DAVID HOFFMAN MOMA HISTORY INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW WITH:	**DONALD MARRON (DM)**
INTERVIEWERS:	**HARVEY ARDMAN (HA); CARL COLBY (CC); RUTH CUMMINGS (RC)**
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DM: Tom, I guess, is going to give you a tour. I've just completed my apartment, so I've taken home about 20 of them, stuff like [Mark] Rothko and [Robert] Rauschenberg and [Jasper] Johns and [Cy] Twombly and [Richard] Diebenkorn and stuff like that. [Tape break]

HA: Oh yes.

DM: I was out there watching them make them, in Germany. Bob really doesn't make those things. Bob went to China and did a little bit of it, and they're out here assembling them in Germany.

HA: They're factory produced, in a way.

DM: Sort of. There was one guy in there sitting there doing the gold all by himself and stuff; it was kind of fun. I want to get some more of them, I think. If you have time, downstairs there are some neat things.

CC: I don't know what you've heard of the film project, but we could fill you in a little bit.

DM: Sure.

CC: As you may know, United Technologies is sponsoring a film on the Museum, and we're the production company.

DM: Right.

CC: And what we plan to do is to do a history of the institution, not a story of modern art; we can't do that in 60 minutes. [Laughter]

HA: Besides that, Robert Hughes already did that.

DM: He did do it, that's right.

CC: So, what we plan to do is to really tell the story from the inside out; to track the Museum in its earliest years, the first 15 years, Alfred Barr, et cetera, and create the excitement and reflect on how that all got started. And then give a sense of the great exhibitions that did occur through the years and the different departments that were created: photography, film, et cetera. And then attempt to finish up by even going further out, not only speaking to John Szarkowski and Kynaston McShine and Bill Rubin about what's going on now inside, but get people like Robert Hughes, who we've talked to, and other outside commentators to sort of say how are things and how's it going.

DM: Good.

CC: And we wanted to speak to you because a couple of people have mentioned that you're very active on the Board, and that you have a great commitment to the Museum, and it appears to be a deep and long-term commitment.

HA: We're telling the history of the Museum, but we don't want to ignore the present and the future. [Laughter]

CC: And rather than it be a kind of dry bones narrated thing where you just see a lot of pictures, we thought we'd really tell the story through interviews, and I'll name you some names: Eddie Warburg—

DM: Wonderful.

RC: Lincoln Kirstein.

CC: Philip Johnson, Elizabeth Shaw, Eliza Parkinson, Dorothy Miller. There's a huge group of people.

RC: Because a lot of people around here evoke that period.

CC: And yesterday we saw Sidney Janis and Leo Castelli.

DM: Oh wonderful, sure, yes.

CC: It's terrific because to evoke not only Barr but the personality of the Museum and what it means—and here we go to see very busy people, including yourself,

[laughter] and we walk in to see Sidney Janis and Leo. Castelli's got 12 people waiting to see him, and as soon as the door closes and he hears what we're doing, he opens up his heart—

DM: Absolutely; Leo is terrific.

CC: And talks about it as his second home and all. And maybe to start things off, we might ask, what attracted you to *that* museum? You're interested in art, but why that one and what was your initial connection?

DM: What is the context in which you want to know this? For an interview or just for background?

HA: The reason we're having this talk with you right now is because before we would bring a camera in, we want to identify what areas you would be comfortable talking about and [what areas] you would have something useful to say for the film.

DM: Because, you know, I get involved a lot with the press in business. But I tell you, the real reason I ask is, *Art and Auction*, which is a pretty good magazine, came down and spent hours interviewing me, and I just saw the cover story and it's called "Stella, Castelli, and Marron." I didn't know that's what they were going to do. [Laughing] It worked out fine, but... [Laughing]

CC: Well, we're not *60 Minutes*.

DM: They interviewed Leo and Frank about me, too, which is kind of funny.

HA: *Art in America*?

DM: No, it's called *Art and Auction*. They sent us a hundred copies of the magazine. They had pictures and stuff, too.

CC: From the beginning, even yesterday, we were talking to the legal counsel, Beverly Wolff, and we're not telling a negative story. We're really trying to tell an affectionate portrait and something that would give a sense of—it's not going to be without controversy, though.

DM: It's got to have a little controversy.

RC: Right.

HA: It does have controversy.

DM: The place isn't perfect; let's face it. There's just no question about that.

RC: The other thing is, it's a living institution, and while it's alive, there's people—

DM: Well the Museum doesn't own one [Anslem] Kiefer. [Laughter]

HA: What we're talking about today—this is strictly for our use and our information, and nothing will be quoted at the moment.

CC: It's as if you were to outline what you could speak best about.

DM: How I got interested and involved, or why I got interested and involved. Well I suppose first of all, I've grown up in New York City and I can remember going to that museum when I was 17 or 18, when I was in college, [and] just getting so excited and nervous by seeing the pictures. I was just excited to see those images and those things [that] were going on. And that stayed with me for a long time. And when I got involved in art, the way I really got involved was, I started collecting when I was young, and at that point you have to be kind of limited in your resources. But when I started to build my own brokerage firm, I found it was really a great benefit to have good art on the premises because what it did was, it really did enhance people's working conditions and their view of things. It's now fairly commonplace, although most of the stuff isn't very good. And what I think happens is that good art reflects what's going on in life, and great contemporary art tends to anticipate [that] somewhat. And the funny thing is I was watching the Rauschenberg stuff, [and] the old stuff anticipated the new stuff that's more sort of simultaneous with what's going on in the society. So I got very interested in that. And if you look around at the kind of museum that both is interested in that now, but also has a background of times that happened in prior life, the Modern is the key place. And one of the Trustees over lunch one day said, "Would you like to be involved and go on the Board?" And I was thrilled. It seemed to me, it just fit right in with my interests.

HA: I understand that you're involved in a number of different committees, and I wonder what your activities are with the Museum today?

DM: Well, I'm involved in a lot of different things. The thing that's taken up the largest amount of time, has of course been organizing the expansion and building the

building. And I've been involved in that from the start. I'm the chairman of what's called the Expansion Committee of the Museum. But it's really been a bigger job than that, because it's been, first, taking the project that was in a desk drawer somewhere and foolishly in one meeting saying, "Gee, I don't see why you can't do that." [Laughter] So we said, "Well, fine, if you could do it, why don't you try it." So it was figuring out the concept of the project; it was picking the architect. That was an exciting thing. I learned more about architecture in two weeks than I had known ever before. We put a committee together: Philip Johnson, Ed Barnes, Gordon Bunshaft, Arthur Drexler, and a few other people, and I was sort of the only civilian. [Laughter] And as I sat around with them, it took me a while to figure out that the words "young architect" means somebody under 50, and also somebody who wasn't in the room. [Laughter] And then it went into dealing with the city and the state on how to organize the particular project. This is a fairly complicated one, [INAUDIBLE: 0:07:30] building and all the other things. Then it was organizing the financing of it, which is also very creative and different. We created something called the Trust for Cultural Resources of the City of New York, of which I'm also a trustee. And then it was starting to organize building the building and shepherding the design, too. If you think [about] designing a building or designing a building for a museum, with all the talented people on the Board, it's a special event. So that's one thing I was very heavily involved with and the thing that is the most important to me, or the most important work I've gotten involved in. Then, I'm the chairman of the Executive Committee, which means getting involved in things when the Board isn't in session. It doesn't happen very often, but it's always an interesting thing. I'm on the Painting and Sculpture Committee, which is the most fun.

HA: You mean that helps select the works that are acquired?

DM: Yes, that's what it does; it is the Committee that does that. There is a committee for each part of the Museum, so there's a committee for every curatorial thing. I'm on the Painting and Sculpture Committee and on the Print Acquisition Committee. We have two big print collections [INAUDIBLE: 0:08:38]. And that's the most fun. One of the sad things is that over the last few years working on this expansion project, I had to go to every expansion meeting, but I had to miss some of the P&S meetings. And I'm very interested in, obviously, that part of the

thing. I try to get to an artist's studio or two every couple of weeks. And it's just fun to be involved.

CC: Is somebody like Kynaston—?

DM: And I'm on other committees, too, the Finance Committee and the Nominating Committee. They nominate the Trustees.

CC: That's a fun job. [Laughter]

HA: How do you manage to do this? [Laughter]

RC: [INAUDIBLE: 0:9:14] one day a week.

DM: Kind of like a Mexican general, [laughter] with all these titles and things.

CC: Is it very collaborative, or, how, does someone like Riva Castleman propose certain artists, or does Kynaston come up and says, 'This is something we're interested in,' or, 'What do you think?' Is it quite collaborative in the end?

RC: And do you bring in artists sometimes?

DM: No, we've never done it, although there's no reason why we couldn't. Basically the staff picks the selections, and the Committee votes on them, is what it comes down to. And I think it ranges from the Bill Rubin choices, which are things that he thinks are masterpieces that need to be fit into the collection, where really, the issues aren't one of artistic judgment, they're really ones of how are you going to get the thing.

HA: How you pay for it.

DM: All the way through to Kiefer and [Georg] Baselitz and [A.R.] Penck and those people, and whether or not you ought to have them in the collection. [Tape break]

HA: Are you an advocate of Kiefer, for example?

DM: I am a great advocate of Kiefer. I think he really, of all of those people, is one of the two or three that I think are the most valid in terms of the kind of work they're trying to do. I'm not so keen on Baselitz because I think painting eagles upside down is not...

HA: It sounds like it's hard to win these battles though, if there's no Kiefer in there and you're—

DM: Well, it isn't really hard to win the battle, it's more I think a question of the Museum tries to cover so much ground they don't get everybody. But we brought up at the last meeting a [Jonathan] Borofsky—I'm trying to think of who else—and a few other young people that were good. And if you're interested, we could walk around downstairs and you'll see some of the stuff, if we have time, the few that I have here. And I think the Museum has got to remember its origins and its past and also be current, and that's a very hard combination. And it's partly a function of getting out. I spend every Saturday in art galleries.

RC: It's the toughest day, too.

DM: And it's—you know, that's some of the hardest thing[s]. And I also have—I get slides every day, so I have two people who work for me now just to help organize my time to go around and look, two part-time people. But that's the kind of things that I get involved in at the Museum, and it's sort of fun.

RC: What's your thought, then, about the direction of the Museum, since you are so involved in expanding the collections? Do you have a thought about how it's doing? Is it okay where it is? Is it in a pause before a leap forward?

DM: My guess about any museum that deals in things that are alive, is that no one is ever going to feel that it's okay where it is, even if it is. There's always going to be a difference of opinion about what it should be doing. And I think the Museum has responsibilities not just to art and to the people who see it, but also to the artists. And the artist, certainly at The Museum of Modern Art, is the most important force in the art world. And I think that responsibility is crucial, and I think that's the one that the Museum does a good job [with], but it's the one entity [we're] constantly alert to, making sure we're accessible and available to artists.

RC: You don't think that galleries now have superseded the museum as the most important—because [Frank] Stella's show, is that worth more than The Museum of Modern Art?

DM: Not to the artists. I really don't think to the artists.

RC: Not to the actual artists. Maybe *worth* more but—

DM: Maybe worth more, but to the artists, the feeling—and I think it isn't just the showing of it, I think it's the exposure to it. And I think one of the great things about the trustee system and about the Painting and Sculpture Committee in particular is, there's a half a dozen trustees on there who are out all the time looking, and the artists know that these people are trustees of the Museum, so they know they're getting a little bit of a link that way. So I think that that is the key thing for the Museum. I think how the Museum's doing, it's limited by its space, and this project—I'd love to tell you about the project for now, because I think it's so exciting.

HA: I do want to talk about that in just a minute. But go ahead.

DM: It's so exciting what it's going to do, but the big thing it's going to do is that it's going to show more works. And it's also going to show more works in an intelligent, intellectual context and chronology, as well as in a purely artistic one. And that's really very exciting because the one big difference in museums that never gets written about is, pictures are bigger.

HA: Oh yes.

DM: One Diebenkorn takes up the space of four [Pierre-Auguste] Renoirs, or something like that, however you want to put it. And so space becomes a premium. And also you have environmental works and conceptual works and things that need a pure setting in order to have things going on. So I think that the Museum in its expansion is being sensitive to that and recognizing it. Obviously, we'll have to see how we install it, but I think that's one issue. I also think, given the gallery system, and given the enormous advance in people's ready acceptance of new art—it's very different now. In the old days, you had to sell somebody on art, period. That's pretty elite, or that's strange. Now people I think are more inclined to accept it rather than reject it, and galleries are, let's face it; they are big contributors to the art thing but they're also in commerce. The Museum serves as an important editing force in the whole thing. I think it should serve as some direction, and I think it does do that very well. It has to come to grips with the various movements and make decisions on what to show and when and in what form, and that's more important when there's so much

stuff around. If you start out cold in the art world, it's pretty confusing to go wandering around.

RC: Do you think that in the recent past they missed any boats, like they maybe—Alfred Barr was a little late coming to accept Pop.

DM: There are things that are missed, but—the Museum has only one Rauschenberg, for example. I've got three or four at home that are in dialogue

RC: I'm sorry, it has only one?

DM: One Rauschenberg and that's it. Just to take that as one extreme.

RC: Now is that something that's a high priority of paintings to get?

DM: I don't think it is necessarily. One of the problems with buying the great paintings of living artists is that they're very expensive. But on the other side of it, the Museum has a great collection of Stella. So there's an editing choice, for whatever reason. The Museum has a few good Johnses, but probably not as many as his stature—now, I'm sure Bill Rubin would disagree with this statement, you know. I think we should probably have a couple more, and we've just gotten a wonderful one. On the other hand, the Museum has very good [Claes] Oldenburgs. The Museum has a couple of good [Roy] Lichtensteins, but maybe not more. It's got one or two Rothkos. I happen to think that, after [Jackson] Pollock, Rothko is the most important artist since 1945. I would like to see them have 10 or 20.

CC: There was a presumption, I think, in the days of Barr that if Barr was out looking at pictures for Mrs. Rockefeller for the Museum, that if he didn't get it, Philip Johnson would get it, and then it would all come to the Museum eventually.

DM: Right.

CC: Is that a presumption that still exists? Or is that a very difficult area now? I mean, are they very skittish about that now?

DM: That's a good question.

CC: Because in a way, that formed the Museum, didn't it?

HA: Especially when you say that you have three Rauschenbergs and the Museum has only one, so I'm asking myself, are those three ever going to find their way into the Museum perhaps?

CC: Do the Trustees feel pressure that that their collections will be raided? [DM laughs] Or is there a lifetime guarantee?

DM: I think that is a question that I can't answer for the other trustees. I think that's probably personal.

HA: How about for yourself?

DM: I pick the pictures myself; I don't do them in conjunction with the people in the Museum. If I buy them and I show them to them sometimes and say, "What do you think?" But I don't—

CC: But nobody's out scouting for you?

DM: Not in the Museum, no, certainly not. I can't speak for anybody else. I do know that there are certainly a number of trustees who are very generous in terms of gifts to the Museum, and certainly, the pictures that I have, if the Museum marches in and says, this is one that's *essential* to us, that would have some influence on it. And I'm now just getting into it—there's a Stella [*Welkom*] downstairs out of Frank's most recent show, which is—I don't know if you saw it or not—absolutely incredible. It's another shift. And Bill Rubin saw it and he thought it was the best one, and Frank did too, and I saw it and we all wanted it. So I bought this one and I made it a promised gift to the Museum. That's an example. But I have made very few gifts of that type to the Museum because I like the pictures at home [laughter] so we can look at them. But I think the Museum would have a good reason to feel that the Trustees should have an obligation.

CC: That's a legitimate feeling.

DM: I doubt it's the same as the Alfred Barr—that was a different period of art.

CC: How about, if you were to compare yourself, as a collector, as a trustee, how different from Stephen Clark or those people—how different are you from them? Or are you very, very similar?

DM: I'm not sure I know who Stephen Clark was.

CC: Stephen Clark who was involved in the Museum back in the 1940s, or let's say, someone like the [Lillie P.] Bliss—

HA: Or even Nelson Rockefeller.

CC: Or Nelson Rockefeller.

RC: Or [A.] Conger Goodyear, or—

CC: Any of the—

HA: Nelson Rockefeller is a really good example.

CC: Or Mrs. Simon Guggenheim, or something like that. Do you think it's a very different era?

DM: Well, you always picture those people as being 65 or 70. [Laughter] They must have been younger; Nelson must have been younger.

HA: Nelson was involved in the Museum the year after he got out of college.

CC: But also he had a whole family, there was a long line of carrying on.

DM: I think people are in different positions. I do it for fun and love it and it's a passion. And I feel completely entwined with the Museum for that reason. And certainly, to the extent I'm capable of it, of responding to a call from the Museum, I will. I don't know how the other trustees feel.

RC: You don't feel like it's a Rockefeller museum and you're a guest there?

DM: No.

RC: It really feels like the current trustees are—

CC: This is a question I think people would be interested in, the public; I was talking to Sidney Janis and other people about it. The people who come into the Museum and pay their admittance fee, they sometimes just presume, well, it's here, and it just exists, and I pay my three dollars or whatever, and the Rockefellers are paying the rest, and they don't think of it beyond that. How would you address—? Could you emphasize in a sense the survivability of a

museum these days? How would you address the student or the housewife who comes in and presumes that?

DM: That kind of backs into this project. I think there's a couple of things to say about the Museum. One of them is, it's one of the few first-generation institutions left, when you think of it being built; it's really kind of one-and-a-third generation. But basically, the people that were instrumental in building the thing, a lot of them are still there.

HA: That's right.

DM: Or if they're there, they're only once-removed from when they started the thing. That's an unusual thing in the history of any museum. If you look at the ages of some of the people on the Board, it's been blessed not only with very talented people but people who have lived long lives.

HA: William Paley, for example.

DM: Bill's 81 and Blanchette's 71.

CC: Eddie Warburg went to the first show.

DM: Mike Coles is whatever he is, and so forth. So that, in the history of American institutions, it's unusual to have any that are that prominent in the world where the first generation is still involved. It usually takes two or three generations. So I think that's one thing. So I think appropriately, since that generation is still there, it should be viewed, in part, as the Museum that was built by them. I think that's absolutely correct. I think in terms of how you deal with the public on that, I think the answer is that the world has changed. The resources it takes to own, run, and build something are out of the scope of any single organization, except maybe Paul Mellon. Did you see that thing this morning in the paper?

HA: I saw what he gave to—

DM: 95 pictures or something?

HA: 95 paintings to the National Gallery.

DM: 95 out of his various things, so I suppose his is an exception. But I think also being an urban museum in a central setting, it has to serve a lot of constituencies, and therefore it has to—

HA: That's a good point.

DM: —be owned and run, as it were—those are the wrong words; if we we're trying to do it for television, we'll pick better words—but it amounts to the same thing. It's going to be owned and run by a broader section of people. And the thing about the expansion project was, it's an example of enlightened self-interest on an urban institution. It's taking a bad situation: big deficit, growing deficit, no reasonable way of solving it on its own, and turning it into a plus by using a resource which is a combination of the land and the Museum's reputation, basically, to leverage up all those things and basically, to come up with something that's even better; a bigger organization, a better organized one, probably a higher profile one to the people that you were talking about.

HA: Yes.

DM: I think done with great taste and artistic capability. And to do all those things in the most exciting city in the world. I think that's an example of what the Museum's been able to do over the last 50 years, and this was a time to do something different.

CC: Do you think the Museum in a sense has got to become or it has become the equivalent of a humane or enlightened corporation? I mean, it has to operate with that sensibility in some ways?

DM: Well, I don't think a corporation—

CC: [Has to] think about its survivability all the time?

DM: I don't think a corporation; that's why I said the words "owned and run" are really wrong, because I think a corporation has got different priorities. The stockholders create a competitive need in a corporation that shouldn't exist in the Museum. I think they have to be thought of much more unfortunately as institutional entities, with a system and a process, and with a more clearly defined sense of to whom they are responsible and how they're going to meet their responsibilities. I think that has to go on and that's very hard for a first-

generation organization of any type to come to. Particularly one that's had an incredible record; why should you change?

HA: Now, in the thirties, of course, there was no other institution that could remotely compare to the Modern, but today that's not really the case anymore. There are others that, if they're not quite on the same level, you can mention them in the same breath.

DM: Absolutely; sure.

HA: So what is the role of The Museum of Modern Art today, and what will it be in the future?

DM: Well, I think that if you can with a great institution, you want to maintain the basic roles that got it going and expand them and maybe modify them some. I think as a teacher, educator, editor, I would put that at the top of the list, still. That while there are other institutions—and that's true, and they are important and great—everyone who is seriously interested in modern art is going to look to The Museum of Modern Art to see what they're doing. So you have a packed house every night for your play, basically.

HA: Right.

DM: So I think it's the editing and educational character of the thing that's almost more important, because you aren't just doing it for yourself, you're doing it for everybody else. I think that really is the central thing that I see the Museum as doing.

CC: Not to disparage the Met, but rather than simply have blockbuster shows attracting crowds, et cetera, what you're saying about educating the public, teaching, really goes back to the very basis for the Museum in its first years. Barr really wanted to educate and proselytize, almost like, the early Christians.

HA: Of course, as you said, modern art is accepted today, and people, when they see modern art and they don't understand it, they think the fault lies with them and not with the art.

DM: Exactly.

HA: That's the opposite of the way it was.

DM: That's right.

HA: And I'm even a little nervous about that acceptance; it's a little too easy.

DM: Well, I am, too. That's why I say, they are now more willing to accept art uncritically.

HA: Yes.

DM: And the proof of that are all the galleries. [Laughing]

HA: So you feel that the Museum can heighten the critical abilities, in a certain sense, of the people who are looking at modern art.

DM Yes. And I think the test for the Museum is to try to figure out a sense of timing as to when to do that heightening. In other words, how current do you have to be? At what point do you go from editing to promoter, which is what you don't want to do.

HA: Right.

DM: And that's a fine line to draw.

HA: That seems to me a problem the Museum has always had and probably always will have.

DM: Yes, I think it will have; it's just more complicated now because there are so many more artists working today, too. And they're everywhere. They're all sizes and shapes.

HA: And because the environment has changed. In the early thirties there were a handful of galleries; today there are 600 galleries, and art is big business.

DM: It's a business and it just has a more eclectic audience, which I think, for someone who is living with it, it makes it more exciting. I suppose the most exciting thing would have been to discover it, in the thirties, as it were. But second to that, it's to be in all this activity going on and be able to make choices, and see whether the choices live up to the standards of time.

CC: Do you feel pretty proud about the fact that let's say the Photography Department in a sense helped create modern appreciation for photography? The Film Department seems to be making strides almost way beyond what anyone would

ever envision of just a screening room with a few select films. I mean, those functions are really quite extraordinary, really.

DM: Yes, I think—I am proud of it; I had nothing to do with any part of it. I think the people who had those ideas really ought to get enormous credit. And I think you can make the same statements about film and photography and prints that we're making about paintings and drawings. It's very much the same sense.

CC: One of the people we talked to even said, if there's a fallow period in painting and sculpture for five or 10 years when there isn't the intense excitement let's say around Pop art's time early sixties, well, then photography will sort of come. And just like a few years ago photography was all the rage, you didn't read anything *except* about photography. And now it's shifting to other things, and who knows, prints and—it's as if the Museum doesn't have to—it's there; it'll happen.

DM: Well, you know, it's is kind of like a great library where all of a sudden you get a question about some topic you hadn't focused on. You go back and find it's been there all along. It's the most wonderful thing. And that's what happened in photography. It was there all along; we didn't have to go out and start adding things. It's kind of a wonderful thing.

HA: So this expansion, outside of enlarging the Museum, is it going to change the character of the Museum, do you feel?

DM: I think it'll change the Museum in several ways. First of all, physically, as an institution, it becomes much bigger. And that brings on it more disciplines and more structure—and that's both internally and in terms of the response of the public, and I think it does that. I think it should also change it in terms of giving it more flexibility in what it shows that ought to make the Museum even more outreaching in the various things that it wants to do. And hopefully, it'll change it financially—that it will be a financially stronger organization, which means it can do more things of a curatorial creative sense.

HA: That last one worries me a little bit because I've seen so many times before when everybody had the highest hopes for doing exactly that, and I don't know whether that's a solvable problem.

CC: Will it be in the black or is it really going to change the financial picture?

DM: It should. I don't know how much you know about what we did. It's probably not what you want to talk about.

CC: Richard Koch said a word or two about—

DM: He was there, but he wasn't really involved that much. Do you want to hear it?

All: Sure!

DM: The institution was having big and growing deficits for obvious reasons: it cost more money to run it than they were taking in. So we did three things to change. We sold the air rights over the building for $17 million dollars, which is the most anybody's ever gotten for air rights. That money the Museum has got; we have it, so it's $17 million better off, for openers. Secondly, the apartment house that's being built over it, the real estate taxes that the condominium owners would normally pay, are going to be called something called real estate tax equivalency payments. And they will go to this Trust for Cultural Resources, and those funds will be used by the Trust to pay for our expansion of our Museum. So over the stream of years, that expansion will be paid for by those real estate equivalency tax payments.

CC: What amount would that be?

DM: That's going to be about $40 million, probably, over time.

CC: In a way, this is a state or city backhanded aid really?

DM: That's one of the debates on how to get into it in public testimony all the time. I'd say no, in a way, but I can see the other side. The Museum of Modern Art gets no income from the city at all, unlike the Met, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Natural History.

RC: It's a private—

DM: It's a totally private institution. It gets not one dollar. The land on which this thing is being built is paying no taxes anyway, so there was no prospect of getting [income], as is true for every other institution. The city did get, or is getting—first of all, it's getting the benefit of the construction. It's getting the benefit of the increased tourist attraction, and it gets a small amount of the tax payments also.

You could say yes, but they could have built the building down the block on another plot of land and have gotten all the taxes; that's true.

CC: Yet, you might not have done it; you might have closed the door.

DM: So it falls somewhere in between. So we get those two sources of revenue plus [a] third [one]—we got a bigger museum, so we will have more cost but equally we'll have more admissions. We're going to have two restaurants. We're going to have a lot of other things. When you put those three together and to describe it to you technically, it would take your whole program.

HA: Right. [Laughing]

DM: The Museum should be at a break-even basis out about four or five years, because, you know, you have the start-up costs. And it's costing the Museum lots of money now because it's closed down in part and we can't show as many things. And so the idea is that they will be in the black by 1989.

CC: Which is a pretty unusual thing for a private institution to be able to say.

DM: If it happens, it's going to be incredible. But we've run all the numbers and done all the things, but as I said, parts of it are a reality. The $17 million we have.

CC: So it was a gamble but it appears to be a risk worth taking.

DM: Yes, I think that's right—worried about that building; make sure it got all the way up; it did. [Laughter]

HA: But no more expansion for some foreseeable future?

DM: No thank you. Four years of my life have gone into this, and I wouldn't want to try it again. No, I think this is what we need to do. We're expanding our gallery space by about 90 percent. The Museum has been able to show only about 15 percent of its collection. We'd never want to show it all, but we would want to show a lot more than 15 percent. And I would think it would be a signal to artists and the art world that it wants to keep growing. Which is a question you haven't asked, but it's another question. How can a museum keep growing, given all the constraints?

HA: You mean physically, or intellectually, or artistically?

DM: I mean in terms of the collections. People have argued from time to time: You have this incredible collection up to here; why don't you stop, or why don't you change the focus, or something.

HA: Or start selling off some stuff?

DM: Well, that's never really come up inside the place at all. But I think the idea is, you want to. That growing not only enhances the future but it enriches the past, too.

CC: And if you don't go anywhere, if you don't grow, then you run the risk of becoming irrelevant.

DM: Yes. You become a kind of a repository. And as you point out, there are other organizations out there that are doing a lot of similar things. I think one of the definitions of a great institution ought to be that it's doing something that nobody else is doing or can do. And for us to make that claim, we have to deal with our past as well as our future.

HA: Well, that's a fine statement, as a matter of fact.

CC: That's very helpful for us because we'll be able to take this back and run it through and see where we might come back to get specifics.

DM: Okay.

CC: But of course, as you've told the—[laughing] we spent a long time talking to Richard Koch, but in 35 seconds, you just told the story. [Laughter] I think that might be number two or three. [Laughter] And very well done. And also I think, considering your role, it's interesting. You addressed the question like this, the idea of the survivability, and you project well into the future. That's something not only New York artists and the New York community wants to hear, but I think the rest of the United States is interested in hearing that going ahead, it has plans; it has hope.

DM: Yes, it has hope. And in that hope is taking risks and doing things—you know, you have to do it. We all do it every day, in other things. Why would we do any less in this?

CC: I think the educational bent—and that's probably the very same thing Abby Rockefeller would say.

RC: It's funny, nobody else has said that. It's refreshing.

HA: Yes, that was a point I had not heard before, talking about the—yes.

CC: Yes, form the current crowd I hadn't heard that.

RC: Yes, and it's good to hear somebody say that's the old spirit of the place. We've talked—it's really true; nobody's said that. They either complained and said it's stuck here, or it's okay where it is, but nobody said, yes, there's a future.

CC: A number of the critics have said, sure, there are minor problems with it, but the hell with it, I love the institution because of what it has already. But that's not the best answer.

DM: That's fine, too.

RC: Yes, that's good but—

CC: That's a good one.

DM: That's a good answer, but we can now look at the future.

CC: Robert Hughes, whatever, he's a dyed-in-the-wool modernist, he loves the place.

HA: It seems to me we accomplished what we set out to do in this talk because we needed to see who could talk about these things; and we know now!

RC: One more part of this meeting is your screen test. [Laughter] No.

DM: [Laughing] My screen test; okay.

RC: But we do Polaroid everybody. And these guys usually kick me under the table going everybody knows what he looks like and our director who's up in Rockport, Maine—

DM: He is; okay.

RC: —will expect to see it.

END OF INTERVIEW at 0:35:58