself to be interpreted. And that it starts off without any interpretation. It accrues interpretation as time goes by. So, I'm trying to, sort of, see what it might look like if you did that in advance. That's all.

CD: Very quickly, I think we have one minute left. Did you work closely with the New Media Department?

AM: No, not at all.

LT: You worked with Greg van Alstyne.

AM: Oh, Greg van Alsytne. Is he the New Media Department? Yes, I did. .

LT: But Allan didn't really work with anybody there because he was working with Ron Wakkary who is not related to the museum.

CD: So, Greg came in for the technical aspects for mounting your site on the MoMA's web site?

LT: Exactly.

AM: Yes, technical, political, helping me find things, getting a digital camera. He actually came over to my studio and helped take pictures of things. So, he was pretty involved, yes. He was very involved in decision making and what he thought the Museum could accept and what it couldn't. He had his own opinions and was influential in the look of the project, of course. We copied his look, his design look, which we had a lot of arguments about. It was very interesting. He wasn't sure he liked that at first, copying. Because he's a designer. He's a good designer, and he's a very distinctive designer. But we finally worked that out, changed the fonts a little

bit [laughter]. Changed the colors. We were all happy, I think, at the end with the look of it. But it does mimic the look of the MoMA site. And he was afraid that would confuse everybody. I said, “Good.”

CD: O.K. Well, thank you very much.

AM: Sure. You’re welcome.

**END TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

**END INTERVIEW**