DAVID HOFFMAN MOMA HISTORY INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW WITH:	**ARTHUR DREXLER (AD)**
INTERVIEWERS:	**CARL COLBY (CC); RUTH CUMMINGS (RC)**
LOCATION:	**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**
DATE:	**1983**
TRANSCRIBER:	**JANET CROWLEY, TRANSCRIPTION COMPLETED OCTOBER 14, 2018**

CC: Well, I'll tell you what he [Ivan Chermayeff] fears and what he's happy about. He fears the museum of fashionable art. He knows that to have good design per se, Conrans and Pottery Barn and a lot of other people—the battle is won; they're doing that job for you. And he feels that the fashionable, the faddish, is not the purview of the Museum, and he is very upset about that, or concerned that [they have] to compete with Bloomingdale's. And he thinks the great wealth of the Museum will be its expanded study centers, frankly, its educational capacity, the fact that it will be able to do that. People will be able to come, Europeans, for instance, will be able to come here and really see what design is about. Where are you on what you're going to be given in the next year? Are you going to be given a horror, or are you going to be given that great challenge? Or is it—?

RC: Something that you fill out comfortably, and there's not a problem with that?

CC: Let me just put it this way. What do you think the function of—? Outside of architecture; let's put that on one side, but design, particularly, the function of that now?

AD: Well, it's essentially what it always was, but the means of doing it changes. But that's not a recent change. That's a change that took place sometime in the—well, by the end of the fifties. When the Museum was founded, nobody was quite clear as to whether it was supposed to be a museum in the classical sense, or the distinction that the Germans make between the Kunsthalle and the Kunstmuseum. The museum is for great works of art that are rescued from the flux of time and are preserved for posterity. A Kunsthalle is a facility that is devoted to current events in the arts, to what's new, and it changes all the time.

And people may object strenuously to what's shown in it because they don't like it or they do like it, but no one gets over-wrought because it's not presented as enshrined for posterity. What was novel about this museum was the attempt to fuse those two things simultaneously on the same premises. And in practice, the attempt was—I mean, the actual, practical workings of the Museum involved building the collection through the exhibition program. The exhibition program tended to pull in the things that everybody thought were terribly important and interesting and provided the occasion for the Museum to pull material out of that assemblage, whatever it might have been, to seek acquisition funds and to say, alright, if we rescue this much of it we're going to make that the nucleus of the collection, so that the actual day to day interlocking of the temporary exhibition program and the building of the collection were, as a matter of practical reality, very tightly connected in this institution. Which is very unusual. That's not the way museums are set up. Usually collections exist, and an institution is established to receive those collections, and then other kinds of collecting activities follow suit. To some extent, that was the case when this museum was founded. The ladies had their own collections of paintings and were looking for a home for them, but those collections were not so vast that you needed to go to all this trouble. It was simply that other institutions were not interested in receiving those collections. The Met was not interested in modern art, so they made an art museum. But in this case, this museum had to set about building a collection virtually from scratch, notwithstanding the nature of those very important gifts from Lillie Bliss and some others. But from the very beginning, the history of the Museum is the history of shifting emphasis, shifting attitudes about the relationship between collecting and exhibiting. And at different times in the Museum's history, depending on a variety of circumstances and temperaments and the financial resources and the subjects that we're dealing with, the emphasis is not always absolutely even. It tends to oscillate. There will be a period in which there's a great ferment in collecting and the exhibition program seems somewhat less interesting, at least internally, and then it will reverse itself and the exhibition programs take precedence over everything else. And it's very hard to—there's no reason to maintain an absolute equilibrium, and it's probably nearly impossible to do that. Nevertheless, I think, for a long period the collections have preoccupied everyone perhaps a little bit more than the

exhibition program. I'm talking about recent years. And the reason would be, obviously, that we have known and have been anticipating this expansion for a great many years. Because back in the late fifties it was apparent that it was hopelessly constrained by its original size. And as you know, the east wing and the garden wing were added in 1964, but they were just the first stage of an expansion program which only now is being completed. Originally, it was thought that the rest of it would be built within five years. But inflation and the Vietnam War intervened, and here we are, still waiting to get it finished. But during all that time, the curators had been anticipating that one day the riches of the collections would be presented, not in their entirety, that's physically impossible, but at least at a sufficient scale that would enable two things to happen. It would enable us to keep major works permanently on view, and then a range of second-rank works, where some would be permanently on view and others would rotate—that you would have enough space to be able to do both of those things, keep some things permanently on view and other things rotating. Now each department will now be able to do that, and that's a great accomplishment, because on that basis you can go on collecting for quite a while, but you will always still have just enough leeway to be able to do both of these.

CC: So people will be able to come to the Museum whose interest, let's say is architecture or design, and no matter what day they come they'll be able to see some sort of architecture exhibit.

AD: Yes, that's right. The new gallery, which is in construction on this floor, will have again, some things in design permanently on view. The bulk of what's on the floor will be permanently on view. But there will be just enough space to enable us to, maybe twice a year or three times a year—pieces will disappear overnight and something else will take its place.

CC: What's the bent for architecture versus design, about 50-50 in terms of what you're going to be putting on permanent in an exhibition?

AD: No. I guess about a third of the space is devoted to an architecture gallery which we kind of had before, but for the first time we'll have a gallery available. It's the one that you walked through when you came in. The tile floor area in the center is for architectural models which have to stand free and they are on wheels to

move them around. The perimeter, the walls of the room, will be used for architectural drawings, and the bench that's built around the room which gets cushions on it eventually is simply so that we can have seminars and lectures [INAUDIBLE: 0:08:55].

CC: So you'll be able to actually have a little—well, it will be in depth. Let's say you examine one building, the Chrysler Building or something, you'll really be able to do in-depth study. You'll have the drawings for it, renderings, et cetera. It's more than—

AD: If we wish to do that.

CC: Something like that.

AD: Yes, but that's not the primary purpose of it. The primary purpose of it is to give a survey of the major works of the art of architecture in the 20th century. We think we can get as many as eight models. That will be crowding it somewhat, but we think we can get that many models in there. Out of that, maybe four will be there permanently, and the others will rotate from time to time. And the same principle applies to the design room.

CC: Do you find that there are particular problems that you encounter in Architecture and Design simply because modern architecture and modern design are so pervasive in the society? By labeling one thing as good and another thing as terrific architecture, do you run the risk of being very precious or almost awarding that A+ or that gold star? Just—there seems to be so much volume of the material that it would appear to be a little bit more difficult for you than even [William] Rubin or Kynaston [McShine] running around. There are only so many painters, but there are an unbelievable amount of—

AD: Yes. It's a commercial activity and lots of manufacturers and designers think that there's nothing nicer than to have their work endorsed by the Museum in one way or the other that they can use in advertising.

CC: Like the old Merchandise Mart.

AD: Yes. And we are naturally reluctant to do that. On the other hand, if somebody has done something extraordinary that deserves an exhibition, we will do an exhibition, whether it results in good commercial publicity for them or not.

CC: Right; it's still the work.

AD: It's still an important work. A case in point is Bang & Olufsen [*Bang & Olufsen: Design for Sound by Jakob Jensen*]; they do very beautiful stereo components. They are one of the few companies that we've given a one-man show; the other being, in the past, Olivetti [*Olivetti: Design in Industry*] and the Braun Company [*Two Design Programs: The Braun Co./Chemex Corp.*]. And I have no doubt that Bang & Olufsen has made fruitful use of the publicity accrued from that show. They deserve it; why shouldn't they?

CC: Is there a problem with everything appearing to be—? Not everything being modern but most anything made since 1940, since after the war, let's say, has modern pretensions, or most things have modern pretensions, except for home-made crafts or...

AD: I think that what's happening to the modern movement is something that has happened and it's in the nature of the cycle, it's historical styles in western civilization—after it has established itself and become all pervasive, those who were responsible for establishing it tend to get bored with it. And the drive that sustained it at the beginning, the principles and the preoccupations of the people who first defined it and established it, are no longer really intelligible to the following generations. And to the extent that it becomes the way to do things, that it becomes the established procedure, it loses its point. It simply becomes like cream cheese: you spread it over everything and when you try to cut through it there isn't much resistance, there's not a grit to it.

CC: It's not in revolt against anything.

AD: That's right.

CC: It doesn't show up in Vienna like something did to oppose the very baroque. [At 0:13:30, AD excuses himself, tape break.] Eliza Bliss Parkinson Cobb, she showed us that wonderful room you designed for [her].

AD: Were you in her apartment?

RC: Yes, it's wonderful.

CC: It's very nice, that circular, hemispherical library. It's strange; when I walked in, I thought I had seen something like that before, but when I left, all afternoon I just thought I had been there before, but then I haven't, and it's such a terrific idea. I guess the books still stayed; there's no problem with bindings or anything.

AD: No; she can't buy any more books, though.

RC: Well, she said she has them two layers back.

CC: It's very nice now. And then she has her little stool or whatever. It's a nice feeling; it's very good.

AD: Where were we? What were we talking about?

CC: We were talking about how it becomes so pervasive that you lose your edge.

AD: Yes. Modernism, as it was understood in the first half of the 20th century, is winding down and onto something that neither god nor man and certainly not The Museum of Modern Art can do anything about. That is the way life is.

CC: If you were to make a wild projection, could you say that in a sense it might be like the museum of mannerist art or whatever that just appeared in the 17th century?

AD: Well that's the phase that we're in now. We're in a phase where people really don't know what they want to do next. And this is called the freedom from the dogma, and everybody stands on their head to do something novel. There's another factor involved in this which is present in developments in painting but not quite the same way or to quite the same degree. Design is a commercial enterprise, rather more so, obviously, than painting. Anybody can make a painting without involving an investment of a fortune to get it manufactured, since that doesn't arise. But you can't be a designer without involving an army of people who have to invest money. And consequently, the problem now is not to see that new work gets produced, but to encourage the commercial market in the new work. The problem is to turn off the flood of junk that is unloaded on the world every week. In the forties, when the Museum had a competition for modern furniture design [*Organic Design in Home Furnishings*], the Museum took it on itself to find manufacturers and to see to it that a department store would

show the stuff to the public because buyers at the department stores were afraid to do that. Today it's a—

CC: I happened to see a lighting catalog. There must be 600 of those.

AD: Well, of course; it's quite the opposite. It is simply now the way everything is, and you scarcely need a museum to intervene to develop new products. Notwithstanding that, there are still, to this day, from time to time, we get requests from manufacturers, [asking us if] won't we sponsor a furniture design competition. I'd sooner cut my throat! There's absolutely no point whatsoever in doing it. If somebody gave me the authority to put certain things out of production, I would certainly do that.

RC: [Laughs] The reverse; yes.

AD: But we are in a different historical moment, and museum people and certainly critics and journalists—more than anything else, this is the age of the journalist—[pause] people tend to take themselves and their activities somewhat too seriously. Things work themselves out according to their place in the historical cycle. And you can stand on your head and do all kinds of funny things, but it does not alter that timetable, which is another proposition.

CC: If you were to make some predictions—? Well, it's hard to do that but—you would then look at somebody like a Michael Graves as being not so much starting a new movement but simply kind of a flamboyant elf or whatever, operating on the outskirts of—?

AD: No. He's doing what was inevitable. But he's not the first and he won't be the last.

CC: So he's not the starting of anything new; he's like the last of the old rather than the first of the new?

AD: No, no, no. I couldn't say that. It remains to be seen.

CC: What's going on?

AD: He hasn't produced enough work for anybody to make that kind of a judgment yet. By the standards of architecture, he is a young man who has done very, very little building. But what was inevitable would be that people would feel that

they had been cut off from history and that they wanted to reverse the premises of the modern movement, and that once more they wanted to go back to history and have an eclectic architecture. At the turn of the century, and at the time when this museum was founded, that attitude among serious, thoughtful people, was regarded as scandalous, and was thought to be a betrayal of—

CC: To have a mix, you mean?

RC: To use any of the old idioms?

AD: It was felt that we had moved into the new era of technology and mass production and science, and that it behooved us to have an art and a culture of our own. And that instead of copying endlessly and mixing, as in a salad bowl, the ingredients inherited form the past, the feeling and the conviction was that honorable, serious men would strive to do something appropriate to the circumstances of our own century. And under that impetus, people invented a whole new architecture and a whole new mode of design.

CC: We talked to Philip Johnson and he said—we reminded him of when he took that trip through Europe; I think in two or three weeks he saw every modern building in Europe, evidently. So he was very much the proselytizing early Christian. And now of course, you'd have to be exactly the opposite. You'd have to, with blinders, jump into Bologna, look at some new building and jump—

AD: Sure; sure; sure.

RC: It's so selective.

AD: See, when I was a student in New York City, in the years before the war, there were perhaps three modern buildings in New York City. There was this building [The Museum of Modern Art, designed by Philip L. Goodwin and Edward Durrell Stone], which was built in 1936, '37, '38, '39. There was a house by William Lescaze, his own house on East 50 somewhere. And there was also before the war, a modern store belonging to a jeweler who sold Mexican jewelry; it was called the Rebajes Center. It had been designed by Morris Ketchum, who subsequently went on to do famous stores around New York City. And it was modern because it had glass going down to the sidewalk, and space inside.

CC: What was everything else?

AD: Everything else was like the older twenties buildings.

RC: Wedding cakes.

AD: And they had not yet been modernized, they hadn't been spoiled by gaudy signs or vulgarized half modern, half traditional architecture. It had a certain coherence. But those were the modern buildings that you could see. And then came the 1939 World's Fair, which gave everybody suddenly a view of what a different kind of architectural milieu could be like. In the years immediately after World War II, everything changed drastically. The battle was joined. We would have to decide immediately after the War, were we going to have a modern architecture or not? And that had very real, practical consequences. For example, the government was building new embassies and consulates all around the world, planning them in the late forties and building them in the early fifties. And the government built the Air Force Academy, you may recall, in Colorado. Well, there was a debate in Congress as to whether the Air Force Academy should be in gothic style or modern style. And the generals wanted a modern building, not especially because they were in love with modern architecture, but they thought it wasn't logical to have a gothic Air Force Academy. And the generals, being part of the military industrial complex—you've heard about that?

CC: Liked new technology.

AD: Liked new technology and their friends and associates were all young executives and chairmen and presidents of corporations that were eager to identify themselves with modern architecture because they wished to be known as forward looking leaders, adventurous, open to new ideas, and leading the way toward a more efficient, light, cheerful, brave new world. That's how Lever House came into existence. It was in that period in the late forties and early fifties that the issue was decided, and modernism carried the day, and here we are. 25 years afterwards, it's a rather different proposition.

CC: Did anyone foresee the complete bastardization of it all, and the gigantic Levittowns and all of the trashy buildings?

AD: Oh sure; sure; sure.

RC: But it was kind of like, the first ones out of the gate; you do it biggest, best, and then there will be followers. [Laughing]

AD: We could see it coming; we thought about it. Sure.

CC: But so what you end up with is Third Avenue, but is it any better than the brownstones in the twenties buildings that used to be there? I'm sure those buildings were better built than—when I go any modern, even a renovation in New York—a friend of mine took me to a new condominium or whatever he was going to buy and it was ridiculous. The windows were in all the wrong places, it was all the modular feeling. It sure was modular.

AD: That's not a problem of architectural design; that's a problem of commercial greed and exploitation and avariciousness.

RC: Because that's after the fact of—

CC: But still, the fact of the matter is that's what you get.

AD: Yes, but nobody is building anything better in terms of reviving old styles of the twenties.

CC: No; no one's doing that either.

AD: There are areas—

CC: Philip just said about the same—well, he wasn't responsible; that happened and then all the [INAUDIBLE: 0:25:02] came with the cheap materials. You can't prevent that. It's like automobiles.

AD: That's right. You can't blame everything on the architects. There's no architect in the world who wouldn't be very happy to build rooms a third again as big as they are in modern apartments. But all you have to do is find a landlord that is willing to do that. But that has to do not with the history of architecture; it has to do with the history of capitalism and land exploitation in the cities and the cost of labor and the whole business. But apart from that, there are aspects of modern architecture and design that are problematic and that do leave unresolved questions and issues. The drive of modernism was toward simplification and elegance of execution, of beautiful materials beautifully worked. But the constant drive toward simplifying forms and reducing them to their essentials and omitting

anything superfluous—when you've arrived at the perfect reduction in form, it makes it nearly impossible to come up with an encore. What do you do next? And if you have another whole generation coming along, what is it that they're supposed to do next? After Mies [van der Rohe] designed the perfect chair, [laughter] what happens then? It's a psychologically untenable situation. It doesn't mean that the design isn't perfect, it means that because it's perfect, you can't continue with that line of thought because it's been run to the end.

CC: I think it just reverts then to the best of the past; people start looking at Biedermeier or American empire.

AD: That's where it gets complicated because nobody quite knows where to turn.

CC: We were talking to Richard Oldenburg and he talked about how if [Alfred] Barr was the early Christians, Christ and his disciples, he is in the unfortunate position of being the Pope and the Vatican. [Laughter] That's the kind of situation he's in. But what struck me is when I left the office—we had just interviewed a lot of people in the Museum—I thought, god, you know, there wasn't an old thing—everything was modern: the desk, the chair, the table, the this and the that. And it struck me as odd that if I had been on the fifth floor of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's place, those modern pictures were probably against old wood and—

AD: Yes. Sure.

CC: These were the little new things, and everything else was tapestries and all.

AD: Sure.

CC: And then when all that lightness and air and open windows and white walls came, then the modern pictures—for about 20 or 25 years, it all meshed really nicely. Well now everybody, fortunately or unfortunately, has this modern setting.

AD: And the pictures look old.

CC: Well now what's happening is people are quick to pick up an old piece of furniture, or an old this or that, an old picture. And it's almost as if it's reverting back to the other.

AD: Well, they did that from the very beginning though. It is part of the nature of modernism that it repudiated the past. It attempted to define itself by breaking with the past. That was part of the intention. But that—it may have been a precondition for producing something new and obviously different from what had come before it, but it's a psychologically very dangerous and nearly impossible thing to sustain. You really cannot break the links of a culture that sharply; it's impossible. When you are doing the isolated new thing in the context of the old, its very newness is by virtue of the contrast. The architect has to go out of his way to avoid any detail that will remind anybody of a classical or a historical precedent. And the desire to do that becomes a very strong part of the procedure of design. It's alright as long as it's the minority statement, as long as it's the isolated thing. But when it becomes the pervasive thing, then something else happens and it suddenly becomes disruptive in a different kind of way. It has had a terrible effect on the texture and the character of cities in the 20th century, to a huge extent in this country, but even much, much more so in Europe where communities have finally tried to block any further building in order to avoid further disruption. Sometime in the sixties it was realized that modernism and just the building boom was likely to not be satisfied until it had demolished some of the more interesting and more important of the older buildings. And at that point we lost Pennsylvania Station, and for a long time the fate of Grand Central Terminal was uncertain. And at that point in the early sixties it became clear that there was too great a discrepancy between what architects said privately and what they said publicly, between what they did and what they said. And it became clear that these opposing—this schizoid behavior, was going to have to be reconciled in some way and they had to come to grips with it, which was why we did the exhibition about the Ecole de Beaux Arts [*The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts*] in the early seventies. That exhibition was first proposed here in 1967. It didn't take place until '75.

CC: And that was one of the big watersheds in terms of people switching [INAUDIBLE: 0:31:33].

AD: Mm-hm; yes; sure.

CC: It's interesting, as you talk, I'm beginning to think that in our interviews, always people paid too much attention maybe to Painting and Sculpture. They just feel

that that's the great overriding influence of the Museum. The Film Department, that's like a big success story, it just gets better. Photography started small and then boomed. Yours though carries a—there's a social responsibility in building, not in your department, but in building and design. It's as if when you said don't blame the architects, I'm heeded, and it's not just a question of, well, I don't like that painting and I can leave. I mean, you're talking about where I live.

AD: Sure.

RC: Right, and the character of the cities.

CC: And the way my door is designed and the fact that it might be safe or unsafe, and why I breathe this. You're talking about things that are—I mean, I can't ignore it. I live in it.

AD: Sure; we all do.

CC: And it may explain a little bit—I've noticed that in Europe, for instance—here there's a lot of attention; young people go to art school, they'll study painting, et cetera. In Europe there seems to be more attention, much more, towards the young activist type that goes into architecture. Not that there's all that much to build over there and a lot of money to do it with, but I think there's that overriding social responsibility at the forefront of their conscience about what they'd like to—well, they feel that they can make a change.

AD: That's a terrible explanation. [Laughter] That's not actually what happened but that's a generous characterization.

RC: Is it more just a sense of style, that it's just fashionable?

AD: No.

CC: Is it a political explanation?

AD: [INAUDIBLE: 0:33:03].

RC: Is it totally economic?

AD: No.

CC: Is it a Marxist kind of—in a way, you can practice your art and do your politics too that way, but you certainly can't if you're just doing a neo-expressionist canvas. I mean, that's not going to change anybody's mind.

AD: Well, during the last decade, enrollment in schools in Europe—in Italy in particular—

CC: Yes, I was thinking of Venice and Aldo Rossi.

AD: —from architectural students had reached proportions that as far as I know are still up there, very high, that are quite stupefying. I think there were 7,000 architecture students enrolled in Rome, and seven or eight thousand in Milan, and Venice had 4,000, and Bologna had another 3,000. And I once went to Palermo to lecture and I discovered that Palermo had 3,000 architecture students. [Laughter]

RC: That's like Dayton, Ohio; right?

AD: Well, a little smaller, a little less alert, but it had 3,000 architecture students. And so you begin to ask, what exactly is going on here?

CC: I mean, are they just renovating their uncle's apartment?

AD: Well, there was a period when they were not so much busy studying architecture as they were kneecapping their professors. You may recall that—you know what that is? How young are you?

CC: I know what it is but I usually associate it with the IRA and other groups. But I do know during the Moro incident.

RC: And the Red—

AD: In the sixties, the Italian students of the left, when they disagreed with their university professors, would ambush them on the street and shoot them in the knees. That permanently cripples you without killing you necessarily. But there's a battalion of Italian professors and scholars who are now crippled as a result of the enthusiasms of the left-wing students in the sixties, and that went on into the seventies. They seem to have lost interest in that for a while. And now they concentrate more on bombing railroad stations or something. Anyhow, what happened was that the study of law used to be the respectable way for someone

to earn a degree and then go into business. Not everybody would practice law, obviously. I mean, there's a limit to how many lawyers you can absorb, even in the United States. But in Europe, law was for a long time the respectable study, and then you either did law or you did whatever it was necessary to make a living. Well, architecture has a great advantage over the study of law. There are no formal exams at the end of your training such as a lawyer has to endure. Yes, you have to submit projects and you get graded and everything, but if you hang on, you know you're going to get a degree, but you don't have to have a hard body of information that you have memorized and that you can discourse on and where it's not opinion but fact. There is legal precedent and you're expected to know it. Architecture can be studied while you're discoing or skiing or [laughter]—but not so [much] law, which is a serious business.

CC: Even in those schools.

AD: Even in those schools there requires a certain application.

CC: But those schools—architecture, does it require much?

AD: No; very little. I mean, you—

RC: Artsy fartsy.

AD: Yes. So, as a result we have 9,000 in Rome and 8,000 in Milan, and—

RC: [Laughing] Oh my goodness.

CC: Instead of English or Italian studies. Instead of romance languages or something.

RC: It sounds like the sociology for that would be—

CC: And how many working architects are there in Italy? 600 or something?

AD: Well, you know, if the entire western world were in a boom period of an expanding economy and building night and day, there's no way that the world could absorb the annual production of architects from all of the industrialized countries. There's just simply no way. So it is really all rather pointless. But on the other hand, it combines ecology and sociology and everything that is irrelevant and extraneous to the actual mastery of the complicated discipline of

making buildings can be dragged into it, and it all sounds very benevolent or well intentioned.

RC: Then has your department served as—in terms of its study potential, do people come here, for instance—Martin Scorsese kind of grew up in the Film Department.

AD: Sure.

RC: So you're still a resource center that way that's used seriously.

AD: Of course.

RC: But then as you talk, getting more of a realization of how much the exhibitions could suggest to this sea of architects and designers another way to look at things—like, if you've run out of modernism, and the Beaux Arts show suggested post-modernism, possibly, you really have a big role here.

CC: You're not an entertainment subsidiary.

AD: We try not to be. You're quite right, we are very—

RC: You do blockbuster shows; I don't know. I'm sure a lot of people attended that Beaux Arts exhibition.

AD: Indeed they did.

RC: But it wasn't necessarily like the [Pablo] Picasso show or—but then in terms of getting funding for your shows. We've talked to some other people in other departments. Do you have any gripes? Can you get money to do the shows you need to do?

CC: We read your opening salvo in your [exhibition] catalogue [*Three New Skyscrapers*], we liked that a lot.

RC: Machines for making money re: Three Skyscrapers; that was great.

CC: But we have to live with them. [Laughing]

RC: They're here to stay.

AD: It is more difficult to fund the architecture shows, there's no doubt about it. Although there's a very wide audience and it's a constantly growing audience, it

is nothing like the audience for a painting and sculpture exhibition. And that means that corporate funds are somewhat less forthcoming because from the point of view of the corporation, there isn't the same publicity.

RC: Right.

CC: And you can't get Knoll or these kind of people too closely connected?

RC: That would be a conflict of interest?

AD: And that's the other side of it.

CC: You get a lot of that but you don't—

AD: If you are exhibiting something—for example, when we exhibited the Bang & Olufsen material, we could have gone to the United States government and asked for money to pay for the cost of mounting an exhibition of the work of a very prosperous manufacturer.

CC: NEA support.

AD: In my mind, that raises a serious ethical question: What do I mean by asking the American taxpayer to pay for an exhibition of the work of a manufacturer who will benefit from the exhibition no matter what I do?

CC: [Laughing] Right.

AD: The other alternative is to ask another manufacturer of something else. Well, why would a cosmetics manufacturer, or why would a gasoline company underwrite Bang & Olufsen? That seems a little unlikely. So you're left, finally, with Bang & Olufsen, which is exactly what we did. We said, okay, we'll pay a base part of this thing, but we'd like you to pay for the travel expenses and all the shipping and special installation things and whatever else we pick up that we find is an expense. Bang & Olufsen ended up contributing $10,000 to that. It was a very small exhibition and we were able to do it comfortably with that plus some other money that we had. In my mind that was the only ethical solution to this problem. And yet this is very difficult to explain to people. We had an exhibition here *called* *Transformations in Modern Architecture* in '79. And it was [a] huge exhibition. It had something like 400 buildings in it; it was a very dense, difficult to absorb exhibition. And I [tape break at 0:41:50] one very important component

of this survey were mirrored glass, reflecting glass buildings, skyscrapers and other kinds of buildings that were all made within a very sophisticated glass technology. I find these buildings very fascinating and 50 years from now they will clearly have been the culminating statement of the line of development.

CC: These skins and everything?

AD: The skin, the glass skin buildings, which are now all over the United States, all over Europe.

CC: Is that Citicorp being one of those?

AD: No, that's a different thing. I'm talking about the glass skin buildings.

RC: The Hancock, it was one of the first, in Boston.

AD: Yes, like the John Hancock; that's right. Anyway, we could have had endless black and white photographs of these buildings and they tend to look rather like each other, which is true of all very simple things, that they do tend to resemble each other. And so I decided these things are at their best when they're in color. I mean, the whole point of a reflecting surface is that you see the colors that are reflected through the atmosphere. So we decided we would do a certain number of them in color transparencies, backlighted color transparencies, and they are very expensive, so I had to go hunting for some money to do this. I could only get—who do you ask to pay for color photographs of glass buildings: Mobil Oil, Estee Lauder? Who do you ask? Well, you ask a glass manufacturer, obviously. So we asked Pittsburgh, PPG had a foundation and they gave us, as it happened, $10,000, which exactly paid for the transparencies that we made up for the show. When the show was reviewed in the *Times* after it opened, Paul Goldberger, who presumably was purer than the driven snow, professed to be *shocked* and he raised the question that the PPG foundation was one of the sponsors of the show, and perhaps that explained the number of glass buildings. It didn't occur to him that there were that number of glass buildings and that I like glass buildings, and that's why.

CC: Also, PPG doesn't make all the glass for all the buildings.

AD: That was another aspect of it. As a matter of fact, if Paul had asked me, I would have shown him the correspondence in which I warned them that it wasn't going

to be PPG glass because these buildings were coming from all over the world and every conceivable manufacturer. It made no difference to them.

CC: No.

AD: But there is this problem in funding architecture shows. And it will continue to be this way, and it will in all likelihood get a lot worse as the competition for money increases. Journalists and critics do no one, including—especially the profession of architecture and design—any favors when they make the process more difficult. PPG ended up—the foundation felt that they had been ill treated and abused. They had acted out of generosity and they get a bad press, and consequently, they weren't interested in helping us on any more exhibitions. I had felt that I had gotten the first olive out of the bottle on that, [laughter] and from then on, oh boy, I was going to be able to get a whole series of exhibitions funded by the PPG foundation.

CC: Forget it. It sounds like you ought to get together with Mary Lea Bandy. She doesn't feel any compunction whatsoever about Warners or Universal or having—

AD: Oh, she's quite right.

CC: I think she's absolutely right because—what the hell. If she wants to show RKO pictures or a selection of Universal or whatever, why the hell not go back to the people? They own them.

AD: Of course.

CC: And they're producing them, too.

AD: The Film Department has no choice, there are legal constraints involved in that.

CC: But also the criticism thrown at you about the *Three [New] Skyscrapers*—oh, well, show three skyscrapers by two trustees or something, that kind of thing. I mean, hey, well, the very fact that the Museum has these people on their board,

AD: Yes, they're on the board because they're distinguished architects.

CC: They're not having a show because they're on the board.

AD: He knows that.

CC: It's interesting though because someone like—I guess after we met him I turned to the—even last Sunday, the one before it, in the paper, I was just curious about just a typical review that he might write, and it wasn't to me about architecture at all. It wasn't about form and function; it was about land use or use of space and grants of property. And it's interesting because it didn't have anything to do with design. It was over in—how do we use this and what's the government doing about giving land to. And I was kind of taken by it. I thought that it was like a legal problem really rather than a design problem. I mean, it has design ramifications further down the line because it's like saying: Gee, could Lincoln Center exist? That kind of thing. Well, it never even broaches the question of what's it going to look like if it does.

AD: Architecture is—it's the nature of the beast. It's really very difficult to talk about architecture pure and simple, even for me. And I'm determined to do it but it's very difficult because you can't extricate yourself from the realities of the...

END OF INTERVIEW at 0:47:24