DAVID HOFFMAN MOMA HISTORY INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW WITH:	**MONROE WHEELER (MW)**
INTERVIEWERS:	**HARVEY ARDMAN (HA); CARL COLBY (CC); RUTH CUMMINGS (RC)**
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MW: …art that he'd cooked up. And, at that time, the Baltimore Museum was willing to do it, *if* The Museum of Modern Art would do it. And when The Museum of Modern Art wouldn't do it, the whole thing fell through and he was furious. But he's still a friend; we [INAUDIBLE: 0:00:19] every couple of weeks, and he tells me, over and over again, that everything in The Museum of Modern Art is shit. [Laughter]

HA: But he was interested in this idea from even before the time of the Museum, wasn't he?

MW: Well, yes, The Museum of Modern Art started at Harvard.

HA: That's right.

MW: And with their Contemporary Art Society that Eddie Warburg and Lincoln and Johnny Walker and, who else? Two or three others. And, I think, well, Alfred Barr, I think had—I can't remember whether he had left Harvard at that time or not. But in any case, he knew about it. And I think he had already gone to Wellesley. But yes, it really began in Harvard, and Mrs. [Abby Aldrich] Rockefeller spoke to me about it often, and asked everybody about what was going on, what are those boys doing at Harvard. And she was—it was one of the things that made her feel that New York was lagging.

HA: I understand.

CC: If you were to characterize, let's say the late twenties, '27, '28, and '29, when the Museum first opened, and it didn't open with a terribly controversial show, but

when it did arrive on the scene, did it cause a great stir, or, what was the nature of the stir?

MW: Well, I was in Paris, although I came back and forth, but—I was in the publishing business in Paris and I lived in Paris for 10 years. And I didn't come back here to live until 1933. But I came back every year and I had many friends in New York who were all involved with The Museum of Modern Art. So, when I came back, I think it was in '32, I was put on the Library Committee because they wanted to have a library. They didn't have one. They had a committee, of which Walter Chrysler, Jr. was the chairman. And then Walter Chrysler—they didn't like Walter Chrysler, although he was—we got a *great* deal out of him, including his magnificent surrealist library, or, the library in Paris that happened to be for sale which we got him to buy for us. But he was a strange fellow, and he just wasn't liked. So they gave me his job as chairman of the Library Committee. And then, the next thing they put me on was the Junior Advisory Committee, which Mrs. Rockefeller had started in order to bring in young people who would know more about modern art than the Trustees themselves, plus, they couldn't because they were all too old, and also provide future trustees. And with her usual sagacity, she hit it right on the nail, and that's just exactly what that committee did. And really, so many of the members of that committee became trustees. Then, when Nelson [Rockefeller] left Dartmouth, he became the chairman of that committee.

HA: Not surprisingly.

MW: And then also the second president of the Museum when the new building opened in 1939.

CC: In that period of '29 to '39, was it more a question of that Barr—people were supportive of his particular vision, or were all of you sort of together committed to the popularization, in a way, of this particular cause?

MW: Both; both. We were committed to Alfred and also committed to the cause. And you can't imagine what the Museum got for nothing, all those years, from gifted people. Because all of my first work at the Museum was as a volunteer and as a guest director. I would propose exhibitions to this group of young people, the Advisory Committee. They would recommend them to Alfred. And then there

was a type of—the staff was so small, there was nobody to do anything. And so—

HA: So you installed it.

MW: They asked me to do it as a guest director.

CC: I see; uh-huh.

MW: And we had a lot of guest directors. Well, Philip Johnson always was, from the early days.

CC: So the Museum was really one of the only places that you could even show things like what you wanted, like, your first show, of course, the *Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators* [*Modern Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators*], that was really one of the first occasions to even show that sort of thing in New York?

MW: Oh yes, that was. That all grew out of my life in Paris where I had met all those artists.

CC: Harrison of Parison.

MW: Yes. And Bennett Cerf used to call it Harrison of Parison. [Laughter] That all—there had never been an exhibition in America of the work that the great artists had done in book illustration. And I had been very close to it in Paris and knew it all, and so it was very easy for me to do it.

CC: So you were kind of a hand across the Atlantic.

MW: Yes, and that's what Mrs. Rockefeller liked about me in the first place. Because Alfred Barr had not lived in Paris, and he didn't know all the artists as well as I did. And she just thought it would be useful, although I had no academic—

CC: Mr. Wheeler knew, very well knew, Jean Cocteau,

RC: Right.

CC: [Henri] Matisse, [Pablo] Picasso. I mean, you—

MW: Well, it was Cocteau who introduced me to most of the artists.

CC: Was there a lot of traffic between, across, or not? I mean, was it pretty limited?

MW: Yes, I think. There were always lots of American artists in Paris, and they met the French artists, too. Then there was—an old-timer was Max Weber, who lived in Paris, and he was a close friend of le Douanier Rousseau.

HA: Could anybody have imagined in those days that the heart of the art world would shift from Paris to New York in such a short time?

MW: Never. Nobody would have imagined it. Least of all, [laughing] the French. [Laughter] Well this [was] very strange; they were so baffled, you know, when the American artists took over in the forties. And it was just after the War that George Salles, who was the director general of the French museums, and he had become a good friend of mine in Paris; a most extraordinary man. And so enlightened; a great friend of Picasso's. He was so distressed that 90 percent of the public at the Louvre were foreigners and only 10 percent were French, that's what distressed him. Whereas we had 90 percent American attendance and 10 percent foreign. And he wanted to know why. And he sent Jean Cassou, who was the director of the museum of modern art in Paris, over here to find out what we did that they didn't do.

HA: Did he discover the magic answer?

MW: Yes, I gave it to him at once. It was art education in the schools, which is what we really pioneered with Victor D'Amico. We got the Rockefeller Foundation to give us Victor D'Amico to start a department of education. And what he discovered was, that the reason art wasn't taught in our schools, in our high schools, was that there weren't any qualified teachers. But he discovered that there were teachers in all the high schools here and there who knew a lot about art who wanted to know more. And so what he did was to form what he called the Committee on Art Education, and he took from the high schools across the country, teachers who were interested in modern art, brought them to New York twice a year, and we had scholars lecture to them, we took them to the studios of artists, and to all the galleries.

HA: That's really extraordinary.

MW: Indoctrinated those teachers.

HA: That's really spreading the word vigorously.

CC: You know what is amazing to me?

MW: And they all went back to their schools and persuaded the parent and teachers associations and the superintendents to let them start art courses.

CC: You know, it's amazing. I was thinking today that, if it wasn't for your effort and just a few others, now, when you go into a University of Wisconsin dormitory, and you go into the dormitory and they have a [Paul] Gauguin self-portrait.

RC: Poster.

CC: Or they have a portrait of Water Lilies by [Claude] Monet, or this or that.

MW: Reproductions; sure.

CC: Really what we're talking about is what Mr. Wheeler did, popularizing it to that extent.

MW: That was something I was able to give a boost to because I was also Director of Publications.

RC: Right.

MW: As well as Director of Exhibitions, and they interested me equally. And so it was possible to get good reproductions made.

CC: Well, reproductions didn't exist, really before you.

MW: Oh, they existed, but terrible ones.

CC: Black and white; right? No color.

MW: No, there were color reproductions made, lots of them in Europe.

CC: But not in America, nobody was making them.

MW: They were made, yes, there were some. But what we did was to insist upon the fidelity of anything in our collection that was reproduced. We were very severe about that; made a lot of enemies among art publishers because they said, "Who are they to tell us how to make reproductions?" [Laughter]

CC: Would you say, though, that the role of the Museum, at that early stage was, [that] you were doing a lot more than having exhibitions? You saw your mission

as a lot more than having exhibitions here in New York for the same people who enjoyed the art. I mean, you really felt—

MW: Some of it had to do with the fact that Nelson Rockefeller was always internationally minded. And that was something that we really clicked on. I wanted to make the Museum international because I had connections abroad, and we needed help from abroad because we wanted to borrow, because that's where the great art was done, and we had to have it.

HA: So you had good relations with him.

MW: That's right. And we were able to borrow what we needed because of the—well, I started to say "clout" of our trustees, but that had a lot to do with it. Because they —

HA: People would take them seriously.

MW: Yes.

HA: When they made a request to borrow something, they had to be listened to.

MW: That's right; yes.

CC: Did you know you were on the right track by, let's say, 1934, when you came back? Did you know this was a going thing?

MW: No, we only knew that we believed that what we were doing needed to be done, and that there was an opportunity there. And, needless to say, we were all having a ball [laughter] because we did it all ourselves. We just took in each other's laundry and—

CC: Did you ever think it would be so popular, in the sense that?

MW: No, no, no, no; no idea.

RC: How long did it take before the public really took to this?

MW: Well, the opening show [*Cezanne, Gauguin, Seurat, van Gogh*], of course—the point is that the artists who we showed in the opening show were already world famous.

R/C: Right. [RC and CC simultaneously]

MW: And there were hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who had heard about them but never had been able to see them.

RC: Right.

MW: I think the last previous show had been done in 1920 at the Metropolitan.

HA: Yes, I remember reading about that.

MW: It was a small show, but there was certainly no place where modern art belonged. And American art, Gertrude Whitney had down there in her Whitney studio, but not for the foreign art. So, from the beginning we've been international.

RC: Right, you were an emissary.

MW: And that's always been the aspect of our work that interested *me* most, because I had been traveling since I was five years old and just a lamb. And now my principal concern is with our International Council, which you probably know about.

HA: Yes. I'm especially fascinated by the people, the personalities. And actually, the man who is hardest to grasp in a certain way, hardest to kind of imagine what he was like, is Alfred Barr. I have read so many things that are contradictory about him, I really can't say that I [INAUDIBLE: 0:13:49].

MW: Well, naturally, I knew him awfully well, so you just ask me what you want to know.

HA: I want to ask you the broadest possible question: What kind of a man was he? What was he like as a human being?

MW: Well, he was very quiet, hesitant, always. You asked him a question and he had to think for a half a minute before he'd answer it, having none of the spontaneity that you find in me. [Laughter] And he [was] contemplative, always thought around the whole question before he answered it. But he changed his mind, and especially when he'd been persuaded to do something that he didn't want to do in the first place. And then—

HA: And he would change his mind back again.

RC: To his original [thought], to not doing it.

MW: He'd agree and consent. In fact, his troubles with Stephen Clark came from that.

HA: I wanted to hear about that.

MW: And certain things that had to be done from an administrative point of view that Stephen Clark, who really ran the Museum during the War when everybody else was in service. And he would persuade Alfred that such and such a thing should be done, and be quite contented, and then the next day Alfred would tell him that he had changed his mind. And this—well, you know, he was the head of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, and he wasn't used to people behaving like that.

HA: So in a way, Alfred was good as a high priest, in a way, for the early part—

MW: Exactly.

HA: But as far as running an institution—

MW: He was *precisely* that. He was the high priest, and he had his champions. And everyone on the scholarly side was Alfred's champion, and a lot of people who were concerned with some of the administrative problems found him difficult. In the first place, it was difficult for him to make up his mind, so that he became—

HA: More the scholar than the executive, really?

MW: You know, when things back up, and, what do you call it?

HA: He was overwhelmed by—

CC: Bogged down.

HA: Back-logged.

MW: Back-logged, unsolved questions that he put off.

HA: I see.

CC: Something that a person can do on their own but not when they're running a—

MW: Yes, that's right.

HA: Leave things in the "pending" basket for a few months.

MW: That's right. But he was—I just opened up his Matisse catalogue and out fell a couple of little notes from Alfred, penciled notes that hadn't been thrown away. One was apologizing.

HA: They shouldn't be. [Laughter]

MW: Apologies, which he frequently sent me because he, especially in the realm of publications and the—as Publications, I had charge of all of the display and the signs and the labels and all that sort of thing. And he had very strict ideas on that, and often, just to get the things done, you know, I did them my way and he would disagree. And sometimes very, very—well, he was irritated and you can say that he was an irritable man because he—and he would speak rudely, then always apologize afterward.

HA: You're shedding a lot of light on his personality. That's just exactly the kind of thing I was hoping to hear.

CC: Do you think, looking at the design and illustration and the rigor in the originality of the book design and graphics, et cetera, that you saw in the twenties in Europe, and now looking in the 1980s to what you see every day, do you see that the grandchild or whatever of all of that, is a success, or is it a poor bastardization, or—?

MW: No, it's a huge success.

CC: How is the evolution for you?

MW: Well, it crept in. For example, we had—our early typographical style was Bauhaus. And that's perfectly natural, because we all admired the Bauhaus and the typography, and Philip Johnson did, too, and Philip, in those early days, had a lot of influence on Barr, too. And then, of course, while I was Director of Publications we grew away from Bauhaus. I got other typographers who—I did some of the typography myself and some of it Alfred accepted and some of it he didn't like. And certainly, it wasn't all perfect, but...

CC: I guess I'm trying to ask you that question about when people, say, look at the best of modernism, the [Charles] Eames chair or Marcel Breuer this or that, or some things in their pure form are very beautifully done. But then, now also, in

contemporary culture, there are things that are supposed modern but they don't seem to have the rigor that the original had.

HA: They're poor imitations.

CC: Poor imitations, in a way. Does that distress you greatly?

MW: No.

CC: Or that's just a natural consequence?

MW: That happens in every area and it doesn't distress me because we've got the genuine article in our collection. [Laughing]

HA: You still know what the genuine is.

MW: Our great anguish is to find room for everything that we want to preserve.

HA: But when you look at the art books of today, do you say to yourself: I know where they got that idea; it was my idea? [Laughter] What I'm asking you is, do you see your influence in what's being done today?

MW: Well, you know, there have always been art books, and there have always been splendid art books done by great collectors like J. P. Morgan and so forth. There have always been high standards. At the moment I'm helping David Rockefeller do a catalogue of his collection, which he wants to [do], well, just for the record. He's not going to sell it. [Laughter] It's just for his friends, but it's going to be beautifully done.

HA: I'm certain of that.

CC: I guess what I'm driving at is, in a way, an answer to probably the hardest question you can possibly ask, which is, in the late twenties, the Museum began as a mission, really; it was almost like a religious cause. And now, in the eighties, it's more institutionalized, obviously; it doesn't have the same glamour and fervor that it had at that time. What do you think of the transition between Barr, [René] d'Harnoncourt?

MW: There's still—there are still youngsters around who adore the place and who feel at home there, even in spite of its vast size. When I was young, the young people my age, we always said, "We'll meet you under the clock at the Biltmore."

Then, within the next few years, the youngsters began saying, "We'll meet you at the Museum." And they didn't mean the Metropolitan; they meant The Museum of Modern Art. And I can remember so many people who were youngsters then who are famous now, who just used to loiter around the place, you know, because they felt at home there. And they were learning something. And their eyes were being opened to something that they hadn't understood before. And it was fun, and it's still true. People—I've just been spending the holidays with my relatives along the north shore of Chicago where I was born—

HA: She was too.

MW: Were you?

RC: I'm from Winnetka and—

MW: That's where I'm staying. I was staying in Winnetka with my cousin Marjorie Colby, one of my two favorite cousins, and she and her husband had a beautiful house in Indian Hill, on the edge of the golf course there.

RC: Right.

MW: And then he died three years ago, but I had always stayed with them, for years and years. He had a great house copied after a French chateau, with a great lawn that went right into the golf course, so that it was really all one.

HA: Only part of the lawn had holes in it.

MW: [Laughing] That's right. And then when her husband died, she couldn't maintain—it was a 16-room house and she was alone, the children had gone, so she now lives in a new condominium at 711 Oak Street right square in the middle of Winnetka. And it's a delightful place to stay because everything that you want is right at your fingertips. You just reach out the window and you can get anything you want, and yet the rooms are huge and it's like the old house, except there's no golf course. Anyway, what I was about to say was, that I meet people still who are ignorant, totally ignorant about modern art, but they still want to learn. And I have—their children and grandchildren come to me, you know, for information: What shall I read now? What shall I see now? And the curiosity is there, in the youngsters, *everywhere*. And I think that's what accounts for our public. It's certainly a young public; I notice that all the time.

RC: Do you remember a particular time when the Museum changed from being an awe-inspiring—? Because I remember going to museums and being—

MW: Changed from?

RC: From a place where one was in awe of the art to this more public place you're describing as it is today.

HA: In other words, if you could describe, say, the difference between the Egyptian room in the Metropolitan, the experience you had there, and then going to a more contemporary show at the Modern, the difference, really, between the mood, the feeling.

MW: Well, we've always felt that modern art was only the latest link in the chain that goes back 20,000 years. And unless you understand that, you can't understand the other links, you know.

HA: Start filling in the pieces.

MW: Because everything is—

CC: It's not so mysterious.

MW: —relative and connected.

CC: It's really not all that mysterious or shocking when you really take a closer look.

MW: Well, there are people, you know, who never get over being shocked by *Guernica*, for example. And then there are people whose whole life is nourished by the art that they find, not only in our museum but in all museums. But I remember once, oh, this was so long ago, that I was going through the galleries. In those days we still were able to provide benches for people to rest on, [laughing] which we no longer do.

RC: I hope the new one will have that as well.

MW: I do, too.

RC: Because it was nice to sit in front of "The Dance" [*Dance (I)*]. I remember that room; you could sit, then you could really study it.

MW: Of course; of course; which is now in Zurich, while we're closed. Anyway, there was a lady sitting on the bench looking at the *Sleeping Gypsy*. And there was an expression of such rapture on her face, that I said, "Well, I can see that you love this picture as much as I do." And she said, "Oh yes," she said, "it means *everything* to me. I live in Yonkers and I have two children, and every once in a while, a time comes when I just can't bear my life any longer, and I go next door and I get someone to stay with the children, and I get on the New York Central and I come down to The Museum of Modern Art just to see this picture." Wow. And she said, "And I go back home after half an hour, entirely refreshed."

CC: That's wonderful.

HA: You mentioned another person earlier who fascinates me, and I wonder about his impact on the Museum, and that's Nelson Rockefeller. Becoming president in 1939, I have a feeling that a lot changed when he became president, but I don't really have a grasp of how it changed.

MW: Well, it went right on in the direction that Alfred and his mother had already established. His mother was an extraordinary woman. She had a great sense of management and administration and how to get people to do what needed doing. And I saw it working with myself when she drew me into the Museum and she'd telephone me to ask some minor question and it always ended in her talking for a half an hour. She was just so immersed in everything that we were doing, and there was nothing that escaped her attention.

HA: Was her son as sharp as she was?

MW: Oh yes; absolutely. And of course, he was in a position to give us much more time in those early days. And he just threw himself into it, with body and soul. Then he began collecting himself and buying things, not only for himself, but for us. And he has been our greatest single benefactor. Because he—when a picture became available, he would buy it either for himself as a promised gift for us, or give it to us right away. And he was the most generous man *imaginable*.

CC: One thing that's extraordinary to me is, he said something in the early forties, I read that he said that, well, to Barr, maybe, he said that, in 1940, the age of the endowment, in a sense, of the great endowment trust, is coming to an end. And

with that, we're going to have to reorient, in a way, how we run things. To me that seemed key, absolutely crucial, to know that. That, in a way, it was no longer a lark.

MW: Because at that time we were still getting money from individuals.

CC: Large amounts.

MW: Yes. But we knew that it wouldn't last forever. And Nelson had begun to tackle that problem of getting support from commerce and industry, when he became governor. But then, after that, he never really came back to us. I mean, he was governor for so long.

HA: He had something else in mind.

MW: Yes. And he, well, [laughing] he didn't manage his campaigns for President as well as he managed the Museum.

CC: But would you say that without the Rockefellers though, the Museum either wouldn't have ever been, or it would have remained a very small club among friends?

MW: I don't think—well, the Rockefeller family has certainly been our greatest asset; no question about that. And they've all been helpful to us, and still are, and they're all still willing to be. And it was David who came to grips with the problem of corporate support, because I can remember very well the dinners that he used to give at the Museum after he became Chairman of the Board, for the heads of the biggest corporations in the country, to get them here. Because David asked them—and [because] he knew them and [when he] asked them, [he knew] they'd come. And then, he and Alfred Barr and René d'Harnoncourt would talk to them, try to enlighten them a little bit, and then the next day, letters would go out from David asking them, you know, to help.

HA: Uh-huh.

MW: And the results were extremely disappointing, because they didn't really know what was going on. I mean, they had no idea. And it just took a long time for them to catch up.

RC: And what years are you referring to?

MW: Well, I'm speaking now, because David became President about—immediately after the War, early forties; not became chairman. No, let me see. He succeeded his mother on the Board, and he soon after that became Chairman. It was during the War—no, just after. He was away in the War; he didn't come back until the War was over. That was when Stephen Clark was still the top trustee, because Jock Whitney had been Chairman, and then he went off to war, and Stephen Clark took his place as Chairman.

CC: Tell us a little bit about characters like [A. Conger] Goodyear, for instance.

MW: Oh yes. Well, [laughing] he was a remarkable man, because he really loved modern art and he, above all, loved his position as being President of The Museum of Modern Art when these three powerful ladies sent for him and asked him if he would be the front man. And he just loved the job, and sometimes went a little bit too far in making decisions on his own. But Alfred was awfully good at keeping him in rein. I suppose his great day was when we sent an exhibition—our first great exhibition we sent to Paris was *Three Hundred Years of American Art* [*Three Centuries of American Art*]. And he had handled negotiations with the French at the top level.

CC: For years, I guess.

MW: The ambassadorial and all that sort of thing. And whereupon the French wrote a letter to him asking him if he would prepare this exhibition, and what the French really meant was, would The Museum of Modern Art do it, and what Mr. Goodyear understood was, will he personally. [Laughter] And so, we had to work that out.

CC: If you looked at each of the characters who are now no longer there but who were very instrumental, Barr, let's say, Barr, Goodyear, Clark, let's say, and even d'Harnoncourt, in your mind, of those four people, especially Barr and d'Harnoncourt, if they were to walk in tomorrow to the Museum, to an opening, whatever, would they be pleased with what they'd see?

MW: Oh heavens, yes. Oh, they'd be de—

CC: And for what reasons would each of them—?

MW: I remember when Alfred, when his illness was just beginning, when he'd come to an opening, and this was after he retired, and everyone would cluster about him and the joy of seeing him and *his* joy of seeing them and seeing what the Museum had become, was immense, immense. And René, too, I mean, because after all, if you see these things developing day by day and year by year, you were there when it wasn't like that.

All: Right.

MW: And the difference is really amazing.

HA: But it's turned out the way that they would have hoped it might have turned out?

MW: Oh, no question about it; absolutely.

CC: So it's quite a happy ending for most everybody concerned?

MW: I think so, I really think so.

RC: Was there any time that you remember that any of yourselves were shocked by some of the art that came in, or you were making decisions about shows that had some very tumultuous responses?

MW: Well, you see, we've always worked very closely with artists themselves, and the artists themselves are the first to understand the new developments. And, I mean, they're close to the creative process and they know what's going on. And we've always learned a lot from the artists themselves, and especially when it came to new work. And that was Dorothy Miller's great asset for us was that she was adored by all the artists, and she was in on their secrets in the very beginning.

CC: Hm; so she was almost like a secret agent then, who reported back to the Museum. [Laughter]

RC: I was going to say, she shared these developments with you? I mean, there was no time that you were—

MW: She was on the staff. She was Alfred's curator.

RC: Right, but do you recall anything that shocked you or that you found hard to [INAUDIBLE: 0:37:10]?

CC: In a way what's interesting is that nowadays people have a preference: someone likes architecture but they're not really keen on film or photography or whatever. But it seemed as if your crowd, you were interested in the "Fur-Lined Teacup" [*Object*]. You'd also—right the next evening, you'd be over watching René Clair's *Entr'acte* or something.

MW: Right.

RC: [Edward] Steichen's photographs.

CC: Then you'd be on to Walker Evans's photographs.

MW: That's right.

CC: I mean, you really had a—each area was to be plumbed and—

MW: Well, that was the—that all dates from the very origin of the Museum when we staked out the areas with which we'd be concerned. And each one had its own curator or director, encouraged by Alfred.

CC: So that's what separates you out from the Metropolitan, obviously, and other ones, I mean, you really dove into these new areas?

MW: Well, sure, because, after all, we were dedicated to 20th century art, and the Met never was. The Met was obliged to concern itself with modern American art because a man named [George Arnold] Hearn who had a department store on 14th Street set up a fund for the purchase of American art.

HA: That's right, the Hearn Fund, so they had to buy it.

CC: Seems like they were a little stymied by that. [Laughing]

MW: [Laughing] They were. It's caused a lot of trouble between us.

HA: How did the artists—? You were talking about Dorothy Miller's role with the artists. How did the artists feel about the Museum? What was their—what was it to them?

MW: Well, it was a new, clear eye on the world, because we were always international and the American artists would see, at The Museum of Modern Art, European art that, if they hadn't been abroad they wouldn't see otherwise.

HA: What about a person like Matisse? How did he feel about the Museum?

MW: Well, Matisse had met Mrs. Rockefeller. I don't know where he first met her, but there's on record a letter—no, it's an article that Frank Crowninshield, who was the editor of *Vanity Fair*, which is being revived now, but Frank Crowninshield did publish in *Vanity Fair* a lot of the avant-garde art. And he was known to all of us and he was one of our early trustees. And when Matisse was over here—I believe it was for the [Albert C.] Barnes, that commission the Barnes gave him for the—

CC: To decorate his walls.

MW: Yes, what do you call those things?

CC: Murals.

MW: Over the windows, over those French windows.

HA: The transom?

MW: You know, he had to do it twice because Barnes gave him the wrong dimensions. [Laughter] He brought over the first set and they didn't fit. [Laughing]

RC: Oh no.

HA: I'd think you might change the wall, at that point, not the artwork.

MW: Right. Well, but, I suppose—he made friends with Barnes and he was always grateful to Barnes because Barnes paid him enough so that when he came over, he could go on to the South Seas, which he'd always wanted to do. And then I learned later from Matisse, the reason he wanted to go to the South Seas is because he read Somerset Maugham's stories of the South Seas and loved them. Then he also had a marvelous time when he went there, and he somehow gave Barnes the credit for that. But at that time, when he was in New York, Mrs. Rockefeller gave a dinner for him. And I wasn't there; I was away. But I remember that Alfred and I discussed advising Mrs. Rockefeller about the guests. And she said, "Who would he like to meet?" And we agreed that he only wanted to meet beautiful girls. [Laughter] And you know, he never forgot it. That must have been in 1935 and I saw him in 1951, shortly before he died, and [laughing] he had forgotten that Mrs. Rockefeller had died, and [laughing] he

said, “Does Mrs. Rockefeller *still* have those beautiful girls parading around her house?” [Laughter]

HA: A memorable occasion.

MW: It really was; he never forgot it. And the fact that he remembered that and that his warmth of feeling for Mrs. Rockefeller, and therefore for the Museum, helped solve a very serious problem. Because Alfred Barr was working on his big Matisse show [*Henri Matisse*] and the big Matisse book [*Matisse: His Art and his Public*] that was to go with it. And Alfred had been over to see Matisse and got his consent for the loans that he wanted to have from Matisse himself. Formal letters of request went out, and a reply came from Matisse that the pictures would unfortunately not be available. Nelson was president, and Alfred just couldn’t understand it. And Nelson said, “Well, Monroe, you’re the troubleshooter; you’d better go over and see him.” And I did, and it was the fact that he remembered Mrs. Rockefeller, and also the fact that I happened to be staying with Somerset Maugham, who was an old friend of mine—

RC: Oh my.

MW: Whom Matisse had never met. Well, he asked me, the first time I went, and I posed this question about his loans, you know, and he said he would think it over. What happened? I was told that three German museums had got together to give a big Matisse show, and Matisse’s friends who were sympathetic to them had persuaded him that it was more important to have a big show going around Germany than to show them in New York. And so Matisse said he’d think it over, and I would come back, and, “Where are you staying?” And I said, “I’m staying with Somerset Maugham.” “Oh,” he said, “I’ve been living within five miles of him for 20 or 30 years and I never met him. Could you bring him to see me?” Well, Maugham had never met Matisse and was longing to go anyway, so that was easy to arrange. Except that when they were actually together it turned out to be a fiasco, because Maugham was such a crumpet. [Laughter] And he wanted to talk. He wanted to hear Matisse talk about art, and Matisse wanted to hear Maugham talk about the South Seas. And Maugham never re-read a book after he’d written it, and his interest in the South Seas had vanished totally. [Laughter] And he wouldn’t say a word about them. And this broke Matisse’s heart; he had

been looking forward to this wonderful talk about the voluptuous delights of the South Seas. [Laughter]

CC: So that's what he wanted to talk about.

MW: Yes, sure, and Maugham wasn't playing.

RC: It must have been a tough row for you, sitting in between.

MW: Well, it was; it was. So, it didn't work out as Matisse had hoped. However, it did work in my favor because at least he'd met Maugham, and he was kind of disposed toward me.

CC: So you got the paintings, eventually.

MW: Yes, we got the paintings and a lot else.

CC: Well, what were, in your mind, your big triumphs in terms of exhibitions and certain publications or editions that you did with the Museum?

MW: Well; triumph? I don't know.

CC: Your *Painters and Sculptors*?

HA: Things you were the most proud of.

CC: *Painters and Sculptors as Illustrators*?

MW: Well, I think that I'm most proud—I really can't answer that question.

CC: Or which have had the most influence, then?

MW: For example, our great Matisse show in which we all took the greatest pride, that was Alfred's job. And a great Picasso show was Alfred's, when it comes to paintings. The Picasso sculpture show [*The Sculpture of Picasso*] was René's; that was marvelous.

HA: I remember that one vividly.

MW: It was terrific. You know, if you go through the list of exhibitions, I don't know how many there were; at the time I retired we'd had 600. And I don't know what the list must be now.

CC: That's amazing. You don't feel any—? There isn't a real lapse of any sort in going from the late thirties, let's say, into the forties with René and all?

MW: No. There were lapses when we were unable to get the show because of the lack of the right person to do it who had the time. We've had a lot of guest directors and they haven't all been successful. But we still are open minded about guest directors because the problems are so vast now, filling those galleries.

HA: Vast is the right word.

MW: Yes. And so, we get shows, as every museum does now, on a cooperative basis.

CC: Yes. You don't feel that the vision of The Museum of Modern Art though has really changed all that much in terms of its—?

MW: No, I really don't; I really don't. I don't know what outsiders feel, but, of course, now we have to share things, because the great museums, the great old museums, are now catching up by doing their version of the things that we pioneered with.

HA: I was thinking about that. The Museum of Modern Art pioneered this territory. It now occupies this territory, so it's not quite the pioneer in the way that it was.

MW: No, but we still try to keep up with new talent and the new developments of established artists, like these new [Robert] Rauschenbergs that we've got there now.

HA: Yes, which are gorgeous.

MW: They're so beautiful, aren't they?

HA: Yes, they are beautiful. I like them very much.

MW: Marvelous. Well, there's still a lot of young blood.

HA: I was reading Russell Lynes' book [*Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of The Museum of Modern Art*] and I was struck by the fact that you had written that paper on good design before there was any—

MW: That was the old Advisory Committee.

HA: Yes.

MW: Because I felt that the Museum hadn't done enough to help people to recognize good design in the objects with which they were surrounded in their homes. And this wasn't new with me, at all, I mean, because Philip Johnson had already concerned himself with good design. Alfred, when he was teaching art at Wellesley, would give each of the students 50 cents and tell them to go out and bring back an object of art that they could buy for 50 cents or less.

HA: That's a wonderful little story.

MW: It is; isn't it?

HA: And that's the origin, in a certain sense, of all of those shows.

MW: And it wasn't long before designers began to, you know have this in mind.

HA: Cater to that.

CC: Yes, spruce it up a little. [Laughter]

HA: To me, that's one of the unique aspects of the Museum is that it investigated and popularized good design. No other museum that I know of has.

CC: It's one of the only ones that I know that children, even—I remember seeing a watch or a coffee grinder or something have a little label on it saying "design" or whatever, "Museum of Modern Art."

MW: [INAUDIBLE: 0:50:36]. Well, that's something that we had, that's where we had—

CC: And it was quite interesting, really.

MW: Sure, and we put Edgar Kaufmann in charge of that department, and he was very helpful to us in the early days. He was the son of a department store owner in Pittsburgh.

HA: I see, yes.

MW: And he was a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright's.

RC: His house was at Bear Run; right?

MW: That's right. Edgar got his father to commission that house from Frank Lloyd Wright, and I think it's about one of the most beautiful homes ever made. And now it belongs, I believe, to the state of Pennsylvania. It's near Pittsburgh.

HA: It's a state possession now?

MW: Fallingwater.

HA: Fallingwater; yes.

RC: At Bear Run.

HA: I know there was a show, a one-house show at the Museum of Fallingwater.

MW: Edgar did a wonderful job, because we made a deal with the Merchandise Mart. The problem was, to get good design into the shops where people could see it and buy it, and the great block was the buyers for all of these big department stores, the chains and all that. The buyers had the *worst possible* taste, and they would buy what *they* liked.

HA: God help us.

MW: And that was all the public was offered. And the problem was, how do we get this good stuff into the shops?

HA: Popularization.

MW: And so when we did that show [*Organic Design in Home Furnishings*] of the furniture design, which Charles Eames won the prize—but before we—while we were developing it, and this is Edgar Kaufmann who was helpful in this, made deals with the department stores, with the manufacturers, so that whatever we decided was the best design would be actually manufactured by [them], and the department stores had agreed to take it, so that we followed through on it.

HA: I'd say you followed through.

CC: With your hand that far in.

HA: Yes, yes.

CC: Would you say before you did the exhibitions, before you began to really mount shows in this way, when you would attend an exhibition at another museum, let's

say, if you went up to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts or something of that sort, what would you take away? Maybe, correct me if I'm wrong, but would you then, the exhibition, it would run, let's say, a month or two. You'd go in. When you came out, there wouldn't have been any posters; right? There wouldn't have been any catalogue, or there wouldn't have been postcards or any of that sort of thing?

RC: [Laughing] T-shirts.

CC: I mean, not T-shirts, but did you sort of pioneer the idea of taking a little bit of it home with you in that sense, at least in terms of a catalogue and all? Maybe not you personally, but the Museum.

MW: Having been an Evanstonian, I naturally was brought up in the Art Institute of Chicago, and my father helped start the businessman's art club in Chicago, and they got the teachers in the Art Institute schooled to help them. And it was just fun for them, but they were all collectors in a modest way, and they—well, this is to explain why I was always at the Art Institute. And of course they had postcards in those days and posters of the exhibitions and all that; it changed in taste with the years. But of course, they didn't have departments of design in those days.

HA: I wondered, as you look in the stores today, do you feel that all of these efforts in the past, like that effort with the Merchandise Mart, do you think that that's still paying off now? My feeling is that it is, so I wonder whether you agree with that?

MW: Oh yes, I think so. Because I think that the editors of the newspapers and magazines, they've all learned a lesson, and they now really establish the acceptance. Don't you think so?

HA: I do think so. I think manufacturers, many manufacturers are very highly conscious of design and they're trying to give the public the best design they can, and the public likes it better than the stuff that isn't as well designed.

MW: Right, sure.

HA: I think that's really true. I feel that way, anyway.

MW: Yes. No, it's remarkable what good design *is* available. But then once in a while you run into a shop full of newly made furniture that's worse than anything you ever saw in your whole life. [Laughter] That people are still buying; you know, I suppose from Sears Roebuck or I don't know what.

HA: Of course, the conversation we're having with you now is just kind of background for us, but the time is going to come when we'll want to come in here with a camera and to film some of these things that we're asking you about.

MW: Okay. Fine.

CC: But it's terrific. I mean, you have—

HA: You're obviously a wonderful source of information and—

RC: The breadth of your experience.

CC: You're on the A team. [Laughter]

HA: I'd say so.

MW: I'm one of the survivors.

HA: You certainly are.

MW: Now, who have you got, of the old timers? Because there's Philip Johnson and Eddie Warburg.

HA: Yes, those are definitely on our list, both of them.

MW: Now, the old timers—

CC: Well, what do you think? We'll just tell you; we'll throw out some names of—

MW: Yes.

RC: You can be candid with us.

CC: Well, Philip Johnson, [Edward] Warburg, Lincoln Kirstein.

MW: Yes.

CC: Okay.

MW: Philip, he'll probably say no, but—

RC: But he could help tell that early story, don't you think?

MW: Oh yes, he might very well.

CC: We want a feisty—

MW: He'll shock you.

HA: I don't care if he says he doesn't like it. That's fine.

CC: Yes, that's fine; that's fine.

RC: Yes, his involvement—

HA: There are enough people who like it.

CC: He's a cultural titan, in a way. He really has done an awful lot, and he also, he was there in those early days.

MW: He sure was; he sure was. It all depends on his mood. Some days he's angelic and some days he's odious.

HA: We've heard more about the latter than the former, but we can be maybe lucky.

MW: Yes, well, that's his nature. He just enjoys putting people down, but he's also an extremely affectionate person. I've got books around here, his books, you know, inscribed to me, it's astonishing.

CC: And Dorothy Miller, we want to get too.

MW: Sure.

CC: What about, is it, Elodie?

MW: Courter. She's the one who inaugurated our circulating exhibitions.

HA: Right.

CC: Would she be—?

MW: Sharing our exhibitions with other museums.

HA: Is she still alive?

MW: Oh yes, she lives in, up there in that corner of Connecticut, where Connecticut meets Massachusetts.

HA: Fairfield? Oh, the Berkshires.

MW: In the northwest; she's married to Bob Osborn.

CC: Osborn, right.

MW: And they live there in a house which I think Bob designed.

HA: Allen Porter is another one.

MW: Yes, and I haven't heard from him later, and he lives up the Hudson in an old church which he remodeled. And I called him a couple of weeks ago, to find out whether he's still alive. [Laughing] [INAUDIBLE: 0:58:32] [laughter].

HA: We heard that he is not well, but he is well enough to talk. That's what we've heard.

MW: He can fill you with stories.

CC: And Eliza Parkinson.

MW: Yes, Eliza Parkinson; her name is now Cobb. C-O double B, have you got that? She's remarried. She was a Bliss; she's Lillie Bliss's niece.

RC: Ah, oh, I see.

MW: Lillie Bliss's niece.

HA: Who was Allen Porter? They keep referring to him as, I mean, he sort of was always there. What exactly was he?

MW: Well, he was a sort of assistant secretary, really. And he ended up as being our sort of chief of protocol, and to receive visitors from abroad, and so forth. When people arrived, if we didn't have time for them, we always sent for Allen, and he would chase them around. And he could have occupied a very important role in the Museum staff and administration, but he didn't want to. And I can remember at our Coordination Committee meetings, we'd say, "What are we going to do with Allen?" And then we'd decide a particular project would be ideal for him. [Laughter] And I would be told to get Allen to take on this job. [Laughing] And I'd explain it to Allen, and he'd flop his hands and say, "Oh, what do you want to do *that* for?" [Laughter]

RC: What would some of the projects be?

MW: He didn't want to be involved. And he took early retirement. He couldn't wait to get out of the place.

HA: We're thinking of also talking to William Paley—

MW: Oh sure.

HA: Who had association for such a long time.

MW: Oh sure. Yes.

CC: And eventually, David Rockefeller also, to help tell the Rockefeller story.

MW: Sure. Sure.

HA: Because the Rockefeller story was just so integral to the whole story.

MW: Absolutely. And of course, David was his mother's favorite, really. And of course he—it was Nelson that was really assigned to The Museum of Modern Art by his mother. And then of course when he went into politics, that was the end of that.

HA: Yes.

MW: And then that's when David appeared.

HA: Came off the bench, so to speak.

MW: After the War, and took over Nelson's responsibilities.

HA: Huh, I see.

MW: And is still doing it.

CC: What about—? Well, we also were going to see Bernard Karpel.

MW: Yes! Oh, I'd love to see him again. He was our librarian, who worked with all of the directors of exhibitions, making the bibliographies for their catalogues. And he was a wonderfully effective librarian, tremendous energy.

HA: Of course, Pearl Moeller is also on our list.

MW: Sure. Pearl, she says she worked for me but I [laughing]—she had something to do with publications permissions. And there was always a problem, and she

solved it marvelously, this business of trying to exert control over the use of the Museum collections in other publications.

HA: I understand. And of course, William Lieberman is someone we're going to see. Of course, he's a little bit later era, but he still has been around for a long time.

MW: Oh, Bill; I hired Bill, in the first place.

CC: When he was 25 years old, wasn't he? He was quite young.

MW: Yes, very young. He was just out of college, Philadelphia, on Main Line there; what's it called?

All: Swarthmore.

MW: Anyway, he came to me with a letter from Wystan Auden, because Auden had been teaching down there, and Auden had learned that when he graduated he wanted to work in a museum, so Auden gave him a letter to me. And I gave him a job as a sort of volunteer in the Publications Department, and that's where he began. Then he decided that he wanted to do work in paintings, so we said, well, in that case, you'd better take the Fogg course. So he went— [tape break]

MW: Believe me, she knows everything.

HA: I'm certain of that. As far as we're concerned, the more outspoken the people are, the better.

CC: Yes, the more outrageous, really, and the more opinionated.

HA: We want to make a film that's exciting, and that's dramatic, and that's controversial, and that's interesting to people who don't know the story.

MW: Sure.

CC: Right.

RC: And it is a colorful place.

HA: Because as we read the story and as we start to meet the people like yourself, there's a lot of drama here, and it's very exciting for an outsider to see how this happened, how people had this little idea and how it expanded, and how they fought to keep it going the way they wanted it, sometimes among themselves.

CC: And some of the things that people take for granted now were pioneered there, or at least were thought of, and considered, and, I don't know. It's had an awful lot of influence that people now, I think, take a little bit for granted.

HA: We think of the reproductions that are on the walls of the college dorms, and it seems to me that they had a direct lineage—

MW: And now they have original prints, too.

HA: That's true.

CC: Mostly reproductions.

HA: But they had a direct lineage back to the Museum.

MW: Oh, of course.

HA: And it's just a way for someone to have a little bit of museum in their own place.

MW: That's right.

CC: And these film courses that people take now all over the country, hundreds and hundreds of courses.

HA: Every college, every university, has one.

CC: I used to rent films from The Museum of Modern Art library. Why? Because they were the only ones who had René Clair's *Entre'acte*.

MW: That's right. René Clair was a friend of mine and his widow [Bronja Perlmutter] came over last year. We brought [INAUDIBLE: 1:04:54].

CC: She's extraordinary.

MW: I can remember when she didn't have enough to eat in Montmartre, Montparnasse. And she's a great lady now.

HA: Is there anyone we haven't mentioned who occurs to you that we should be, of the old timers, who might be around that we don't know about?

CC: Or, put it this way, if there's anybody who—we began to think among ourselves, as someone who is outside the Museum but who might have something interesting to say. Would it be, like, a Pierre Matisse, maybe? Would he?

MW: Oh sure, sure.

CC: Can you think of anyone?

MW: Pierre is one of our angels. And he—

CC: He's closely associated?

MW: He knows us well and he's one of our great benefactors. He's given us such marvelous things by his artists, like [Yves] Tanguy and [INAUDIBLE: 1:05:52] by his father, of course. But we've also been a good customer. [Laughter]

HA: I'd say. Someone else mentioned to us that Henry McBride—is Henry McBride still alive?

MW: Oh, [INAUDIBLE: 1:06:00]. No, he—there's a book of his criticisms; did you ever see that?

HA: Uh-huh; I have not.

CC: We've been reading his quotes, though. We've been reading reprints of his reviews, and we're most impressed by his reviews.

MW: If you can ever find a copy, I'd pay anything for it, because his friend who had it published after his death, sent me a copy and it was lost or stolen. It just disappeared before I'd even read it. And I know his name, his name is Miltzlaff, and he lives up in Connecticut somewhere, but I'm terribly disappointed in that Strand place down there.

RC: The Strand Bookstore?

MW: To be able to supply any book that they've got.

CC: They can't find them.

MW: They've never been able to give me anything I've wanted. [Laughter]

HA: It's fun to browse there, but that's it.

CC: What about someone like Jimmy Ernst?

MW: Oh, Jimmy was an office boy, and we looked after him during the War, and paid him $15 a week.

CC: He might be kind of colorful, don't you think?

MW: Why sure. Sure. And then he became a painter because—

CC: He's Max's son.

MW: He's had a fair degree of success, I think.

HA: Also, Mary Sands Thompson, we keep coming across that name but we don't know—Mary Sands.

CC: Was she Alfred's secretary?

MW: Probably. I don't remember exactly. I know the name but I don't remember what she did. She must have been close to Alfred.

CC: And Victor, of course, Victor D'Amico, we do want to see him. What about James Sweeney? Is that too brief of a period, really, to make much difference?

MW: Well, it was brief all right except that he was always an ardent supporter of the Museum until he became the director of Painting and Sculpture. And he, well—

CC: Or is that the same ground, do you think, that would be covered by—?

MW: He always wanted more authority than Stephen Clark was willing to give him. And it was a problem. He made some important acquisitions for us, but there were things that he was never able to complete, like a Georgia O'Keefe—he wanted to do a Georgia O'Keefe show because he was a friend of hers. And so we said, fine, go ahead, do it. But Georgia O'Keefe wanted a book to go with it, which we were quite prepared to supply, except Jim never produced the book.

HA: I see.

CC: And what about Andrew Ritchie?

MW: Oh yes. Well, he was at the Frick, you know.

CC: Yes.

MW: And he was a very studious, thorough—

CC: A very good writer, also.

MW: —curator, yes, and all of his shows were excellent.

HA: Is he still alive?

MW: Oh no, he died some years ago, and then, now his wife's died, too. I mean, she knew a lot.

CC: And John McAndrew?

MW: John McAndrew is dead also. He was very important in the early days of the Architecture Department, and also the good design. He preceded Edgar Kaufmann.

CC: And Edgar Kaufmann we can't because?

MW: Edgar Kaufmann is around.

CC: He's alive?

RC: He's alive; yes.

MW: He'll be spending Christmas in Greece but he'll be back.

RC: And what about Emilio Ambasz? Was he?

MW: A very late arrival, Ambasz.

CC: If we look, let's say, at good design, just for one category, and we have you, let's say, and Philip Johnson, and Arthur Drexler, is that pretty much a good grouping? I mean, we're not leaving a hell of a lot out?

MW: Absolutely. You don't need me in that. [Laughter] Because Drexler is wonderfully articulate, speaks extremely well. We have very few people who do. [John] Szarkowski is one of them.

CC: Do you give high marks to them?

MW: And Drexler, yes.

CC: And what about, for film, we were thinking of seeing Margareta Ackermark, for instance.

MW: Yes, yes.

CC: I think she'd be very good; she knows Iris Barry's story.

MW: She knew Iris very well. Yes, Ackermark's fine.

RC: What I was going to ask you, is, in this type of film, as much as we've described it to you, what period would you see yourself really speaking about? For instance, you said that some other people would be more apropos to talk about different areas. As a spokesperson for a particular period, event, era.

MW: I suppose my years were the forties and fifties.

RC: Forties and fifties.

MW: After all, I was there 35 years.

RC: Yes.

CC: Well, but he goes back to—I mean, he came in in '34; right, you were in New York?

HA: Sure. '36. That's right.

CC: Also, I think it's nice to establish—you may have come in officially at one time, but the fact that you were in touch with people in Paris when you were there and you were doing things that then later affected.

HA: You were very nearly there at the beginning.

RC: In spirit.

CC: You were quite there in a sense, at the beginning, at least in spirit.

MW: The staff was extremely small.

CC: But they knew you in Paris, and that sort of thing.

MW: Sure.

RC: So your very active period as well were the forties and fifties for you as Exhibition Director.

MW: Yes.

HA: Well, it was very fortunate for the Museum, your international connections, it seems to me.

MW: That's what Mrs. Rockefeller thought. [Laughter]

HA: I think she was right. [Laughter]

CC: If you think about it, the European artists, who did they know? They knew a few American collectors, sure, who came over, and they knew a couple of museum people would come over, but to have a good friend like that—

MW: In the Museum, yes.

CC: I think that made a hell of a lot of difference. It wasn't easy to jump on a plane then and go spend a few days.

MW: Well, yes, I did a certain amount of trouble shooting.

HA: What about William Burden?

MW: Bill Burden? Well, he's all right. He's living in a wheelchair now, but he's right in the head. He's just finished his autobiography, he told me. And he was president of the Museum; it was during or just after the War. He left; he became Ambassador to Belgium, and that's when he—I think he had to give up the presidency of the Museum to go to Belgium. And then I think he was succeeded by Eliza Parkinson.

HA: Yes, I believe that's right.

MW: Now Cobb. She knows a lot.

HA: Do you think that, in your opinion, I mean, we read the Russell Lynes book, but we, among us, we feel it's a little dry. Do you think he'd be good to talk to, or do you think—?

MW: Everything he knows is in that book.

CC: Yes. See, we felt that.

HA: That's the way a writer works; he puts it all in.

CC: We felt that it just made it—it was factual but it was very, very dry.

HA: He could have made a more dramatic story if he had wanted to.

CC: We've now met a couple of the people, we begin to think—

MW: Well, he was afraid we'd all jump on him. [Laughter]

HA: It may have been true.

MW: His brother, the photographer, was my closest friend for 15 years—

RC: George Platt Lynes.

MW: And Russell was a little boring, you know. And he was frightened to death of all of us. But he enjoyed the assignment and I think he did a very good job.

HA: Well, it certainly is a lot of information in there.

RC: Yes, a lot of information.

MW: Yes, it is. But there's not too much about art in it.

HA: No, but the film we're making is not a film about art, either. It's a film about the Museum and the vision and the ideas.

CC: [INAUDIBLE 1:13:57].

MW: I can't tell you how much this disappoints me, because for years and years I've been telling Bill Paley, "*When* are you going to wake up to tackle the problem of visual arts on TV?" It's been such a mess all these years. And Bill, don't you know, that when he says, he says, "Well, I'm going to pay for a film on the Picasso show." So he pays for a film on the big Picasso show [*Pablo Picasso: A Retrospective*], and what does it amount to? Have you seen it?

RC: That's the Perry Miller Adato film [*Picasso: A Painter's Diary*].

MW: Yes, and they just filmed the pictures on the wall.

HA: It's very hard to do. A film about art is very difficult to do and make it interesting.

MW: I *know* that, and I hoped you boys were going to tackle it.

HA: No, but we're not the last film that's going to be made in The Museum of Modern Art, either. [Laughter]

CC: I doubt there could be a movie about the Museum that doesn't say all that much about art.

MW: It's so simple. You've simply got to have a fresh approach that has nothing to do with the way an exhibition looks to a photographer wandering through with a camera. I mean, that's not the approach.

HA: It's dry as dust to do that.

MW: You have to be brought close to the artist and to each particular work of art. And I think the most successful art film that I know is Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation*.

CC: Yes, that's a great view.

MW: And I don't think we can involve him in your project.

HA: No.

MW: But he once told me something that moved me very much, when he had arrived here from Europe. And he said that he took a taxi at the airport and came straight to 11 West 53rd Street; he wanted to see the Garden of The Museum of Modern Art with the Henry Moore installed in it.

HA: Oh, that's wonderful.

MW: He couldn't wait.

HA: The bags still in the cab? He hasn't checked into his hotel.

MW: Right. [Laughter] He's still kicking around.

HA: We feel that, in terms of a popular, broad audience, that the story of the Museum itself has never been told, really, and it's a story that will interest people and they'll take pride in, and maybe they'll come to the Museum as a result.

CC: Also, you telling us the story of Circulating Exhibits and the impact, for instance, is one part of the story. But also, your very moving evocation of that woman who lives in Yonkers, who comes down to look at the *Sleeping Gypsy* is just as much a part of the story.

HA: That's right.

MW: There are hundreds of her around—

HA: Oh, yes, of course there are.

MW: —who attach themselves to a particular work of art which really nourishes them.

HA: Those stories will also be a part of our film, though.

CC: And then we'll also put up a picture of that, because also, it's going to be remarkable that—it's not as if, when we put up a reproduction or on the TV show a picture of *Sleeping Gypsy*, it's not as if people aren't familiar with those; most of them have them in their college dormitories. [Laughter]

HA: That's right; that one in particular—

CC: That's very popular imagery.

MW: Well, it's one of the greatest pictures ever painted, I think. And one of the most mysterious. That's why it's so great. It's because of its mystery. No footprints for the lion, and just a dream. [INAUDIBLE: 1:17:15].

CC: [INAUDIBLE: 1:17:15] imagination.

HA: Yes, it is a dream.

MW: Another dream, another dream. You know, Max Weber told me a thing that I've never been able to assimilate. He used to stand with [Henri] Rousseau when he was painting. And he said Rousseau would put his canvas, fasten it to the wall, and he would sketch out very roughly his idea of what he was going to paint. The only other painter who did that was [Pierre] Bonnard, whom I know; knew. Rousseau would then start painting at the left, and he would paint a strip, from top to bottom.

CC: Incredible. It's true.

HA: I don't understand that at all.

CC: No, really he would do a section—

MW: And then he'd do another strip.

CC: Incredible detail.

MW: Yes, detail. And when he got to the right end of the picture, it was finished. [Laughter]

HA: Well, he certainly had to have it in his mind before he started, didn't he?

MW: That's right. Completely perfect in his mind, before he started.

HA: That's remarkable. Well, I'm not a painter but I certainly wouldn't go about it that way.

MW: Ha! [Laughter] Nor would I.

HA: Listen, I think we've taken more than enough of your time, and it's been wonderful for us.

R/C: Thank you. [RC and CC simultaneously]

MW: I do have a dinner engagement.

HA: So we appreciate it enormously, and you can be—

END OF INTERVIEW at 1:18:32