

## DAVID HOFFMAN MOMA HISTORY INTERVIEWS

**INTERVIEW WITH:** JACK LIMPert, JR. (JL)  
**INTERVIEWERS:** RUTH CUMMINGS (RC); CARL COLBY (CC)  
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RC: Jack Limpert, Development.

CC: ...from its inception to the present, and what the future holds. We hope to, in a sense, tell the story from the inside out, from people here as well as the ones who originated it, beginning almost on a very intimate scale between Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and Alfred Barr, Lillie Bliss, and all this told through the words of people like Eddie Warburg, Philip Johnson, David Rockefeller, Monroe Wheeler, Beaumont Newhall—I spoke with him today; we’re going to probably bring him in—and really start to tell it from the origins. And that’ll be in a sense, a very romantic story and almost like a social-intellectual history of New York and of culture in America. But as it begins to expand out, what we thought we would like to do is not simply catalogue each department—and this has this and this has this and that, show the art when it makes a point—but begin to track the present and the future as if, where are we headed. And with that in mind, we’re also seeing people, and we’re going to see more, but we’re seeing people such as Donald Marron; we’ve been seeing him on Wall Street. We spoke to Richard Koch about the transition. We spoke of course to Richard Oldenburg. We’ve spoken to the curators; not all of them. We see Bill Rubin soon, and Arthur Drexler. We’ve spoken to John Szarkowski, et cetera. But from an institutional point of view, we don’t think—it’s not necessarily bad that the Museum became an institution. It happened, and it happened in the forties and it’s what’s popularized it. But in order to get a further fix on where it’s headed and what the Tower means, et cetera, we wanted to speak to you because you’re in the hot seat for survivability, really. And Donald Marron put it very succinctly. He said it is a question of survival, to do something like that. And we wanted to speak to

you, if you had comments which clearly related to the future of a cultural institution such as this, which is still privately supported, not state supported or city supported. How do you address that? Is it getting harder and harder? What solutions are you coming up with in order to keep yourself alive?

JL: Well, if I'm in the hot seat, I've got a lot of good company in there with me. So that's, you know, a good thing. I don't think we should really try to be so cosmic about it. This condominium tower, and all that we've done in the past four or five years, is not, nor should it ever be, nor I think it was ever intended to be, the ultimate solution to all of our problems. Okay? And I really believe in that as a fundraiser. I don't think it would be a good idea, even if somebody thought it might be, to so work things out that we never had to raise any more money again. I think, in fact, the way in which you raise money and the people who give you support is one indication, not the main but certainly one indication, of how useful and desirable you are in your own time. So that I see nothing wrong with every 10 years going back to various constituencies and having a capital drive. So as far as I'm concerned, this is not the end all or be all. This project and what we're doing now has given us at least a 30 or 40-year lease on time. And that's pretty darn good, as things go. You know? Therefore, we're going to solve our problems for the next generation, or at least be part of the solution for the next generation, and then we're going to get other generations to come along and they're going to do their part, too.

CC: So you don't want people to forget you, I mean, [INAUDIBLE: 0:04:04].

JL: Well, I think, yes—I think, mainly—I think the main thing is not to clutch up. I think the point is that we took on something very exciting here, a really innovative way to solve our problems. And if you look at a model of the Museum, what you see is that the way the Museum is expanded, it's like a rabbit warren. There's a little bit of it over here, and there's some of it over here, and there's some of it over there. We're not sitting in a park, like the Metropolitan or like so many museums that are expanding where all you have to do to expand is just go out in one direction, you've got nothing but land. We're hemmed in on all sides, so we had to sell the air rights, and the condominium goes up into the air, and under it goes the new west wing, and the Museum builds another floor onto the Garden wing for another restaurant. That's it; that's what we're doing. And that's

exciting, and it has a lot of [INAUDIBLE: 0:04:55] to it. It's an ingenious solution, for this time. Now I don't know, 20 or 30 or 40 years from now, someone might come along and say, 'Alright, that's fine, and now we're going to do it another way.' I think it's constantly evolving, and that's good.

CC: Even beyond, let's say—that's the Museum Tower, and I think obviously, it has to be addressed. It's sitting there, and it has to be recognized and talked about. But even in the grander scheme, to go back to the more cosmic, we're looking really to address those million and a half or two million PBS viewers who unfortunately, a lot of them, they come to New York, they come to the Museum, they pay their \$3, and then they kind of think to themselves, well, the \$3 plus what the Rockefellers give, and that's the Museum. They have this concept that it's just a lot of private wealth plus their little contribution, and I guess the endowment or whatever, and they don't think about it. And they come in and enjoy the show and leave, and they buy a postcard. But what we're concerned about is, for somebody to tell that educated public out there who does go to the Museum and is interested and who will be watching the show, just what a museum really has to do now in order to survive. And I think if, along with what Marron said, for instance, if that was to be addressed in a simple way, it could help people's understanding of how an institution like yours continues to exist. I keep going back to seeing Nelson Rockefeller's comment way back in 1940, when he turned to Alfred Barr or whatever and said, 'Listen, you know, the great day of the big endowments is over; it's coming to an end.' And he's talking from—that's the horse's mouth speaking.

JL: But he was wrong.

CC: He was wrong?

JL: That's not true because it was never [INAUDIBLE: 0:06:33]. The endowment drives today that Harvard and Yale and Princeton are mounting are the greatest in their histories. So if the day of the big endowment drives is over—

CC: I think he meant in terms of two or three big [J.P.] Morgans or [Henry Clay] Fricks or whatever.

JL: Sure, but other people have come in to fill their place, so, I mean, the fact is, you always have patrons of the arts, right from the times of the pharaohs to the present day. And the present pharaohs are corporations, and they are now the patrons of the arts. And I don't know, maybe a hundred years from now, it'll be something else again. But I think that—I really would be very careful about any general pronouncements on who is or who isn't coming in, or what kind of money there is around or isn't around. I mean, you know, the Met's gotten a few 10 million dollar gifts, and that seems to indicate that the day of big givers is certainly not over. We've gotten multi-million-dollar gifts. So I think there's still plenty of money out there. The question again comes back to, are you providing something useful in your time? If you are, then you're going to get support. Now—and who are we providing this useful function to? Well, let's start with the leading supporter of this time, which is the corporate sector. This Museum peculiarly is suited to corporations. When I came here 10 years ago, I thought that the Natural History museum was a much more natural thing for corporations to support. I talked with a very smart businessman, and he said, 'I don't think so. I think actually, you have more to do with business than natural history.' And then, in the intervening period, I've come to agree with him, because if you're in the mining or petroleum business, then the Natural History museum is very much up your alley.

CC: Environmentally.

JL: Environmentally and everything else. But on the other hand, if you live in a modern office building, as most corporations do, you're surrounded with modern furniture, you have the latest technology, you produce products that have to use good design; I think you're talking about MoMA. Because the disciplines [INAUDIBLE: 0:08:39] for design and film and photography, which we've pioneered as being modern arts, are the things that every corporation uses. So, this is a repository of knowledge and skill for corporations. We had a party here—in November 1974, we had a lot of businessmen. We took them all down to the study center of the design collection, and one of them said, 'Gee, you know, I send my designers all over the world and now I realize that they only have to come here, to 11 West 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, and they can see the whole thing in one place, at the Modern.'

RC: That's great.

JL: So, that's the kind of utility that we have there. What sort of utility do we have for members of the public, let's say? Well, I think there is something you get here that you don't get [INAUDIBLE: 0:09:25] museums, the Frick or the Met. Okay? What do you get out of the Frick? You get magnificent art, probably, in my opinion, one of the greatest collections in the world, and certainly in a breathtaking setting. Right? Alright, what does it symbolize? It symbolizes what great capitalism can do when it's linked with beautiful taste. Terrific. If you had all the money that Frick had, you couldn't replicate what he did, because the art simply isn't available any longer. So while you can bathe in it, you can't really take it home with you, except in the spiritual sense. The Met, you could do a little bit more there. It's a little bit more accessible. I mean, many of the departments can train your eye, and so on. But still, it isn't replicable to any large extent. This place, on the other hand, you come in, you begin to look at the things. You get to learn what good architecture is, what good design is. And if you have any feel for the contemporary, you want contemporary objects and things like that around you, well this place will train your eye. So what I'm saying is that it will teach you how to live in a contemporary way with very good taste. And I think that an awful lot of people pick that up as they come through, and that's why it's important.

CC: And also, they can go and look at your recent acquisitions—

JL: Absolutely.

CC: And then go downtown and get one. [Laughter]

JL: I mean, there's that too, of course. See, I don't think—it's interesting. We had a Breuer show [[Marcel Breuer: Furniture and Interiors](#)] about a year ago, and to me it's rather touching to look at this work because Breuer, I mean, the stuff that he designed in the twenties is still as modern—it's ahead of its time now. Okay? But I think he had a concept which I have rarely seen carried out, namely that he and other modern architects felt that people were going to live all of a piece; a modern house with all modern furniture and modern objects of design, and that was it. It was going to be end-to-end a modern approach. Well, I've been in a few houses like that, and I'm sure you have. But most people are eclectic. They have a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and a little bit of something else, you

know. And certainly, today, that seems to be more in style, that you live with the old and the new side by side. So that we haven't really evolved the way that Mr. Breuer hoped we were going to evolve, but in the other hand, there is a great role to display.

CC: Now you've brought it up. I mean it's sort of funny because in the last couple of months I've been thinking of that, especially with this project I thought to myself, well, in the old days, when Mrs. Rockefeller had their great big house, it was all Moorish and Turkish, and in the top floor, a few modern pictures. And actually, they were just watercolors; they weren't too outrageous. But they were modern and those were modern things in an old setting, so that being like an [Aleksandr] Archipenko or something on the wall, a [Francis] Picabia or whatever, was really quite outrageous in an old-fashioned setting. Now, it's almost the reverse. I mean, most everyone—most everyone they live in a townhouse or whatever, live in a quite contemporary setting, so you occasionally will see an antique desk or a piece of porcelain or a certain chair that you might have bought that's Art Deco or Folk Art. Do you sometimes see that it's too locked in? Or, do you feel that the Museum could just sort of find itself in a vise grip of having taken on this modern art and it's taken on this battle, and since the battle is won now, so, whereas—?

JL: I think there are always some surprises, some great things—

CC: Always more to do?

JL: More to do and more to learn. Take our present show, [Three New Skyscrapers](#). I went through the show, and my mind was blasted by the [Gordon] Bunshaft building, the one in Saudi Arabia. And I think it's just tremendous. And as I looked at it, I thought, if anyone thinks that modern architects really have said all they had to say, just take a look at that building. Because it's an unusual building. And to me, that's really what the place is about, that you get these wonderful surprises.

CC: And that other one in Hong Kong.

JL: And the one in Hong Kong is interesting. I must say, that of the three, the Bunshaft building is the one that I really love. Wonderful. By the way, and [this is] interesting, I saw him at a board meeting, and I said, "Gordon, I think that

building is clearly the winner in the show.” And he was very modest. He said, “The other buildings are very good, too. But,” he said, “you know, I had a good client with money to spend, and also an interesting problem which the building solves, which is that in Saudi Arabia, unlike New York, sunlight is *not* what you want; you want shade.” So he built the building to shade the floors. And so there it is, form and function beautifully linked. So I think—

CC: Yes, which is a building that wouldn't normally work here.

JL: I think there are some things we can learn. I mean, I'm certainly picking things up. I go to the gift shop; obviously we've got I think a very handsome [selection], that, you know, somebody would like.

CC: It's not a question of—collusion isn't the word but, what happens when someone like these people that are on your board, [and] also, the great modern artists, [who] suddenly become—they're no longer simply adventurous; they *are* the great businessmen. Or [Robert] Rauschenberg has a show and he's also a terrific artist, and he's very, very popular.

JL: Yes he is, and he is a good businessman.

CC: What happens when they all—? Does that become difficult for you that in a way you're suddenly in position where, if Arthur Drexler chooses so-and-so then, here we go; that man's reputation is made. Or Kynaston McShine decides that so-and-so and so-and-so are now going to be in a drawings show, [INAUDIBLE: 0:14:58].

JL: I can't give you—that's the view of an expert that you're asking for, and I'm not. But I—

CC: I ask you though because you're not in curatorial.

JL: Well, no, I think that one of the healthy respects that you get after you work here for a while is that you have to be very careful how you use the imprimatur of the Museum. This is part of the problem, which is, that it's nothing to be done lightly, because yes, people do take it deadly seriously, and the next thing you know, off they go and say, well, The Museum of Modern Art recommended this or did that, and suddenly, you've brought the whole institution sort of into a position of prominence. But it is a problem—I'm told by curators, that is, that Kynaston

McShine is planning a show right now, a group show [[\*An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture\*](#)], and he's been very careful not to talk about who he's going to observe because it will affect the art.

CC: Sure. Someone in Rome or Milan finds out—

JL: It is not a problem for me; no. I mean, it is a problem only tangentially in the sense that infrequently, I have been approached by artists who want to donate their pictures to the Museum. And that's tricky.

RC: You have to refer them back to the curators?

JL: I think it's a very responsible policy. First of all, the Museum generally does not like to accept works unless they're works that they could exhibit or that could be part of its collections. It also has a real dislike of accepting the work of a living artist then turning around and selling it, because again, this is damaging, you see. And so it's to that extent that I get involved, but I immediately turn it over to the curators, and we go from there.

CC: We spoke to Sidney Janis, Pierre Matisse, Leo Castelli, and a couple of others, and they repeatedly, particularly Pierre Matisse and Leo Castelli, were saying how receptive America was to all this. And they tell wonderful stories of [Marcel] Duchamp coming over here, and he loved it here. People bought his stuff. Katherine Dreier, and she's buying that *Large Glass*; she has 90 things by him, or whatever. But, do you think Americans—? And this again is that two million people who are watching but, do you think Americans can be quite extraordinarily proud of themselves for having evolved so much culturally? I mean, where do we stand, you as Director of Development here as opposed to let's say—well, I don't even know if anyone is doing your job in Paris or wherever the hell [INAUDIBLE: 0:17:26]?

JL: More and more places—

CC: What do you think about this?

JL: Well, I think that it's a combination of things. First of all—

CC: Is it quite extraordinary really, I mean the pervasiveness?

JL: The pluralism of support for cultural activities in this country is extraordinary.

CC: Practically unprecedented?

JL: It's unprecedented. I mean, you've got the government, you've got corporate support, you have private individuals, you have everybody together in this. And it's one of the glories of the world. People come here to study this, and it's sort of ironic now because Ronald Reagan wants to get the government out to the degree of funding cultural activities, and that diminishes the pluralism somewhat. And I feel, and many other people feel, that corporations are not going to step in just simply to take up the slack. No, they're not going to do that; they don't have that much money. But I think you have a very peculiar thing that happened here that did not happen in Europe. In Europe, after all, you had great patrons of the arts and many, you know, [Johann Sebastian] Bach and [Ludwig van] Beethoven had their patrons who sponsored works and so on.

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:18:31].

JL: Yes, and all that was terrific. And these, after all, were people of cultivation—these princes and popes and so on. I mean, they weren't just suddenly coming into wealth and having to spend it. But now we did have a situation here—we had our robber barons who made a lot of money very fast. Them being, I think, the quintessential American, in the character of Americans who believes that, alright, let's get some culture, and we'll buy it by the board foot if we have to. Well, that's about what they did at the time, but what they did was really marvelous because they, unlike the Europeans, for instance, who said, I'm going to give you something but this is what I want in return. The Pope would direct Michelangelo: Make sure you do it this way. These people gave the dough, and really sort of said: Well, alright, now do something. You know? But they didn't sit and tell them exactly what to do. So this, I think, was a very peculiar thing that happened here, and it set a pattern which is [INAUDIBLE: 0:19:32] to this day—which is that certainly, individual patrons have exercised strong influence, but on the other hand, most of the corporate monies and [INAUDIBLE: 0:19:45] comes through with no strings attached. And that's quite remarkable. Something that Europeans find hard to believe: Do you mean that all these rich people gave that and they didn't demand anything in return? They didn't want the artists to paint their picture a certain way? Or they didn't want galleries arranged a certain way?

CC: Selling their cars in the museum...

JL: Yes; right. And the answer is, by and large, yes.

CC: So you could really look the public in the face and say that, as opposed to let's say the European system. Or if someone was really very depressive about it, they might say, aw, the government's going to take over, you'd say that the system we have worked out now, if the government doesn't step out of it, I mean if they do keep their foot in, is a—this pluralism is a solution that works extremely well and that—forget the European model. I mean, our model works, and we have—is there more flexibility, would you say here, than let's say at Beaubourg? Not to put that down, but...

JL: I can't speak to a specific place, but I do think that the funding patterns here are much more flexible.

CC: And probably do much.

JL: Yes, I think so.

RC: Let me ask you then about the fact that the—we heard from Riva Castleman, the financial staff personnel outnumber the curatorial. Now that's curious. Is your job—?

JL: I would hope that Riva would say that one curator is easily worth five finance people. [Laughter]

RC: See that was the purpose of what [INAUDIBLE: 0:21:06] said. And yet, we heard—well there's two questions we have. First, about that fact, is your job harder than the original people, or have circumstances changed so much?

JL: We've grown, the development operation of this museum has grown. Sure, it has, because we've had to raise more money, and we've had to raise more kinds of money. When I came here, what were we trying to do? We were trying to do two things. We were trying to arrest what was then a decline in the membership picture, and to build annual operating supports with an Annual Fund. Now what are we doing today? Today we still—now we've got the membership, and it's a vigorous effort, so that's fine. And we still have to get annual operating support. We have to raise 75 million dollars for the Capital Campaign. We've raised 61.3,

or 82 percent so far. We have to raise money for construction and renovation. We have to raise money for exhibition support through corporations. And so on and so forth. So we're doing about five times what we did 10 years ago when I came here.

RC: Now what were your methods? Because that's interesting. I mean, you really pumped up membership—what ways? How?

JL: There's no better way to pump up membership than to have a succession of outstanding exhibitions, which indeed we did.

RC: Some people said that the corporate—the blockbuster shows, some people find fault with that, even though it's producing the income.

JL: Well, I think that one of the great examples of a marvelous blockbuster is [\*Cezanne: The Late Work\*](#). Okay? Here was a show that had a scholarly thesis, namely, the last 10 years of Cezanne's life, what he produced. He foresaw much of what would come after him in modern art, like cubism and abstract expressionism and so forth. And so there were 20 studies of the same subject, for example, up on the wall. And a week or so before the show opened, Bill Rubin said to a group, a Planning Committee session, 'Look; you all have been sitting here planning for a very popular show. This is a very scholarly show and I don't know, maybe nobody is going to come.' And half a million people later, I mean, he was, I think, as surprised as anybody else, at the extent of the popularity of the show, but it was both scholarly and instructive and also terribly popular.

RC: However, did you have to sit down and say to them [that] you weren't sure of the outcome of this? You didn't have to sit down with the Committee and say: Look, you guys; you're doing this all wrong. We've got to have a [Pablo] Picasso show; we've got to have shows that are—

JL: No. What we did—we had a very enlightened corporate sponsor, and the corporate sponsor made the show possible. And we did all we could to intelligently promote it. And then, you know.

- RC: What does it take to talk to corporate sponsors? Now it's accepted, because, like you described, MoMA now is the corporation patron. Were you responsible to pull them up? What was that like?
- JL: I'll tell you what I think it takes. It was best said by a young photographer in a show called *Mirrors and Windows* [[\*Mirrors and Windows: American Photography Since 1960\*](#)] that was sponsored by the Philip Morris corporation. And this photographer said, 'You know, I'm really glad to get the support for my work, being in a show that has corporate underwriting, because corporations and artists have more in common than artists and the government.' He said they share things like inventiveness, private industry, quality, that kind of thing. And I think, if you say to a corporate sponsor—IBM, in the case of *Cezanne* [*Cezanne: The Late Work*—this is what we're trying to do in this show, it's a fascinating idea and it captured their imagination. They're people like anybody else. You've got to have something exciting to capture the attention of the people. I think that that's the first step. Then after that you need—the next question is, that's great for me; what's it going to do for the corporation? In other words, I love the idea but how do you see this fitting in with our overall marketing objectives?
- RC: And you quote that photographer, and what else do you need to say? Now that it's accepted, I mean, was your job harder when you came in? And were you the one who created this movement?
- JL: I think it was—no, I certainly can't take credit personally for it. I was certainly one of the people who helped do it, but a lot of other people were doing it as well. And I think that it was somewhat easier years back because there were fewer of us beating the bushes for this kind of support than there are now. And now there are many people out there and many shows competing for attention. It's a highly competitive environment at this point. Plus, right now we have a severe recession, and that doesn't help at all.
- CC: It must be tough for you also to go to certain people, and I don't necessarily mean corporations, but let's say a foundation or a family foundation, whoever, and say to them, well, we're doing a so-and-so drawings show at the Museum; we really could use you to support that. And at the same time the person that morning had a visit from a hospital or whatever that's been getting a heart fund or

whatever, and money's getting a little tight, and at the same time, people will give when there's something.

JL: I don't think it's as difficult for a person, but I think that's a very acute observation where corporations are concerned. Because I think particularly right now; let's talk about New York. Right now, early 1983, we've got a hell of a lot of human misery in this town at this point. And that is competing with all the rest of us for corporate philanthropy. And this is the first time in 10 years that I've been in this business where I have sensed that we're not just competing with each other any longer—that is the Met, MoMA, the Guggenheim, and the Whitney—but we're competing with other things around us. And it's a hell of a problem. I hope, and I think, that there's a case that can be strongly made for a balance in all these things. But it is a new thing that we have to take into consideration.

CC: I asked Donald Marron whether he felt that he had a great responsibility to the Museum, being a trustee, because of—not to say that it's taken for granted that he's going to be buying and then later giving to the Museum, but that it is certainly in the air that when he does buy, [that] the Museum is there and is very interested in—that if he's going to buy, will he buy intelligently and keep an eye to the Museum as being a conduit that he'd eventually give up to the Museum. And he, you know—I couched it in nice language and I said, you know, that's what the Rockefellers did, I mean, is there a move on or do you feel the pressure to be like Abby Rockefeller, hopefully not Stephen Clark or a couple of others. But do you have that same impetus? And he said, yes, it gives him—it makes him feel that he is more than just there for the moment. I mean, he's being asked to do more, there's a long stretch to it. He likes the fact that he has a collection, that the corporation has a collection, and that he also occasionally gives things to the Museum directly. But he likes to maintain his independence, but he did say that he feels a responsibility and a loyalty to the Museum. And he knows that that's one of the functions of why he's there. Do you see that even though Abby Aldrich Rockefeller is no longer here, and Nelson Rockefeller, et cetera, even though those great big names are mostly gone, do you see that same long-term interest in someone like the young people, or a John Parkinson, David Rockefeller Jr.? Do they have that same long-term commitment?

JL: Yes, I think they do. And I think that beyond that, there are lots of people that you and I have never heard of that also have this commitment. And every once in a while, we'll pick up the newspapers and see somebody or some family who we've never heard of has left, you know, 10 great pictures to Yale or to us or to the Met. Where do these people come from? Well, a few people knew about them. But I think there's always this: I think Don Marron definitely burns with a collector's fever, and that's a marvelous thing. I think that's why he got involved with the Museum; I don't think it was the other way around. He was interested in modern art before he became involved in the Museum. And that's the great thing. But we don't mind which way it happens; we're just grateful it does. I think it's fun to be a collector. I mean, I wish I could afford it; I would be one.

CC: Do you think—? One of the things we wanted to do is try to give some color to—and I know, you wouldn't have known her, but, the extraordinary relationship that must have existed between Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and her husband. He didn't like the stuff, and he was very, very much committed to her, though, and he, if anything—I read in one of the books that he tried to live down, in a way, the family fortune, because it was so outrageously enormous. And when he tried to give—and he did; he did succeed in giving. To most people, they may remember the name Rockefeller as being acquisitive and nouveau riche and monopolistic and all, but to many, many people now, the name Rockefeller—

JL: It's a benevolent—

CC: [They remember it] as benevolent, benign and he is quite responsible for that. That kind of a relationship, it must have been very extraordinary. Do you see that as being something that just was extremely lucky happenstance for this institution that it never would have happened without him?

JL: No.

CC: Or do you think that's over-played?

JL: No, no. I think it's the result of a very intelligent woman with strong convictions, namely Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, and a husband who loved his wife and also had great respect for her. And I think that this is what you're seeing is the interplay, and I don't think that just happened. I think that in fact, if you look at their

children and the way their children were brought up and the philanthropies that they've continued, and their children's children, I mean, this thing was pretty carefully thought out. I think it was part of a whole pattern of being of service to the community and to the best causes. And I think that even if John D. Jr. didn't really like what his wife was doing, he had enough respect for her to say, 'Well, alright, there may be something to it, even if I personally don't want to look at it.' He was more of an antiquarian, apparently, than—

CC: Since the forties or whatever, you've structured the institution financially so that you'd be able to survive the passing of that great fortune out of the—perhaps not out of the system entirely but not in the sense that Alfred Barr [was] saying, 'Let's get that picture,' and then she's on the phone getting it. 30 years from now, when Paul Mellon is no longer at the National Gallery then they have a dinner where he gives 94 pictures.

JL: Right. I think the point is that the members of the Rockefeller family who are involved with the Museum never made any bones about the fact that the family could not continue to be a mainstay of support, and that at some stage, [like] now, other support would have to come in. And again, what we said when we started, which is that getting support from a wide variety of constituencies is one indication that what you're doing is valued and needed by the community. So that's another thing, I think—in other words, it's important to them to feel that other people have come into the scene and said: This is a fine institution; it should be supported; we want to do our share as well.

RC: So it's really succeeded. I mean, if they were alive to see this, people would be very pleased.

JL: Well, I remember once, when I first came here, I was in the lobby and some—there was a young sort of a—not the tail end of the sixties anymore; it was the early seventies, but there was a young student who came in and said, 'Well, I don't see why I should pay the admission fee, because after all, the Rockefellers are part of this, and why don't you just let me in free?' And I said, 'Are you suggesting that the Rockefellers should let you in free, and also therefore have total say, because,' I said, 'if they're just going to give you something, then they'd have complete say and control of what goes on here. Is that palatable?' And no,

he didn't want that. He wanted much more of a public stance, but on the other hand, he wanted the Rockefellers to pay for it. Well, the two attitudes are inconsistent.

RC: Exactly.

CC: I think that's right.

JL: Yes. So I think that, in fact, the institution is much more public now than it was in 1973. And will be more public still in another 10 or 20 years.

CC: See, we feel that's part of the story, particularly as it winds out in the end and at the end of our hour. Because if someone leaves watching the film and has a terrific affection for the Museum of the times of the twenties and thirties, and a lot of interesting, creative people and it's all wonderful, but still goes to the Museum, has no inkling of the trouble and the attention and where the money comes from, and still thinks when they give the three bucks, like the kid, that, do they really need it; they've got all that money. But they don't have all that money. That three bucks, plus the government giving the matching three bucks...

JL: I think that's very important, and I also think we have to do a better job, all of us, of telling the public what this is all about. I mean, the truth of the matter is that, if you go to [Colonial] Williamsburg, which is another great Rockefeller philanthropy, you will find in the visitor center there, a complete presentation on what it takes to make Williamsburg operate, and where the money comes from. And the public is invited to do their share, and it's explained that the admission fees go to the [INAUDIBLE: 0:34:42]. That's a very good thing to do. And we all have to do more of it, because maybe you ought to hand out a brochure to people to let them know where your admissions go and where your dollars will go, et cetera, et cetera. I don't think we've done the best possible job, no. We have with our constituencies; not with the general public.

CC: I used to live in Washington, and when I first came here a couple of years, I still remember being in a museum and [when I would] have to pay something, I thought, "Why do I have to pay?" Isn't that—in a way, they're setting a bad example down there by doing that? And Armand Hammer goes to the Corcoran, and puts in just enough money so they don't have to pay them?

JL: I disagree with that.

CC: Is that a bad idea?

JL: I think it's a bad idea.

CC: The average tourist goes in and he thinks—

JL: I think free admission is a bad idea because—

CC: Who's paying for it?

JL: Well, who's paying for it, and I mean it perpetuates the concept of Lady Bountiful sort of behavior which I think is totally outdated at this point.

CC: And I think in Washington's case, it's not Lady Bountiful, it's the USA.

JL: Yes, and I think that in fact, an admission charge, hell, we—well, what we're charging today is less than what it costs to get into a second-rate movie. Okay? And I certainly think we should compete with that, if not with first-rate movies. So I'm all for people having a good, sizeable admission charge. It does, however—it does mean that at a certain level, and we're beginning to approach that now, you are beginning to compete with some interesting other entertainments and attractions. So the question is, how do you position us among the visitors? The visitor says, 'Look; I'd rather do this than go see,' you know; whatever.

CC: Also, the fact that you're open in the evening; for instance, that's a good—I remember reading early, in one of the books, that Alfred Barr, after a couple of years, he thought, 'Hell, you know, why aren't we open in the evening? Everybody who works can't come during the day. They want to come in the evening, and, let's be open in the evening; it's an entertainment; it's like going to the theater.' And it's true. It's a show business.

JL: Well, it is, but unfortunately, though, museums are mostly daytime visiting activities, except for openings, which are at night. Our open evenings have never been all that heavily populated.

CC: Who comes mostly?

JL: A lot of members come, because for them it is more convenient. But again, I think, you know, the American character is rather peculiar in the sense that we

have this wonderful belief; it's naïve in some ways, but it's also our glory that, if we pay our three or four dollars and go through the museum, we're going to emerge from the other side better people for it. And that's true, I think, basically. You can stop at the idea, because if you can say, what are you going to pick up in an hour that's really going to do that much? But the point is that it is the desire to be better than you are, and that's what museums should cater to, they should cater to that desire, not just entertainment or spectacle or anything, although we occasionally all do that.

CC: It's still the original missionary zeal, then.

JL: That's right; that's right; absolutely. It is that zeal. And I think that any institution, regardless of age, always continues with the zeal that the founder put in, unless you get someone else to alter the character of it. So, I think we're still burning that fire that Alfred Barr lit.

CC: One question; how do you compare, I mean, Alfred Barr and let's say Richard Oldenburg, what does it take to be a director nowadays? And does he have to be a master fundraiser, a Prince Charming? What really does it take?

RC: Yes, a lot of different things.

CC: We had our interview, and it was the day after the Met had just opened with its [*The Vatican Collections: The Papacy and Art*], and he was even saying, not for attribution but that the cardinal was practically selling indulgences in the gift shop.

JL: First of all, I have to say that I hope this won't be considered too mischievous, let the—will you be my excuse; I have to say that the selling of indulgences is not necessarily a terrible idea. I mean, in a way, it's extraordinarily humane, because what you're really going on is that man is fallible and is prone to sin and error and has to be a magnetism of forgiveness. So if the cardinal was doing that, I for one don't take it amiss. And certainly into the first half the church and art have been linked together and the show proves that and so he was just sort of reemphasizing. Let's start by comparing two mayors of New York, [Fiorello] La Guardia, whom I remember as a young kid, and Ed Koch; okay? Would La Guardia today be as good a mayor as he was in his time? I don't think so. I

think that one of the things that we know about La Guardia is, he just had a super-human energy, and he was not a very good administrator.

CC: He was a builder.

JL: But he was a builder, he was a visionary, and he also was remarkable for his time. He was half-Italian and half-Jewish and he spoke Spanish, and wherever he found himself in New York, he could talk to anybody in their own language. And he made them feel they were all part of something very big, and that brotherhood thing, a lot of it stems, I think, from La Guardia's time, and it's still very strongly what keeps New York going. I mean, we have fantastic mixtures of people. If you brought him back today, I think the lack of administrative skill would trip him up pretty badly. So that I think that he was right for his time; Koch is right for his time. Now, Barr had a fantastic spirit, from what I'm able to glean; I didn't know him. One of the sad things for me, I came here in '73. He was still alive, but unfortunately he was not really too focused then. But he had an incredible vision, and he had also many modern talents in putting it through. We talk about marketing museums; Barr was a very good marketing man; there's no question about that.

RC: In what?

JL: Because he, for example, he would spend weeks and weeks trying to decide on the right title for a show. That was very important to him. And I wish we had some of that now [laughter] because some of our titles are just—I mean, they're really so flat that you really do yearn for a little razzmatazz.

CC: He brought the crowds in.

JL: But Barr, he thought that it was very important that a show had the proper title. Also, and this is a sidelight, but it's interesting, most good marketing men always think of marketing as a battle, indeed a war: there's your product and there's the enemy's product, and so on and so on. Well, Barr apparently was an expert on something which fits right in with that. He knew a lot about different great battles that had happened over a long, historical period.

RC: That's right; yes; military history.

JL: He really could recall the military history. He was absolutely up on all of it, which means to me that he also thought in terms of your move, my move, your move, my move. You see? So I think he really had that, the vision was there; the spirit was there, and what was really fantastic is, the spirit was the bold, adventurous spirit linked with a perfectionism, which is very rare. I mean, there are a lot of bold people around, but rarely do they demand high quality. Usually they sort of let the chips fall where they may. But that wasn't Barr's approach. So he set something in motion that was extraordinary. But he was not, I think—I don't think he was probably a great administrator. I don't know. But I also—he had a good sense of the dollar, and certainly from a curatorial point of view, knew both what it took to run a museum and all the pressures of financial troubles.

CC: Also, when he was doing it—when he was out buying pictures for people, making a decision.

RC: He was making the shows. [INAUDIBLE: 0:42:45].

JL: In other words, I don't think that Alfred Barr today would be as successful as he was for his time. But he was the right man for his time. I think today—

CC: What would it take for Oldenburg [INAUDIBLE: 0:42:56]?

JL I think, for one thing—and I think this is terribly important—he's a great diplomat, and that's very important. Because he's got so many different internal constituencies to satisfy. Then, beyond that, he's very bright, which is a very good thing to be when you're a director of a museum; he has a first-class mind at work there. He's also quite fair, in the sense that he remembers what he said and he remembers what you said. Okay? He doesn't always do what you want him to [do], to be sure, and sometimes he might take a position that you feel it's unfortunate that he feels this way or that way about something, but basically, he never reneges on what he says. You know; he'll say, "Well, that's true; I did say that, but I was wrong, and here it is," and so on. So these are qualities that I think inspire confidence and loyalty to somebody. And particularly to this period, when the Museum is searching, I think, and properly, for what it's going to be doing in the next decade or two decades or three decades. This is a very good—these are good qualities to have, because I think they create a flowering of [INAUDIBLE: 0:44:10].

CC: Is the duo that really accomplished that move, the transition into the institution, would you say would be Nelson Rockefeller and René d'Harnoncourt? I mean, they made this a modern institution or a modern corporation almost? They took a club and turned it into an institution that can survive on its own feet?

JL: I don't know. I think, frankly, that it might have been a little later than that. I have a feeling that certainly, the last 10 years have been very much that. I think, when I came to the Museum, that my feeling was from the standpoint of what I do, that the message that I should try and get across is, the Museum is competing for discretionary dollars just like everybody else, and we have to know that when we go out after them now. I think the Museum—that's accepted, we all agree that we are indeed doing just that. And that doesn't mean you have to pander, but it does mean you have to be aware that there are certain modern techniques we're going to have to employ. Now, turn that around. Bloomingdales, I once talked to their marketing director, and I said, 'Who do you compete with?' And he said, 'We don't compete with Bergdorf Goodman; we don't compete with Bonwit Teller; we don't compete with Lord & Taylor; we compete with The Metropolitan Museum of Art; we compete with The Museum of Modern Art; we compete with the Guggenheim, the Whitney, Yankee Stadium,' he said, 'Broadway.' He said, 'You name it; we compete with everybody who's doing something exciting.' [INAUDIBLE: 0:45:35].

CC: It's like they're competing with other phenomenon.

JL: Exactly. So I think—

CC: People go to the store, and you begin to think to yourself, alright now why are they going?

JL: What's happening?

CC: They're not really shopping.

JL: No. They're going to look at each other; going to meet each other; they're going—

RC: It's like Rockefeller Center.

JL: Yes.

CC: The *Newsweek* critic [Mark Stevens] said that almost off the top of his head—and that's something that we all know to be true and we hardly ever think about it. He said the Museum is a famous meeting place, the Garden, I mean, it's social, people always used to meet there. Monroe Wheeler said, 'Well, in my day, we all met at the Biltmore [Hotel] clock, but,' he said, it later turned into—they'd all meet in the Garden.

JL: Woody Allen said The Museum of Modern Art's the best place in New York to pick up girls.

RC: Sure, *Manhattan* was—

CC: He started his movie there.

JL: Yes, he did his movie in the Garden and so on. And so that was, you know, [INAUDIBLE: 0:46:22]. You have to be very careful how you do that.

CC: No, but I mean, it just gives you the feeling that it's part of the city, and it's not—it changes the idea of a museum.

JL: I think; look. The people years ago used to meet each other at church socials. That sort of thing is pretty well gone. Museums and other things, activities, have taken the place of these things. This is today's meeting ground.

RC: Let me ask you a hard question. What do you say to curators, such as Kynaston and Riva, who have important yet difficult, as far as from your end, things that need money. And both of them said, it's really tough. And maybe everybody would say that, but if Rubin wants to put on a Picasso show, no problem.

CC: Because they feel that they're in their own hot seat when they've got to come up with the new [tape break at 0:47:17].

JL: [Laughs] Then, what's happened is—several things have happened. Economics have played a role. That is to say that the so-called historical shows which everybody loves, like the Vatican show, or Cezanne, or Picasso—

CC: [Henri de] Toulouse-Lautrec or whatever he might do.

JL: They're getting steadily more expensive; okay? The shows that used to cost \$75,000 or \$100,000 now cost \$250,000 or \$300,000 or \$400,000. So many

corporations have said, 'Well wow, I mean, you know, do you have anything that's a little bit more in line?' [Laughter] Well, what's more in line—

RC: Do I have a deal for you.

JL: Yes; is a more contemporary artist where the work does not have to be shipped vast distances and so on. And certainly photography shows, you know, for example, are relatively inexpensive, and so forth. Then, another factor is, you've got a growing sophistication among corporate funders. I mean, after all, Sperry [Corporation] has just done a *Milton Avery* show [at the Whitney Museum of American Art]. That's a sophisticated thing to do. And it works geometrically in the sense that yes, a given company started conservatively, and today may be sponsoring very contemporary exhibitions. But if you get another company that's never gone into the exhibition field, they don't necessarily start with the art historical show and work their way forward. They watch what their peers are doing, and then they say, 'Well, why don't we do a contemporary show?'

CC: And they might want to jump into something—

JL: They jump, they jump right there.

CC: Rather than getting a second class—

JL: Well, the best example that we had, and is certainly one of the finest examples of how you get corporate visibility for a show, and for the sponsor, is Interpace Corporation. They came to the Museum and said, 'We'd like to sponsor a contemporary sculpture show'—which was Kynaston's show [[\*Contemporary Sculpture: Selections from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art\*](#)]—'and the reason we want to do that is, that we're in the business of building materials: conduits, ductwork, plastic and ceramic insulation, and all sorts of things like that. And we think that modern sculptors work in exactly the same materials, so therefore, we'd like to do the show.' So we had the show, and it was wonderful. So of course, everybody's curiosity—

CC: Were they happy or were they freaked out?

JL: Oh, they loved it, they absolutely loved it. And as a matter of fact, the press picked it up because they were curious. I mean why; this is the most un-fundable sort of thing at the time, contemporary sculpture.

CC: Ropes hanging...

JL: Right. And they said, 'Why is this company doing this?' And we said, we could say, 'Call up the chief executive officer, Bill Hartman, and talk to him.' And Hartman would say, 'Well, we did it because they work in these materials; so do we; and we think there's a natural affinity there between us.' And so, people just loved it.

CC: You also get people who support a particular department, don't you? Isn't there that Mills—the textile company for instance that helps—?

JL: Springs Mills has been one of [the sponsors of] the [Eugène] Atget, the four [Atget shows](#), in their publications.

CC: That's probably good for continuity, isn't it?

JL: I think it's very good. I think it's very, very smart. In fact, Springs started with one of the smartest arrangements that any corporation has ever offered, I think, by just saying, we want to sponsor a series of American photographers, and then we'd like to take an option on a big show.

CC: Sounds like a movie contract.

JL: It's like a movie contract; exactly. So they did the three smaller shows, and then the option was for the Ansel Adams show [[Ansel Adams and the West](#)], which was of course a knockout.

RC: Blockbuster; yes.

JL: Yes, that was a blockbuster show, a wonderful show and everybody loved it.

CC: So you get that continuity. It's like sponsoring for Public Television. It's tough to get somebody to go for just one, whereas you can't say the words "Masterpiece Theater" without thinking, "Where's that third word?"

JL: Mobil, third word; right. Exactly; exactly.

RC: Let me ask you; you touched on something I'd like for you to amplify. Is the spirit of this place, is it a tight ship now, everybody's on board and Oldenburg's at the helm? Is it really like that and you're just all waiting and the crew's ready to follow off into the future? Or, we have a different sense of—?

JL: No. [Laughter]

RC: It's so big.

JL: It has nothing to do with its being big. I think that first of all, the Trustee, who shall remain nameless, has a husband who is not all that keen about The Museum of Modern Art, so it's a replay of the original Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and John D. Jr. situation. And—but he's a staunch Harvardian, okay? So he came here one day, and I asked him what he thought about something; he was rather grumbly about it. I said, 'Listen. I want you to change your whole approach here, because this place was founded by a Harvard man.' And I said, "Therefore, since you have such reverence for your university, you ought to think well of the Museum." Now the reason I tell you this story is that I am just like Harvard, where it used to be said that no two Harvard men every agreed with each other about anything. So, I think the Museum is a [INAUDIBLE: 0:52:35] of opinion. And I think it's extremely healthy. We are not a militaristic organization. There are many different theories and thoughts. I think this is extremely healthy. I think there's a lot of discussion. I think you can find a debate [INAUDIBLE: 0:52:54] if you want.

CC: To give an example, we meet boundless enthusiasm from Mary Lea Bandy.

JL: Yes.

CC: We meet Mr. Will Rogers, you know, John Szarkowski. He's riding the biggest success wave. It's incredible what's happened to photography, and he feels a responsibility for it, and he's pushing further, he's pushing further into [the] frontier.

RC: And then Kynaston—

CC: We meet Kynaston, who thinks he's—

RC: Who's guarded and doesn't know—

CC: And he won't talk. He's in the total hotseat because he thinks they're all looking at him. And he puts on a show that's, 10 minutes—he's wrong any which way, he's going to get pushed off. And Riva sees the business aspects to her

particular department, and she was quite good, really, but she felt very sort of depressive, I think, about the whole thing in general.

RC: It's so big; where is the direction, and—

CC: She just sort of felt that, god, 50 years from now, will we remain independent? I think she was very concerned about that.

RC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:53:51] state.

CC: She wasn't afraid that artists were going to become master businessmen, but she just felt that what she was doing, it was more than commodity, and then after a while it just will take off on its own right and bring in—people forget, though. [Peter Paul] Rubens, you know, was Secretary of State, in Holland; you know that? The artist. People, in those days, sure, there were some monks, but a lot of them were very, very active characters: designers, architects. They were very much in the business world, and I think people have still got in their minds the idea of an artist in an ivory tower and anti-establishment and all that.

JL: I think one of the things that this reflects is that there are six, now seven, modern arts. Right? I mean, painting and sculpture, architecture and design, film, photography, drawings, prints and illustrated books, and video. All of these disciplines are in different stages of evolution. Painting and Sculpture is sitting around and saying, is modern art over? Did it end in 1960? And when you meet with Rubin, you must ask him that question. You'll get some good answers. The Architecture and Design—Drexler says, no, modern architecture is not over. He doesn't agree with Tom Wolfe, who says, that's finished, now we're back [INAUDIBLE: 0:55:10].

CC: No, there's intense interest in architecture.

JL: Okay. Film is really in its element today. It's really the era now.

CC: Mary Lea may as well be at Paramount.

JL: That's right. Photography, not only is John riding it, but as you've reflected, he's leading the discipline, at this point. Really.

CC: Extraordinary; really.

JL: He is, and he is very controversial.

CC: He even distributed to us I think an article that—

JL: Oh, people get frantic about it. I mean they—

CC: He was a little worried—he said his staff had 15 copies of this article that was against him. And he said ‘Hey, why so many copies?’

JL: Well, I have—I mean, just a personal preference, I happen to like photojournalism. Okay, that’s, as far as John’s concerned, I think that’s out. I mean, he’s much more sort of what I would call photography for photography’s sake. Which, to my way of thinking, Ansel Adams is the best blend of the two. He tells a story but the photography itself is magnificent. So, terrific. But in any case, you have all these different stages of evolution and up until about a year ago, I didn’t know what video art was. I mean, I would watch some of it and really, I thought that was a good case of the emperor’s clothes. And then I sat down with Barbara London, and she showed me what we have in our collection. [INAUDIBLE: 0:56:25], again that’s an art form that my children instantly understand, and it takes me quite an effort of the will and of the mind to really put myself thoroughly into it. For instance, they are video creatures. They’ve grown up with it from the beginning, whereas it came into my life when I was about 17 or 18. So, the formative process was over by the time I saw that. So, I think because there are these different stages of evolution, you have these different tensions, different philosophies, different feelings. That’s why it’s hard to say whether the Museum is—is it modern? Is it contemporary? Is it avant-garde? Do you use an old fashioned word? Where is it? And you can’t answer the questions.

CC: If you have to even ask the question, I mean, is modern old fashioned?

JL: Is modern an old fashioned word; exactly.

RC: Well, what’s your vision now, if you could sum it up, of the future? Are you hopeful? Are you cautious? Are you on the right track? Could you pick a point of view about the future?

JL: I’m optimistic. I think that what the Museum is doing is really the smartest thing that it could do. I think that it needed to expand, number one. Number two, the

way it expanded was ingenious and the maximum use of the assets, and from a fundraising point of view, gives a powerful story; namely, we did all that we could to help ourselves, and now we need your help, which is always a nice way to go into things. I think that we've made a conscious decision to remain a museum. I think that's very important.

RC: As opposed to?

JL: Well, I'm rather dubious, for example, that all of this is going to end up on cable TV. I really have to tell you that I don't think so. Our art exhibitions and the viewer who we're saying is home, inside.

CC: I totally agree with you. Everybody I know still goes to the movies.

JL: Well, that's the point.

CC: They like to get out and they like to see [INAUDIBLE: 0:58:27].

JL: I think in fact, just the opposite, which is that as exhibitions get shown on television, more people want to go in person to see them. To that extent, there's a relationship. But we've made it—we're not going to turn the place into a bazaar. We're not going to become one gigantic gift shop. We've made those conscious decisions. We are not going to necessarily plan shows because they will be popular, but we certainly, I think, will take into account whether or not a show will be popular. We have to, we've got to survive. But, I would hope that somewhere along the way we could begin to do much more in the future what we've done very successfully over the last few years, which is to get the large attendance shows followed by exhibitions that benefit from this. Right after *Cezanne* [*Cezanne: The Late Work*], we had [Sol LeWitt](#). You could not possibly pick two more different approaches. But a much larger number of people saw LeWitt, because they had gotten in the habit of coming.

CC: It's like a good Christmas season movie.

JL: Actually, I'd love to see them running side by side.

CC: Sure.

JL: I'm not sure that the Museum ought to be organizing six or seven curatorial departments so much as it might be organized along two broad lines, historical

on the one side, and contemporary on the other, so that people can come in and see where the roots are, and at the same time they then can see where we are today.

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 1:00:00] always going to be departmental.

JL: Well, it is departmental, though, for example, one of the things that this added space will give us is in the Architecture and Design Department, I am told, that what the viewer will be able to see for the first time is the evolution, not only of architecture, but of the interior design that went along with it. So that in point of fact, you will be able to—

CC: Not even Bloomingdales can do that.

JL: Exactly. Well, you know, Barr had this idea when he first opened the Museum, that what he would do is, as things got accepted and classical so to speak, he would send them on to other museums and stay on the cutting edge.<sup>1</sup> But he soon abandoned the idea because he realized you have to have a capstone or a touchstone; you've got to have something you start with. So Bill Rubin has always—in the old Museum, the Cezanne's [*The*] [Bather](#) was on the wall, and the point there was that that was a good picture which started the collection of the Museum because it really summarized so much. I'd like to see more of that kind of thing now.

CC: That's a good idea. Eileen Bowser, we talked to this morning, we didn't expect to have this comment come out of her, but she said something that Bill Lieberman talked about at the Met, we saw him, and which is that you're in a unique position to do cross-discipline exhibitions.

JL: That's true.

CC: [Art of the Twenties](#), or—imagine what you can do with German Expressionism. Eileen and Mary Lea have incredible German films of the early thirties and late twenties, [*The*] *Blue Angel* and all that terrific stuff.

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<sup>1</sup> The Inter-Museum Agreement among MoMA, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1947, intended to allow the Met to acquire a number of older works of painting and sculpture from the collections of the two modern museums, freeing them to concentrate on more contemporary acquisitions. This agreement, by which such works as Picasso's *Woman in White* entered the collection of the Met, was terminated in 1953.

RC: Bringing everybody for [INAUDIBLE: 1:01:28].

CC: Bill Rubin has pulled out all the good expressionist stuff.

JL: You bet. I mean, I have majored in—

CC: I mean look at the architecture, for chrissake. You could pull out all the Bauhaus and god!

JL: I majored in English when I was in college and forever after have regretted it wasn't history of lit, which is a much better major, because you really can't understand why people are writing the way they are if you don't know a lot of things that happened.

CC: And what institution can do that? The Whitney, they'd be lost. They can only do American, they don't have any [INAUDIBLE: 1:01:55]. The Met can probably do it but they've got to go and borrow from everybody.

JL: That's right.

CC: And also, for you to be able to generate your own exhibitions really, out of what you've got, is a pretty extraordinary thing, rather than [to] have to go out and compete with Carter Brown, [INAUDIBLE: 1:02:11] and all.

JL: I think there's another point here, too.

CC: You do generate a lot of your own; right?

JL: Yes.

CC: As opposed to what we see.

JL: Yes, I think that there's also the question of style, which the Museum has always had, too, which I think is very, very important. Because again, it's a style that, if you like it, you can emulate it. And that's marvelous. And again, that's not true of other museums in town.

CC: I want to do, as the last thing—I just want to read a couple names off the list we have of some of the trustees which are some of the other people we're going to see, to get your opinion—

JL: Sure.

CC: —as to whether or not you might have some additional—

JL: I want to say to you that I think it's remarkable for a group that's just gotten into this—maybe you knew a lot about MoMA before you ever got into this, but you've really got a very good handle on the place.

RC: Well, we both have studied and worked with art history and—

JL: Okay.

RC: But it's a wonderful.

CC: But also, we looked at chronology, and as a biography of somebody, you could do a biography—the biography of Robert E. Lee is not his chronology, it's really what happened in the events, and that's what we're finding out about this place.

RC: Yes, that's for sure.

CC: And we're trying to start very intimate, and it might be very, very small, but Abby Rockefeller and Barr, and then just to start expanding it from there, and just sort of get into all that. Besides critics, et cetera, I won't go through those; trustees we're going to be seeing, Philip Johnson, David Rockefeller, Blanchette Rockefeller, William Paley, Paul Gottlieb at Abrams—

RC: Joanne Stern.

CC: Gifford Phillips, and that was on the recommendation of Eliza Parkinson, who was terrific.

JL: She's marvelous. I hope you're going to see her.

CC: We did see her.

RC: Yes, she's wonderful.

CC: She's like Eddie Warburg.

JL: Well, she's marvelous because she's a real old-guard person in one way, and utterly contemporary.

CC: Incredible. Her apartment and her attitude. She loves the place, too. She says her husband, he wants her to live in Florida, and she goes, 'Florida? I've got to live in New York.' And he says, 'Well, why?' And she says, 'Because of the

Museum.' She comes up here every month, and she goes to all of the meetings, and she used to say how she'd sit on the floor with Nelson and Lincoln.

JL: She is not a person for Florida, I don't think. She's very nice.

RC: Very nice.

CC: Gifford Phillips, Beth Straus—

JL: Yes.

CC: Joanne Stern—

JL: Yes.

CC: Ivan Chermayeff, who we know through MoMA [INAUDIBLE: 1:04:35]. John Parkinson because I think it would be really interesting to see that third generation. And then David Rockefeller Jr. perhaps, to see that—Elodie Courter also, and Beaumont Newhall, we spoke on the phone to today, and other people. Of that list of trustees, do you—? And as we say, we've seen Donald Marron—do you see any wrong notes in there? Or do you have any additions?

JL: Yes, I do have some additions.

RC: Oh great.

CC: We won't have to see too many people, but we really are seeing about 70.

RC: Maybe kind of orienting us to the different camps. I don't mean—

CC: Just to fill you in, also—just to fill you in, so you know. We've seen Lincoln Kirstein, Eddie Warburg.

JL: The Lincoln Kirstein meeting must have been a jewel.

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 1:05:22] pretty exciting.

JL: [Laughs]

CC: We've seen, who else? Oh, we've seen—

RC: Monroe Wheeler.

JL: Monroe Wheeler; oh, you've got to see Monroe. Wonderful, wonderful man.

RC: He's just great.

CC: Emilio Ambasz, we want to see.

JL: Yes, Emilio is fun. He is one of the few people—you know the old saying: You can work with temperament, but genius you must take or leave. [Laughter] Well, he's a genius, and you ought to take him, because he's one of the few people whose talent lives up fully with [INAUDIBLE: 1:05:49], which is [INAUDIBLE: 1:05:50]. I think it's softened now, because he's in business for himself, so I'm sure he's had to, you know, pull back a bit.

CC: Yes.

JL: Let me just take a look and see if there are some other people that you might want to see.

CC: We spoke with Richard Koch.

JL: Yes, that's very good.

CC: Elodie Courter is one we're going to be seeing. Two people just who we can't really see, Alan Porter and Bernard Karpel, they—one doesn't want to talk at all, and the other is quite ill.

RC: And Edgar Kaufmann, I wasn't aware of what problem he had with the Museum, but he didn't want anything to do with it.

CC: He doesn't want to talk either. Well, Lincoln doesn't want to talk about the Museum either, [JL laughs] but he's [INAUDIBLE: 1:06:28].

RC: [INAUDIBLE: 1:06:29] makes a movie.

CC: You would love it. I mean, the tower, Paley's monument, the apotheosis of greed, it's all money. It's unbelievable, I mean, it's really something. What a character.

RC: Well, [INAUDIBLE: 1:06:41].

JL: Eddie Warburg is one of the—

CC: You get a feeling of—I wasn't there but I felt sort of transported by the sort of silly air of him. He said he used to have crazy parties up in Connecticut or

Westchester at his mother's place, and she'd go, 'What are all these Russians doing around here?' He'd say, 'Don't worry Mom; it's art, it's got [INAUDIBLE: 1:06:57].' And he was paying for the whole thing.

JL: I think you ought to talk to a few businessmen.

CC: Okay.

RC: Sure. How about some of your important—?

JL: Business is very important. I think that's right. Let's stick with trustees for a minute. I'll give you a couple that I think you ought to.

RC: Okay, I'll catch up with you in minute here. [Pause]

CC: That list is—of the ones we already have there—is really based on people who a number of people recommended to us.

RC: Okay, so, are these business people?

JL: These are business people that I [INAUDIBLE: 1:07:35]. Frank Carey, who's chairman of IBM and who's chairman of the Corporate Campaign Committee, which is the Committee that is raising money for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary campaign. You certainly ought to talk to him.

RC: Yes.

JL: Tom Carroll, who's President and Chief Executive Officer of International Executive Service Corp. And he is Chairman of the Museum's Business Committee, which raises money from corporations for annual operating support. So that will give you certainly two very much business points of view that I think you should [have].

RC: That's important.

CC: They're not on your board but they're—

JL: No; they are on the Board. I'm just going to give you board members that I think you ought to talk to.

RC: Okay, alright.

JL: Let's see. I think it would be fun for you to talk to a man that—I know *you'd* have fun talking to him, and I'm not being sexist—and that's Gianluigi Gabetti, who is our version of Rossano Brazzi, but he's better. And he is really Gianni Agnelli's right hand man. And he has helped us enormously with raising money for exhibitions.

RC: Internationally?

JL: Internationally, yes, as an international person, an international businessman. And he has an office in New York and he's absolutely charming. He loves the Museum and so on.

RC: Good.

JL: Let's see who else. [Pause]

CC: Because obviously, what originally begins as a family story becomes a club story and then an institutional story, and then eventually, obviously becomes an international [story].

JL: Well, I would stick with those three people.

RC: Okay, for the perspective.

JL: I think they'd give you a very good business point of view, and I think that's a good place to start.

EC: Right.

JL: Because I think you do have to have the business point of view because it's so important. And it would be very good to get—you know, ask Frank, when you see Frank Carey, ask him about, you know, his view of how you raise money from corporations for The Museum of Modern Art. Because he's got a very specific marketing viewpoint—

RC: Sure; that would be very interesting.

JL: —that's very smart and very savvy, and I think it'll add to the film because he's the guy that's Chairman of IBM. And you could also ask him why IBM sponsored *Cezanne* [*Cezanne: The Late Work*] and why it sponsored *Picasso* [[Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective](#)].

RC: Were they one of the first—? I know Mobil was one of the first corporations.

JL: The first corporation to ever sponsor anything here was Alcoa [for] [\*Four Americans in Paris\*](#) [*Four Americans in Paris: The Collections of Gertrude Stein and Her Family*]. That was the first corporate underwritten show at the Museum. But they've done two shows. Now, I'll give you a little clue, because this is sort of fun; it's a great dialogue to get into. I was at a dinner party in Southampton and I just happened to be visiting someone over a weekend. [I] sat down to dinner and before I knew it, the fellow sitting opposite me, between the soup and the fish, or whatever it was, said, 'Listen,' he said, 'I'm a stockholder at IBM and all I can tell you is there is nothing that you can tell me about the Cezanne show which justifies the fact that IBM has put all that money into it.' Now what do you say to that? And everybody quieted down to see what [INAUDIBLE: 1:11:15]. So I was sort of racing through my mind some of the things that Carey had said, namely that we are the latter-day patrons of the arts and so on, which I'm sure he'd say to you. And I thought, well that's obvious enough, but it isn't the answer. So I said, 'Well,' I said, 'you've forgotten something.' I said, 'All the answers I could give you you've already thought of them, I'm sure; patron of the arts, all that stuff.' He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'Well, there's one thing you've forgotten, which is that all through the ages, men and women in positions of power have wanted to leave their mark on their time, and the only way that anyone has really ever done that, aside from being a religious leader, has been to become involved in the arts of their time. Those are the only things we remember.' And I said, 'Mr. Carey, like all other powerful figures of his time, is translating that as the corporation leaving its mark.'

CC: It creates good feelings for it.

JL: And he looked at me and he said, 'Okay, you've answered my question.'

CC: I'll never forget, in S.N. Behrman's book on [Joseph] Duveen, [INAUDIBLE: 1:12:16] Duveen, they asked—there was a terrific passage, it said: If you look in the encyclopedia, and look under Henry Clay Frick's name, there are about 11 lines. And five of them are about him being an industrialist, and if you know anything about him, and his group machine-gunned strikers—

JL: He was a tough hombre.

CC: A very tough hombre for five lines. And the other six lines have the names of [Jean-Honoré] Fragonard and all kinds of painters and Rembrandt and all. And the man bought immortality. And that's what he's got. So now people go up there and they say, "What a wonderful man." And they think of him living there, and you drive by at night, and you think of the Fragonards in there, and what a wonderful person. I mean, it might have been [that] that's true too, but what did he get? He got—

JL: He did indeed.

CC: He got immortality, that's what he got. He's in the company of the saints.

JL: The more interesting figure as far as a collector, was J. P. Morgan, who was—those Fragonards come from Morgan's collection.

CC: Oh really? I think that story of the Diego Rivera is really unbelievable.

JL: You mean in the Rockefeller Center, the mural that was—

CC: Nelson Rockefeller having to go to J.P. Morgan's office to explain that one.

JL: That wasn't the original J.P., that was his son, a bad carbon copy of the old man. No, the old man was really a fascinating figure because he was the most powerful man in business of his era, but far from the richest, you know. And what I always loved—

CC: He had the most influence?

JL: The most influential. But when he died, he left a portion of the \$65 million dollars and people thought he was the richest man on earth, they couldn't believe it because Rockefeller was I don't know how many times wealthier. So was [Andrew] Carnegie. So was Frick. But he did love the arts. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, one of the donors of the Cooper Hewitt, and of course the Morgan Library. You know, all of that stuff. And to me, the interesting thing about him was that he really loved art and had a disinclination to explain that as a hard-headed man of business, which I think is wonderful. And a great pattern for today of people in purview of his life. Namely, his father bought—the father lived in London; it was a peculiar arrangement. The father lived in London and headed the Morgan

banking house in England. The son headed the Morgan banking house in the United States. And they were very close. And the father bought for the son, [Thomas] Gainsborough's *Duchess of Devonshire*. And right after he bought it, the painting was stolen. So, the father died, and 20 years later the painting surfaced, and it was again offered for sale, and Morgan, this time, the great J. Pierpont, bought the painting. And so it was: How much did you pay for it? He said, "I will not tell you because if I did you would think me a candidate for the lunatic asylum." In other words, he had to have it no matter what the price. And it seems to me that the moral of that story is, he didn't do it because it was good for PR, visibility, a good investment, or anything else. He did it because he loved it, and that was it.

CC: In those days, you didn't get any points.

JL: Right, you really didn't. Frick as you say has immortalized himself and that [INAUDIBLE: 1:15:28] with wonderful bills. Have you read the life of Lord Duveen?

CC: That Behrman book.

JL: Yes. Well, it's been a lot of fun.

RC: I have one more thing to ask you, if we could take a Polaroid.

JL: Oh, alright.

RC: And could I ask you, when we film you, you're okay without your glasses?

JL: Yes, sure.

RC: Okay. Could I ask you to—?

JL: Oh, alright.

CC: I guess they gave you the view that you could really oversee the construction here.

JL: Okay. I had a lot of fun talking with you.

RC: Oh, we enjoyed this too. You've been most helpful.

**END OF INTERVIEW at 1:16:03**