**INTERVIEW WITH:** **LARRY ALDRICH (LA)**

**INTERVIEWER:** **LYNN ZELEVANSKY (LZ)**

**LOCATION:** In the Museum restaurant? See page 6

**DATE:** **1993**

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**BEGIN Sound Recording #2000.31, Side A**

LZ: There's a fair amount of ambient noise here, so I'm not sure it's going to work. So, I'll take notes, also, at the same time.

LA: If there's anything I have to tell you that would warrant taking notes; I don't know.

LZ: Well, I hope so. [laughing] First of all, am I right that you. Well, no, let me ask you this. I believe the fund that you created, started in 1959, the fund for contemporary art under $1,000?

LA: That's right.

LZ: But were you involved with the Museum before that?

LA: Not at all.

LZ: Not at all. So that was the beginning.

LA: And you want to know the way it came about?

LZ: I'd love to.

LA: Well, I don't know whether you know anything about what my career was previously.

LZ: Wasn't it in the fashion business?

LA: Very much so. And I began, became involved with contemporary art in 1951, with our parent. I went to Europe at least three times a year from 1933 until the war had started, and then again beginning in 1946 until 1966. And I had a very important collection of the impressionists and post-impressionists, which I

acquired principally in Europe __[0:01:38] And I've had __ in contemporary art, it didn't really speak to me until 1951 when I was __ to Paris. I was on the left bank by a gallery, and there was a red painting in the window. It was abstract but not totally abstract. __ figure __ object __ a beautiful, beautiful work. It was by an artist called Zao Wou-Ki. Is that an artist you know of?

LZ: No, say it again?

LA: Zao Wou-Ki.

LZ: Zao Wou-Ki.

LA: He now calls himself Wou-Ki. Anyhow, he's fairly well known in this country but he's quite famous in Europe. So much so that he has a beautiful home in Paris, and a beautiful house in the country, and his paintings in Europe sell for forty, fifty-five thousand dollars. Anyhow, that's the first contemporary painting I bought. And while I was in the gallery, I also bought a Vieira da Silva, another name.

LZ: Yes.

LA: Those were the two first contemporary paintings I bought. And I continued, when I went to Paris three times a year, we were allowed always three or four days to do nothing but look at galleries. And so I had a fairly sizeable collection by 195_ [0:03:20] of all the __ European contemporary art. And Zao Wou-Ki was one of them.

LZ: And you didn't look in New York, when you were?

LA: I couldn't. I lived in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

LZ: I see.

LA: __. So my weekends were actually always spent in the country. And in those days, Saturday, that was before Soho, Saturday was the logical place to shop. So I'd come back, I did three weeks at least on each trip to Europe. When I came back I had to get very busy on the next collection. But I never had time. But it stirred me that I knew of course about the Pollocks and all those people, but they were

LZ: How did you know about it? You just read it?

LA: Just by reading about it. And seeing photographs in magazines and so on. But they were already in the $12-15,000 range at that time, and that wasn't my interest. I was only concerned, as I was in Europe, with just buying the work of newer contemporary artists.

LZ: So by the late '50s, they were in the $12-15,000 range?

LA: Pollock, all those, yes, they were. Pollock and Kline and all of them, __.[0:05:00] And of course the early ones __.

LZ: Yes.

LA: Anyhow, I realized that American art was doing things that were not being done in Europe. Although they were the same vein. And I didn't know how to get around it. I happened to meet a Johnny Myers. Do you know who that was?

LZ: Yes.

LA: Early '59, end of '58, I guess, Johnny Myers sent me a very long, impassioned letter about an artist that he had, and a particular painting – lyrical about it -- by the name of – she was written up in a story in the *Times*.

LZ: Grace Hartigan?

LA: Grace Hartigan. A large painting. And so I took the time on a Friday, left a little early and went up to his gallery, which was then on Madison Avenue in the '60s. And I bought this Grace Hartigan. That's the only first __[0:06:25] painting I bought. And she and I got to know Grace quite well, subsequently, I wound up with about a dozen of her works. That original first painting I've since given to Brandeis University.

Z: Oh.

A: And so, I had met at a party somewhere, Bill Lieberman, who, as you know, is a very good salesman.

LZ: [laughing] That's what I've always heard.

LA: __ curator __.[0:17:15] And I know a lot of people who __ reputation as collectors, who didn't know any more about a painting than they knew about that

furniture. __.[0:07:32] And subsequently did, or maybe all the time, meet Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller.

LZ: I think all along.

LA: As a matter of fact, I don't think that, from what I gathered – I don't know if Nelson Rockefeller ever picked out anything for them, but I don't know. But I do know,

LZ: They were very involved with it, certainly.

LA: Yes. Anyhow, I called up Bill Lieberman and asked him to my office for lunch. I had __ offices, I'd have guests for lunch __.[0:08:14] And I told him what my problem was, that I just had no time to go shopping, and since The Museum of Modern Art had done a great deal about the abstract, uh

LZ: Yes.

LA: __ came before, __ in Europe, and so on and so forth, that I felt as though they were doing more about American art than even, of importance, than the Whitney, at that time. And I was, and in essence, I told him, clearly, since I didn't have the time to do what I'm able to do when I'm in Europe, when I go to France __[0:09:10] and I would have, I'd work there, I would buy paintings, __. I thought that The Museum of Modern Art might be interested in a proposal, which I'd prepared to give them $10,000 a year, since I was only interested in new contemporary art, that I would put a limit on it, which was possible at that time, no longer.

LZ: Yes.

LA: Put a limit on $1,000, extend it a little if necessary, per item. And there were no qualifications. The only – I had no veto power over anything. The only qualifications were that I would see the work before I gave the check. And if one year there was enough work that it would run over the ten, that's fine, there would be less for the following year.

LZ: Right.

LA: Well, the first group that was shown to me as a group had a couple of artists whose work interested me that I wanted to acquire. They gave me the name of

the gallery where they had come from. And I called the gallery, and in each instance, “Oh, The Museum of Modern Art has had that for about five months now.” Apparently, the Acquisition Committee was meeting about twice a year, and so they would accumulate things for the Acquisitions Committee and the ones that were approved, within my group, were shown to me before I paid for them. But they would have been in exhibitions of a few months hence, and the work was gone, or what have you. So I saw that that was, I had to. Anyhow, the first work before I was shown a group was the Sixteen Americans show, and I was crazy about the black Stellas.

LZ: Yes, I know.

LA: And at that time, you know, the height, the size of it, I had no museum, I couldn’t __.[0:11:40] I couldn’t even think of the idea of a painting that was ten-foot high and ten-foot wide. I wouldn’t know where to hang it; I had no place I could hang it. And so I reluctantly I was, I didn’t get one. But Dorothy said, “We want to use your fund to buy this __.”[0:12:00] I said, “I would love to buy one myself, but I don’t know what I’d do with it.” That’s America’s __.[0:12:08]

LZ: Yes.

LA: That’s the first money that was spent of the fund. I was shown the painting in the gallery __.[0:12:20] And at the same time __, there was a Jasper Johns in that show, medium sized, maybe four by four or something, and it was a flag. And I said, “I’d love to have that painting.” And it was __ dollars and I wanted to buy it for myself. They had already acquired several.

LZ: Right.

LA: Anyhow, Alfred had picked four or five, I think, and one for the Museum and three or four other people.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: Anyhow, this one, he had picked for Nelson Rockefeller. And of course, Nelson hadn’t seen it. So I said, well, if he doesn’t take it, I want it. Well, every week I would call Dorothy Miller during the Sixteen show, no, Nelson hadn’t seen it. And he did finally see it the last two days of the show. So he got it. So I never got it. Anyhow, oddly enough, that painting was in Albany in the fire. It burned.

LZ: Oh really? So it's not the flag that's in our collection now.

LA: Oh no. It was never in your collection. If I'd acquired it, it never would have burned. [laughing]

LZ: [laughing] Yes, that's true.

LA: So, anyhow, I was very disappointed. And the next time I was shown anything, which was maybe five or six months later, and again, the same thing. There were a couple of things I liked, but they were no longer available. Of course, in the '69 [sic] show, the first thing I did was, they said to Nelson Rockefeller, I called Leo Castelli; they'd told me the gallery. And I said I would like to have a Jasper Johns painting. Leo said, "I'll put you on the list. There are about forty on the list now; you'd be forty-one."

LZ: Oh that's remarkable. And this is 1959 already.

LA: Right. In other words, the word got around that Alfred had bought five Jasper Johns from this one show, and everybody was hot for it. This is before the damned exhibition opened, because he bought it two months before. Anyhow, I saw that that __.[0:15:05] So I finally made a decision about '61, I guess. So that one day __[0:15:20] And that's how so many Wednesdays I would meet Dorothy and Alfred in this room for lunch.

LZ: Oh yes? Uh-huh.

LA: And I had an apartment in New York all the time, but I was coming to New York on Monday mornings __ and I would go out on Tuesday night, and I'd stay in the country on Wednesdays, because we had two children that we had adopted at that point. And my wife didn't like the idea of my being in New York all week without coming home.

LZ: Yes.

LA: And I was to do things with that thirty-some-odd acres __.[0:16:04] Anyhow, I decided that I would stay in New York on those Wednesdays, and I would do the galleries. __ memory __. [0:16:18] There was a book written on The Museum of Modern Art by someone who was a

LZ: By Russell Lynes?

LA: Russell Lynes. And in that book he mentioned, out of the blue, someone in the fashion business had come to the Museum, et cetera, and he said that he wound up picking things for the Museum, because he spent more time in the Modern than the Museum did.

LZ: [laughing] Right.

LA: Which was absolutely __. I had a copy of that book but I loaned it to someone.

LZ: Oh, that's terrible; yeah.

LA: __.[0:17:05] I haven't gotten room in my library __. But what I would do on Wednesdays is, and I would limit myself to going to galleries that had first one-man exhibitions. That's all I was interested in. And it didn't take long before all the galleries – and they were all from 57th Street on, uptown -- all the galleries got to know you in New York. And they would call me when they had an exhibition coming up. It would open on a Saturday and I couldn't get there on the following Wednesday, I would, the previous Wednesday, they would have the work and I would go see it. Anyhow, what I would do is pick one out for myself, and then I would put a hold on one for the Modern. And after '63, I added the Whitney to that program, and I'd put one on hold for the Whitney as well. And I would call Dorothy and tell her about it and the gallery, and she and Alfred would go out every Saturday. And what happened many times, that she would call me in New York on Monday, and say, "Larry, we liked it; we'd like to have it, but we want the one you picked for yourself." [laughter] I'd say, "Alright, I'll take the other one." That happened with Agnes Martin, particularly.

LZ: Uh-huh. How long did you do this?

LA: Until almost the end of the line.

LZ: Until Alfred retired, or?

LA: Yes. Until Alfred and Dorothy were no longer there.

LZ: Right.

LA: Then Bill became Director for a few years. And that was in '69, or '68.

LZ: Well there was that whole – Barr actually retired in ’67, and I think that’s when everything sort of __[0:19:20]. They had all the difficulties there for a couple of years, with Bill Lieberman and Bill Rubin, and all of that stuff. And then, I guess it must have been ’69 that Bill Rubin became Director of Painting and Sculpture.

LA: Yes. Then what did Lieberman become?

LZ: Head of the Drawings department, and then eventually he went to the Met.

LA: Well, he had been head of the Drawing department previously.

LZ: No, I think they created the Drawings department for him, essentially.

LA: It wasn’t Drawing, it was Prints.

LZ: Was it Prints?

LA: Yeah.

LZ: Well I think that what they did was that they separated works on paper from paintings, and they essentially gave that to him.

LA: I gave him a contribution every year for prints. And they must have hundreds and hundreds of prints __.[0:20:20]

LZ: Oh yes, I’m sure. One thing I’m curious about, and of course that first Jasper Johns show is something that people always point to as, I mean, MoMA went in there, bought four paintings, and reserved more for trustees and people like that, works they hoped would eventually come to the Museum, I’m sure. They never did that for Mark Rothko. They never did that with Jackson Pollock. And that kind of buying was not something that

LA: I think that’s the first time it probably ever happened. Because Alfred apparently went so crazy, I attended a dinner that was held out on the terrace once, in which Alfred spoke, and Jasper was there. I think it was for Johns’ exhibition, I’m not sure. And Alfred told about how he went into the gallery and saw this exhibition, and it was not – I wonder whether it was the first – it was not the first exhibition Jasper Johns had, because I remember reading a book by Rosenblum in which he, Jasper Johns’ painting had some objects on it, he thought they were terrible.

LZ: I don't know. Jasper Johns' first one-person exhibition was in 1958 at Castelli. That was his first one-person exhibition. And that had the flags. But he had been in the Jewish Museum in a show, and I think Castelli had also had him in a group show.

LA: Group show, yes. And the fact is, Rosenblum used to lecture at The Museum of Modern Art. I don't know if he still does.

LZ: Well, only on special occasions, you know/ [laughing] Not as a regular thing.

LA: Well we had him and others in a panel on, at the Museum, on, the one who died in New York Hospital.

LZ: Frank O'Hara? No; who died in New York Hospital? Oh, Warhol.

LA: Andy Warhol.

LZ: Yeah; right, right.

LA: And what he did mostly was show slides. And it was very amusing because they were all slides of what we had shown the Museum in the 1980s. I did an Andy Warhol in 1984 through, Andy Warhol in the '80s, all of his later works. And it was mostly slides. He had been a very good lecturer, at one point.

LZ: He's a brilliant lecturer, even now. He was a professor of mine at the Institute, and he was wonderful.

LA: Oh, he's still there?

LZ: Yes. It was one of the classes you'd look forward to, because, you know, it was always really enjoyable.

LA: Well, I'm talking, but you haven't asked me a single question. How is that?

LZ: But you've answered a lot of my questions already.

LA: I don't know how.

LZ: Did you have any feeling about the Americans shows in general? Did you have a sense of that group of shows, before you saw the '59 show, did you have a sense of it as a series?

LA: I didn't, I had never seen it.

LZ: And you were not, because you hadn't been involved in art in the United States, at that point, you weren't involved in all the various arguments around the exhibitions and all of the.

LA: The first exhibitions that I saw in the Museum, and by that time, due to the fact that I had originally made this proposal after Bill, I had talked to Bill about it, he arranged for me to meet Dorothy and Alfred here for lunch. And I told them my proposals. I didn't tell them what my reasoning was. They didn't ask me and I didn't tell them. But my reasoning was that I hoped they would review my shopping for me since I didn't have time to do it.

LZ: Right.

LA: Fortune, it didn't work out that way. But they jumped at the idea because they couldn't – they had __.[0:25:00] If there was a painting that cost $40,000 or $50,000, they could find a donor for that. But they could not find a donor for a painting that cost $1,000 or $1,200, or $1,500. And they had no fund at their discretion with which to go out and spend and buy. Now on the Jasper Johns, buying four or five of them for different people, and putting a hold on so many others, I'm sure that the Museum got one for free.

LZ: I don't know about that.

LA: But it wouldn't surprise me.

LZ: Yeah. Yeah. Did you have any sense of Dorothy Miller apart from Alfred Barr? I mean, did you have a sense that she had strong opinions of her own

LA: Oh yes.

LZ: That weren't necessarily the same as Barr's opinions?

LA: Well, I haven't any way of knowing that, because they always went out together, from what I knew, on Saturdays. But Dorothy always had artists coming to her at the Museum, and they always, they'd leave a painting from here or there for her to look at. Like Jack Youngerman. I bought one of those for the Museum and I bought a few of them for myself. Well I got to Jack Youngerman through having a rather small one sitting around in her office, with other works Jack Youngerman

had brought in __.[0:26:50] And that happened with a few other artists __ I can't remember now.

LZ: You know, she's always very self-effacing, when you read what she says about – she always says that she really learned everything she knew from Barr and from Cahill, and that – so it's very hard to tell how much of it is being politic on her part and how much of it is genuine. And you read, you know, one person will tell you, oh well, Barr was really very slow on abstract expressionism but Dorothy knew all along. And another person will tell you that Dorothy put abstract expressionists in her 1952 exhibition because Barr supported the movement. [laughing] So it's very hard to know.

LA: Well, and have you tried to pin Dorothy down?

LZ: I haven't spoken to her. I'm not sure she's really well, at this point.

LA: Oh, probably not. I haven't seen her for about four years. The last time I saw her, she came to the Museum, she was actually retired. She was buying art for several people. I don't know if you know that.

LZ: No, I didn't know that.

LA: Yes. And we did an exhibition from '72 through '76 that we called Contemporary Reflections, and it consisted all of artists who did not have a commercial gallery.

LZ: And this was at your museum?

LA: In Ridgefield.

LZ: When was your museum – I'm ashamed to say I haven't.

LA: __[0:28:40] We get people from the Modern all the time __.

LZ: When did you start your museum?

LA: In 1964. And it's all Alfred's fault.

LZ: It is? Why?

LA: In 1958, my wife and I, through Mr. Zumsteg, who was Abraham Silk, arranged for us to see all the fabulous art collections in Europe. And I kept a Rolls Royce in Paris. And when I was finished working, my wife would come a week before,

and when I started to work, I'd send her home on a plane or a boat. When I finished working, she would come over, and we would spend a week or two in Europe. And so he arranged for us to see all the private art collections in Switzerland, which, over a period of about ten days, was a marvelous experience. Very few of them were contemporary art, in fact, hardly any. Anyhow, there was one exhibition, there was one owner, his name was Buhrle, who had a house on the lake in Zurich, and we were invited there for lunch. And the house next door, which was larger than the house he lived in, if possible, was where he kept his art. And it was all racks, and he had two curators, not one. A fabulous collection. Nothing contemporary, but it went all the way back to the 14th, 15th century, anyhow, and right on up to the 1920s. And there was only one room in that big house, the living room, it had a fireplace, and he had track lighting __[0:31:13] with a wicker rocker and a pipe stand. And his curator – he wasn't there for lunch; his wife and his daughter were; he was out of the country or something. His curators met with me there, the curators showed me everything; we spent a whole day. He would phone them about 4:00 in the afternoon, and he would tell them. When I was there, there was nothing in that room __.[0:31:41] He would tell them which paintings to hang in that room. And his wife said that after dinner, he would come through the hedge, and he would, with his pipe and tobacco, and he'd sit and study the works that he'd asked to have __.[0:32:00] Which to me was __.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: Anyhow, in 1963, after I had sold my __, what was then supposedly the most important auction of the year. Before that, I might say, that in '59, I had agreed to have a traveling exhibition all over the country for a period of three years. It started in Richmond, went to Atlanta, then went all over the country, all the way to the coast. And I agreed to appear, and I did at my own expense, and did a talk at the opening of each exhibition on the beauties and pleasures of __[0:32:50] 20th century art. But when the exhibition came back, and it consisted of all of my, or most, thirty-five of my, what I call "classical" paintings, which I had lost interest in it. And 35 of my contemporaries, which were pretty much all European. And twenty sculptures, ten contemporary and ten Degas and so on. When it came back, in the meantime, where I had paintings, I had hung

contemporary Americans. I had no further interest in these classical ones, and I put them in storage, originally, trying to make up my mind what to do about them because they were in the way. However, nobody has a pocket with depth that goes on forever, and I was interested in acquiring more work. This was 1963. And so I decided to sell my original collection. And I sold them at Sotheby's, which was then Parke-Bernet. And I had a pocketful of money, when the auction was over. And we had, as I said, a 30-acre place in Ridgefield, Connecticut. The grounds were very beautiful, and I wanted to build – and I had at that time about 200 works of contemporary art, including Americans. And they were all over the city in __,[0:34:45] under the beds; they were everywhere. And I wanted to bring them all together, take them out of storage. By this time, of course, __ storerooms __ and what have you, I had big paintings. And I wanted to build what I saw in Switzerland: one room that would be about 20 by 40, and behind that, a big storeroom, with all the newest ideas, connected with it. And I wanted to put it down past our guest cottage, behind the pool and tennis courts and all that __.[0:35:30] Anyhow, my wife, being more __ -- the whole place was done by a fantastic landscape architect, and she was president of the Ridgefield Garden Club of America, et cetera, and a wonderful flower arranger. Anyhow, we also had ten acres of woods behind all of this, that you had to go around the corner and out the entrance. She wanted me to put it there. And we were discussing it, and you know, it wasn't important enough for me to take a stand and say. "Goddammit, I want this or else." You know. Anyhow, I ran out of cigarettes one night, and I passed a building that I knew was being used as a Christian Science church. It was built in 1783. And I saw a For Sale sign out in front. So it piqued my curiosity, and so I pulled in, and I looked through the windows, and it looked like __[0:36:44] And so I thought, well, maybe it's, arguing with my wife, if I have to get in my car and build a road and water and what, that would be ridiculous. I would have a hundred-thousand-dollar expenditure before I started building the damn thing. And so I got there on a Sunday, the following day, at noon, when I knew the services would be over, and I asked to see who would be responsible for selling it. They told me they had been trying to sell it for months, through one of their parishoners, but it was right on the main street, and it had no garage. It had been used as a home at one time. It had been used as a store __,[0:37:32] but who in their right mind would

want to be right smack within ten feet of the sidewalk on Main Street in Ridgefield, in a big four-story building? So they hadn't sold it. So I looked it over, and they gave me the key, and I went home for lunch. And told my wife about it, and she was anxious for me to do anything __.[0:38:02] [laughter] So we went over, and I thought, well, I could create the main floor, the street floor – and incidentally, it had nine-foot ceilings in one place. In other places it was only seven and eight, six and a half in the attic __. And I could forego, use the first floor or part of it to create this one-room gallery, what have you, the rest of the building had this great storage space __.[0:38:50] And so I, we came home about five o'clock, and I called, got the woman on the phone, and I made an offer. And she said, "I have to consult with the other members of the committee." And about seven o'clock, she called and said they had agreed because I had offered – they wanted to sell it with one acre. They had four and a half. The reason for selling it was to build another church with one-and-a-half acres, and one acre with that current building, and the other two acres the road in __ one acre __.[0:39:30]

LZ: Mm-hm.

LA: So I made an offer to buy it with three acres for less than they had wanted for one acre. And she said she accepted the offer. __. She said, after they accepted the offer – I said, well, arrange to meet me at such and such an attorney's office and Saturday we'll sign the contract. And she said, "Well, fine, we'll arrange to do that, but I just want to tell you that in accepting your offer, that the Christian Science church rules are that before you can build a new church, they have to have fifty percent of the money in the bank, and accepting your offer, we're just short $2,500.00." She said, "I've accepted your offer; I just thought I ought to say it." And I said, "Very well, I won't increase my offer, but I'll give you a personal contribution for $2,500.00." Which I did. Anyhow, Alfred Barr used to come on the average of once every month or so. I'd send a car for him, and he and Marga, his wife, they would come to Ridgefield and have lunch with us on a Sunday. And so after I bought this building, and started to redo it, Alfred came to lunch. He wanted to see it. And he came and he saw it on the main street, the building, and he said, "Larry, you know, there are lots of modern museum __."[0:41:15] And he had acquired a pretty good idea of my visual

ability on art, because there were so many things that the Museum acquired that I found on my Wednesdays. There were lots of them. I had a whole list of them; I'll tell you how I know. And he said, "But there is no such thing in the country as a contemporary museum of art. And with your proven background and experience, and this right on Main Street, you live in the town, why don't you create a museum of contemporary art?" Well, my father had always warned me against flattery. [laughter] And it's one time I should have listened, because this museum has cost me millions. Anyhow, I talked to my wife about it, and I had thought in doing it that, originally, if I wanted to let my friends in on a Sunday, I wouldn't want employees or anything, just someone to cut the grass. Because there were a lot of people, personal friends, who, whenever I came back from Paris, always wanted to know, what did I bring this time.

LZ: Yes.

LA: I'd bring them to Ridgefield to begin __.[0:42:44] So, anyhow, I fell for the idea. And then, the whole idea of what I was redoing, I had to start it all over again. And I finally opened it as a museum in October of 1964.

LZ: But you kept contributing to MoMA and started to contribute to the Whitney at the same time.

LA: Well, I had made the arrangement with the Whitney after I had my sale, successful sale, before all this came about.

LZ: I see.

LA: And since I had a commitment for ten years, I wasn't going to welch on it.

LZ: Yes, sure.

LA: So I continued in the same way. But I may have been the first person in the world who noticed Alfred __[0:43:40] losing his mind.

LZ: Did he have Alzheimer's? Is that what it was?

LA: We had become – I lived -- since 1965, I've had the pleasure to have been involved with the Aspen Institute, and I have one of the big trustee's houses; I own house number 2. And Armand Bartos, whom you must know,

LZ: Yes.

LA: You know Armand and his wife, anyhow, they're very active in the Museum, and they own house number 3. For some reason, they were going to Europe in July or August, I don't remember which, and Alfred had retired. But he still went to the Museum every day. He had retired from any position but he was writing a book on

LZ: Yes, the chronicle of the collection.

LA: Did he ever finish it?

LZ: Yes, he did.

LA: Anyhow, he was given the use of the house for a month, and he spent the month right next door to me. So we already had been friends before, but we became bosom buddies, the whole month we were together every day. And Alfred's main interest then was birdwatching.

LZ: Yes.

LA: And I would take him all over the places where you could, and it was amazing, at his age, how frail he always was, that he could see a bird on a tree eighty feet below us __.[0:45:15] He would run right down there with his binoculars. Amazing. I got to know how much pension he had. I got to know everything about him. But this is already after I had opened the museum. But before that he used to come to our house. He liked my wife. __.[0:45:40]

LZ: She died. She died about a year and a half or two years ago.

LA: __. This is rather interesting. During the time I did the Contemporary Reflections show, I bought a painting from what turned out to be Alfred Barr's daughter.

LZ: Oh.

LA: They used to come to see every one of the Contemporary Reflections shows, always a group, with Philip Johnson or somebody else. And the one that had his daughter's work in it, I didn't say anything to him. I was with him all the time. __[0:46:25]

LZ: I don't remember myself.

LA: Anyhow, Virginia, Valerie, something [Victoria], he just came to it __. We used big type, unlike other museums.

LZ: [laughing] Yeah.

LA: Things that I didn't like about other museums I incorporated in ours. Very big type, so you didn't have to take your glasses off and stick your – so you could look at the painting from five feet away and still read the label, instead of having to go up to it. And he saw that it was his daughter's painting. He didn't say a word. He looked at it quite a long time. __.[0:47:45] I didn't know, at that time, that there was bad blood between them. Whether that ever got smoothed over, I don't know.

LZ: I don't know. But you said that you think that you might have been the first person who ever realized that he was deteriorating. [0:47:31]

LA: [inaudible]

**END of Side A at 0:47:41**

**BEGIN Side B at 0:00:12**

LZ: Okay.

LA: __ We all looked down into the __. In three or four minutes

LZ: Really?

LA: He didn't say a word. And finally he remembered __.

LZ: Oh, he couldn't remember something.

LA: __

LZ: Oh my.

LA: That's the first indication I had. Because possibly a month before that he had been up for lunch, and he was just fine. Never

LZ: And what year do you think this was?

LA: That's where I have trouble.

LZ: Was he retired at that point, from the Museum? Or he was not?

LA: I guess he was.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: He was retired from the Museum, but he was going there every day for writing his book.

LZ: I see.

LA: It was after I opened the museum.

LZ: Yes. But you opened the museum in ’64.

LA: October of ’64.

LZ: And he retired in ’67.

LA: He had seen it. Well, I started the work on it before. I had bought it in December of ’63, so early in ’64, I was working on the building of it, __.[0:01:35]

LZ: I see.

LA: He came to have lunch with us, then came to – I told him, and I told Dorothy, that I had bought this building, and what I was going to do with it, based on my having visited the Buhrle collection __.[0:01:50]

LZ: Do you have any feeling about Dorothy Miller in relationship to Peter Selz or to William Seitz or the people who were running Painting and Sculpture at that point?

LA: Well, I didn’t know Seitz too well, but I knew Selz. No, that seems very wrong. I didn’t know Selz too well but I knew Peter Seitz [sic] very well. In fact,

LZ: Well, Peter Selz was the director of the department, and William Seitz, Bill Seitz, was the curator.

LA: I had something to do with his [Seitz] getting a job when he wanted to leave the Modern, when he went to Brandeis.

LZ: I see. So do you think that was a comfortable situation for her? I mean, I just wonder what it was like for her to have Ritchie there first, and then to have those guys come in at that point.

LA: Dorothy never complained about anything. Never. The Museum was her whole life. And I had heard all kinds of rumors, that there was sexual activity between Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller, but never, other than sound about it, I have no idea __. [0:03:10] I've met Dorothy's husband. I've been in that apartment on Eighth Street several times. I've been there several times with other people who they had as guests. I have no idea.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: But Dorothy certainly, Alfred was god to her.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: No question about that.

LZ: Yeah. And as far as the art world was concerned, and the artists themselves, she was very important for them?

LA: Yes. Alfred really had no activity with artists that I knew of. But Dorothy did all the time.

LZ: She says that that was the first job he gave her when she came to the Museum. He said, 'I'm being deluged with these artists, and you have to see them and take care of them.' And that's how she started.

LA: And anybody who would come to the Museum and come to see her, she would, if she weren't tied up with something else, you could see her. She was very open that way. Which is not true of other museums, as far as I know.

LZ: You mean, that she would let the artists up, to visit, you mean?

LA: Yes.

LZ: Yeah.

LA: I don't remember what floor she was on.

LZ: I don't know what it would have been like in the old building. Yeah, yeah.

LA: But I used to be up there very frequently. To the point where I didn't even have to check with the girl at the desk downstairs.

LZ: They knew you. Yeah, yeah. Well, it's all very interesting.

LA: And there was a dinner, which, I sat at a table next to Bill Paley, who was then Chairman of the Museum. I'm suddenly remembering all this. And he knew about, that I had opened the Aldrich Museum. It must have been about '67 or '68. And he said, "You know, we get a lot of conversation, complaints about our lack of doing enough about contemporary art." I said, "Well, I have a thought for you." I said, "Why don't you hire a curator, take a little section of the Museum, and give him full sway, he doesn't have to check with anybody, and he'll stand or fall on his own account. Just have a little area, where he can show, change every month, a new little something connected with contemporary art. And make it very clear to the world at large that what he is doing does not have the backing of the Museum in saying that this is something that's very good. Whereas, all the other things the Museum buys, you're supposed to stand behind it and say you acquired it because you think it's wonderful, of merit." And that's how that little thing started.

LZ: The Projects series.

LA: Yes.

LZ: So that was 1970 or '71, I think, when Projects started. Yes, and there had been protests at that time. Yes. And it's still going.

LA: Well, it was in a different part of the Museum then; it was off to the left.

LZ: Yes, I even remember, as a student, I remember going.

LA: And it was a small space. And I don't remember who – there have been several curators of it. I don't remember who it was.

LZ: Well, I think Kynaston McShine ran it in the beginning.

LA: I think that was it. Yes. __[0:07:07]

LZ: Yes, that's right. I remember, he was the one who ran it in the beginning. They hired him before that, as far as I knew.

LZ: He had been at The Jewish Museum, and then he came here. So, we should order lunch, yes?

LA: Yes.

LZ: I think you've answered all of my questions.

LA: Well, you haven't asked me any.

LZ: Well, you did it without my asking. I'm just looking to see if I have anything more, and I don't really think so. [0:07:45] [tape hiss to 0:08:28]

**END Side B at 0:08:28**

**END OF INTERVIEW**