# EXCERPTS FROM MoMA ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM INTERVIEW WITH KYNASTON McSHINE

**Compiled by David Frankel**

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM**

**INTERVIEW WITH:** **KYNASTON McSHINE (KM)**

**INTERVIEWER:** **CAROLYN LANCHNER (CL)**

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CL: Now Kynaston, you've elected to start in the summer of 1959.

KM: Because I'd come to New York after a year of graduate work in English literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I arrived in New York thinking I would look for a job, with the idea of also going back to graduate school, but perhaps finding a job in publishing and also going to school at the same time. I had thought that it would not be that difficult, and, through having met Donald [Allen], an editor at Grove Press who suggested several places to look, I started trying to find a job. However, I was really quite without money and did not want to depend on the parents at that point. So I took in typing.

CL: You did?

KM: And I was typing manuscripts of somebody called Jack Richardson, who was a novelist. His wife actually worked at Janis. But that was really my little thing of getting a little income for the summer. The thing is that I started looking for a job and not really getting anywhere. I think I was a little bit naïve at that point and not really realizing that the publishing industry did not really hire people of my color, at that point, very much. The only person who was around in publishing was a woman called Dorothy Dean, who was at The New Yorker, who was a really funny woman and delightful lady from Radcliffe. She had sort of got in there by the year or two before, say, like, '57. And she appears, of

course, in the New Yorker legend. Hilton Als wrote an article about her. She was really a wonderful person around town. Anyway, at some point, Donald, who edited the book The New American Poetry, suggested that I go to The Museum of Modern Art and perhaps work there at the front desk, as several other people had done, like Frank O'Hara and John Button and others. I could do that and then have time early in the morning to look for a job, and I would then have at least a base until I found something. And also I thought, well, no harm in coming to the Museum, since they would have a publishing program, and that might be a good place to be a novice.

So I came uptown because I was delivering the manuscripts of Jack Richardson, so I thought, why the hell not go and see about applying at the Museum. So, I think it was a Tuesday, or maybe it was a Thursday—it probably was the Thursday, because the lady at the desk, who was called Sylvia Liska, said, "Mrs. Borden only interviews on Wednesdays." So I realized there was a span of time. And so then, the next Wednesday, I came back, which happened to be July 1, 1959. And I was interviewed by Mrs. Borden. She was called Althea Borden and was the major personnel lady of that time. And I interviewed, and she said she had something in mind for me that was not necessarily the front desk, and to come back that afternoon at about three o'clock. So I came back that afternoon, and I was introduced to a woman who was the manager of the International Program and Circulating Exhibitions. Porter McCray was basically the head of that. So she interviewed me. She was a great big hawky lady, and they said they'd let me know. So I went back to the place I was staying and had no idea of what they had in mind. And they called me at about five o'clock and said that I had a job, and to please come in the next morning.

So my first day at The Museum of Modern Art as an employee was July 2, 1959. And in those days the offices of the International Program were in an old brownstone next to the real Museum, with lots of staircases, quite a rabbit warren. I was taken to what was probably a side closet where there was this woman called Anne __[07:42] Hecht, who was sort of in charge of the files and the publicity of the International Program. In those days it was very active, doing exhibitions abroad and a domestic program of exhibitions. And so, for example, Frank O'Hara was in the department at that point, and so was Jimmy Schuyler the poet, and George Montgomery, who was also a poet and who ended up being the head of the Asia Society. And this was all headed by Porter McCray, who came from the State Department. He at that point was in Europe at documenta. It

was one of the first documentas, and it was kind of, I think, one of the sensational ones, it was a documenta that introduced a lot of American painting, like Barney Newman, for example. Anyway, I was put down there, and the idea was that I was going to be helping with the press stuff that came in, for example translating articles that came in in French into English for the summaries for the files, and that I would sort of be a general little help. Then there was René Neu [09:35], an Italian woman who worked in the department. And Walter Rasmussen. So there were a lot of interesting people around, and at that point the Museum had a certain smallness to it, so everybody knew everybody, so it was a little bit more congenial than it would be today. And you immediately met Mr. [William] Seitz and Mr. [Peter] Selz [10:04], and even though I was this little peon, I immediately was warmly received by Mr. [René] d'Harnoncourt. And so I started working there, and also doing typing for Porter McCray.

One of the first really beautiful exhibitions I see here is the Monet show, Seasons and Moments. Bill Seitz had come in just I think a year before or so, from Princeton. And it was the first show he did here. It was a very beautifully organized show of haystacks, cathedrals, and I think it had a very big impact on New York and in terms of the abstract painters. And I remember the curator from England who helped on the show, Lawrence Gowing. Wonderful Lawrence Gowing, who was a professor at the Courtauld. He was sort of a collaborator on the exhibition.

Not getting along with [the department manager], particularly, I started to find ways of finding other things to do. So I got a lot involved in the warehouse and spent a lot of time over there in terms of learning, helping with the exhibitions and the packing of things, and actually I learned a lot about conditioning and condition reports and a lot of all the registrar things you do. At that point, we had a big warehouse space on 49th Street, 449 West 49, Santini Brothers, and I kept making myself useful. And then of course, the thing is, there were all these other people that you met and could talk to, like Robert Ryman, who was a guard, and Dan Flavin was a guard, and you immediately felt yourself right in the milieu. And then, of course, there was Lucy Lippard in the library, who I became suddenly friendly with. We all were, you know, about the same age. She had just come out of Smith when she was working in the library.

The thing is, what was kind of wonderful at that time was that somehow you could get to pay attention to what other people were doing. Bill Seitz was working on an assemblage show, and collage and Surrealism had interested me, even in my college days, so I

decided to pay attention to what he was doing, and it wasn't like now, where everything is top secret. He never disallowed some little peon from coming up and looking on, and what he was doing and what he was selecting. And somewhere in there I got interested in the work of [Joseph] Cornell. First thing was that Lucy and I volunteered to help with the bibliography. We have to go into my whole immigration problems at some point, but we'll leave all that out at the moment, because I had to also be a student and I was a little bit illegal at a certain moment, before going to the Institute. But that is also part of an issue. Anyway, we started off as volunteers, working in the library and digging out lots of stuff for Bill Seitz for the bibliography for the assemblage catalogue. And in doing that, I guess I got involved in loving Cornell. So one day I said this to Bill, and he said, "Well, why don't you try to write a very short entry on Cornell, and if I like it, I will publish it." And he somehow liked it, as spare and as, you know, innocent as it was, and published it. So that was my first real entrée into the formal Museum world.

CL: What I have gathered from what you have been saying is that your switch from a major interest in literature to a major interest in art had a great deal to do with simply being at the Museum?

KM: Well, there was a big interest in art in college, and I took several art history courses. As you know, my degree was in philosophy, and that involved aesthetics. And I had a very bad experience with English literature in graduate school, which is, you know, further, personal reasons. And then, so coming here, I think, and having met several poets, I think, particularly, I had met Frank O'Hara before I came here, whatever, and I had met a little bit of the art world. But when I came here, I think it just pushed me completely into the idea of art and art history. And I went to Columbia for a term, where I did a poetry course and I did an art history course, I think, as a temporary measure for this visa problem. And then being here, the possibility of going to graduate school in art history arose, because also the Museum paid for it.

So then I applied to go to the Institute, and was accepted. So I was working here and going to the Institute. And of course, you know, this is like John Cage, my life has been about chance. But I had to stay at school because of the visa, I had to be a student.

CL: How did you manage the Institute and the job?

KM: I didn't very well. I didn't do as well as I should. I had Dr. [Robert] Goldwater as the advisor. Of course he was across the street as the head of [the Museum of] Primitive Art,

and had just started. I was very involved in the idea of surrealism, and it comes from an interest in surrealism in literature, which I did a little bit of in college, in French literature. And, but the point is that in those days the Museum didn't let you go off to the Institute at 3:00 in the afternoon, or whatever, so I could only take courses that started at 6:00. So if you go into a room at 6:00 after a full day of work here, into a darkened room of slides, you get a little twilight yourself.

CL: I can understand that. You said that the Museum paid for it; having been an employee myself at this institution, I was unaware that they ever did that.

KM: They still do it. You have grants for courses, they have always had.

You know, you can say, like, "Kynaston, tell me about what the Art in Embassies Program means?"

CL: Yes, I am about to ask you, tell me about the Art in Embassies Program.

KM: Well, it was initiated in 1960, and it was right after [John F.] Kennedy was elected. And I think, given Porter McCray's connections to Washington and the International Council, which had been founded by Mrs. Rockefeller and Mrs. Parkinson and René d'Harnoncourt, they had this idea that the Museum should provide works of art for embassies around the world as a gesture and as a way of showing American art in all of these various places.

CL: The initiation of that program was post that show that circulated from here in '58 or '59?

KM: The New American Painting.

CL: Exactly, that's what I mean.

KM: Which, of course, was a big moment in Europe. It was an extremely important show.

CL: Well, is there a connection?

KM: I think there is a connection. That show had a big impact in Germany, especially on people like [Georg] Baselitz, because it was shown in Berlin. And the [Jackson] Pollock show also went to Berlin, I think, and had a big impact on London.

CL: Yes, yes.

KM: I don't remember exactly when the International Council was formed, but it was just a little before that. And that, of course, was to encourage patronage by an international group of people, as well as people from around the United States, to further the concept of art being international and not political. But you know, we know differently.

CL: It was later highly criticized just for that point, to say the least.

KM: Well, it was criticized more for American imperialism.

CL: Yes. How New York stole . . .

KM: Yes. But, so, very shortly, I mean, I guess it must have started before Kennedy took office, it probably started to brew. And I think everybody else being so busy, they didn't have people to do everything. So somehow I got roped into it, and suddenly found myself meeting with Ambassador [John Kenneth] Galbraith, who was going to India, and Ambassador [Edwin O.] Reischauer going to Japan, and Ambassador [John M.] Cabot going to Warsaw.

CL: What did you do for them?

KM: Go over the plans of the main rooms of the embassies and try to work out . . . of course, being quite a novice, it was quite a big education trying to find the art that would suit these various places. And it meant that, for example, I immediately had to go visit [Claes] Oldenburg's studio, and I remember one watercolor of a hot dog, which has disappeared, that was selected for the embassy in Poland. It was a very vivid memory. But things like [Maurice] Prendergast and some early nineteenth-century, some late-nineteenth-century art, Georgia O'Keeffe or whatever. And so I was there, suddenly being made to assemble little collections.

CL: These were, in a sense, loan shows. They weren't from The Museum of Modern Art's collection.

KM: A few, sometimes, maybe you would have a print or two from the Museum, but they were basically loans.

CL: And you went in many cases directly to the artist him- or herself, mostly him.

KM: Like [Helen] Frankenthaler.

CL: Okay, well, her.

KM: People like that. A lot that I didn't know, but I was just this little young man arriving at these doors and knocking. With suggestions, obviously, from people in the departments. But at the end of the day, we immediately had this education of putting "exhibitions" together. And then also having to oversee it being framed and packed and shipped.

CL: Well, I think I remember your saying the International Council was where we all went to school, in a sense, in terms of the actual logistics and kind of thinking that goes into making an exhibition. If you did it for the International Council, you were equipped.

KM: I don't remember the names, but I was also involved in a lot of little traveling shows that they were doing. At that point we did a lot of shows for colleges and universities, sort of like what the AFA does or did do. But we had quite a program going. And I guess budgets and the world changing, it started to dissolve. But you know, that's really part of the accusation of a museum within the Museum, because you had a whole set of staff that were working on these things. There was a woman called Virginia who was like the registrar of it all, a wonderful lady. And you had a woman called Marie Frost, who was like the tour director, organizing the tours and the correspondence and the shipping. And you had Anne Hecht preparing the press releases for those things. Then somebody like me preparing a checklist and gathering the photographs.

The embassies thing was on for the year 1960–61, I think.

CL: I think it lasted much longer.

KM: It went on. England, of course, has always had grand ambassadors, so they didn't have to do England, it was John Hay Whitney, and whoever else was Paris. So they were more interested in sending a collection to Warsaw, India, and Japan; I mean, other countries. Then at some point soon after that, Waldo Rasmussen was much more involved in the organization of exhibitions for Latin America, and he wanted a show of [Josef] Albers. Actually he went to Bill Seitz and said that he thought it would be a good idea for a show of Albers. You know, these things were very independent. Painting and Sculpture at the Museum was very independent from the International Program, and vice versa, the International Program was kept very independent, but they did communicate about permissions, in a way. I think Waldo and Porter went to Bill Seitz and said they

thought an Albers show would be a good thing for Latin America. So Bill said, “Let Kynaston do it.”

CL: There was such a movement in South America, wasn’t there?—

KM: There was a history of geometry, concretism, neo-concretism, and so on.

CL: Yes.

KM: So I, of course, had the big privilege of going up to New Haven almost every week for several weeks to work with Mr. Albers, and of course, met Annie, who was quite a tough lady. I learned a lot about his teaching methods and his printing methods. And we worked on the selection of the show together. The catalogue is quite a little gem.

CL: Did you like him?

KM: Yes. He was a stern master.

CL: I remember all the things that Robert Rauschenberg said about Albers. I’m just wondering how you found him.

KM: I found him stern but not unfriendly, and not too much of a sense of humor.

CL: Well that’s not far away from what Rauschenberg said [laughter]. In fact I think he was very grateful for his teaching.

KM: And Annie would come in in her tweeds at lunchtime, with a sandwich and a Coca-Cola or whatever [laughing]. We were very aware of the great man, the respect that he had at Yale. You know, somehow, they lived in a very, very modest way, and, you know, an extraordinary cellar of storage of these big paintings, because Albers at that point was really not very popular at all.

CL: Did he go to Yale from Black Mountain?

KM: Yes. And it was actually even later in life that I realized a lot of things about how important he was. And then, of course, he came back into my life when I found out that, like, Richard Serra was so involved with him and his work at Yale, and then realizing how many people I knew who somehow, like Wilder Green, who worked here at the Museum, was very involved with Albers. And there was a very big impact of Albers on architects, and of course on graphic design, besides the painters. So I’d go up to Yale,

and we worked out the show, which was really now only about forty-eight paintings, I think. It had a symmetry to it.

CL: Did you travel with the show in South America?

KM: Yes. So I went in 1964. It was about—it coincides with my exile in Trinidad for six months while I was waiting on my visa, by coincidence. I had to wait on the green card. This is a common practice.

CL: And you worked as a green card person for more than half your career at MoMA?

KM: Well, I didn't become a citizen until, what? There was a period where I was a little bit in questionable legality. For a lot of the time I was working, I was on what was called a working visa for students. And then there's a little moment where I was legal for about three months, then I had to leave the country, it coincided with August vacation, so I had to leave and then come back. But waiting on the visa in Trinidad was a little bit more of a torture. But, within that time, the show arrived in Caracas. I went to Caracas to install the Albers, and that's where I met John Parkinson. He was working there for First National Citibank. Met Alfredo Boulton, who ends up being a major chairman of the International Council. And so I installed the show there. And then I think I came back, and then I think I went with the show to Bogotá and installed it in Bogotá. And then I think it took care of itself later on in Argentina or wherever. But I think it was very well received, and in Caracas it was really a big deal.

CL: And looking at this résumé, before you moved from MoMA to the Jewish Museum, you do American Collages.

KM: American Collages was the first show that I basically hung in the Museum. It happened just before I left for the Jewish Museum. And it was really quite a beautiful little show. There was [Robert] Motherwell, Jess, who I introduced to New York in that show, [Conrad] Marca-Relli . . . it was a good set of people. Cornell, I think [Nicholas] Krushenick. . . .

Again, these were shows that were done in the small galleries between the Museum's main lobby and the cafeteria in those days. There were two little galleries, and that's really where I also started Projects.

CL: Did you meet [Willem] de Kooning then?

KM: Yeah.

CL: Did you know him well?

KM: No, yes, and . . .

CL: Well, here I go again. How did you find him?

KM: Oh, he was easy to find.

CL: [laughing] I know he was easy to find, but I asked you how you felt about Albers. This is a parallel question.

KM: Well, at parties in East Hampton in Springs, at Patsy Southgate's, where Mike Goldberg was. In those days everything just rumbled one into another. You didn't have to be pushy to know people.

CL: And you first started going out to Springs because of your artistic connections?

KM: No, I went out with a friend once, for the first time. And then the artistic connections began.

CL: And they have not stopped.

KM: Well, the connections may have stopped, but I still go to the Springs.

CL: Well to the degree that connections are still with us, they haven't stopped.

KM: But, well, they've changed. The Springs thing is a whole story in itself. Because, I don't know, it was a kind of a very different time and different kind of life, and very easy, and people were just very hospitable. At one point I would go and spend the weekends with Lee Krasner, which were quite funny and amusing.

CL: I remember her as being somewhat difficult.

KM: Well, so am I.

CL: But were you already? [laughing]

KM: Of course. But I must say, it was very much fun to go and stay with her, and hear her stories. It was good company. And if you're poor in New York and you didn't have

anywhere to go on weekends, you were very happy to be invited to stay with the lady and go to Alphonse __[Ossorio?]'s [22:00] grand parties.

CL: Well, that was a very distinguished group.

KM: Some people do it in a more calculated way, but it just came about. Everybody lived near each other in the Springs; everybody was a bike ride between each other. The Southampton set was a little different. That was Larry Rivers and Frank O'Hara and so on, except Frank was also part of the Patsy Southgate Springs thing, too. Norman Bloom was out there a lot, too, especially in the summers. So you formed a lot of friendships easily, and then you saw them in New York.

I don't know what date was the Motherwell show. Frank O'Hara is the director.

CL: But it's before you went to the Jewish Museum.

KM: Oh yes. Frank was alive, and I think he died in '66, so it was like '65.

CL: And you were what, the assistant?

KM: I guess through that I started hanging out with or going with Frank to visit Motherwell and Helen up at 94th Street, and then Motherwell wanted a chronology, which hadn't really been done much in museum catalogues before. And so they said, "Kynaston, why don't you work on it?" I had all these extracurricular things and I wasn't too good at the Institute. I was doing all these other, more serious things. And so I sat down and did the chronology, which involves where he travels and who he meets and things like that. Which, of course, ended up being parodied by Ad Reinhardt [chuckling], which was a very big moment.

CL: That's a mark of distinction.

KM: It is a mark of distinction. But it became the model of The Museum of Modern Art's chronologies for quite some time, if not still going on.

CL: I think probably.

KM: And it had the whole thing about when he meets Pollock, or when he meets the club, and had a lot of information about the '40s and his French involvements. And that was

really a very good thing for me to have done, but it was also kind of a wonderful model of something.

CL: If you're doing a chronology, nothing could be better than to have the artist right there.

KM: And it didn't hurt to go and work at 5:00 with cocktails with Madame Frankenthaler and Mister Motherwell. And it also meant a great deal of being friendly with Helen, and completely a different approach. And then I paid back Helen a bit, it was very peculiar—she had a show at the Whitney, and yet we traveled it to Europe. And I had to go and sit in Hanover to install it.

CL: Well, we travel because we're international and they aren't.

KM: Yes. And it was one of the gloomiest times I've ever been in Europe, sitting for about two weeks in Hanover, because in those days it was really grim. That's when I became aware of the Turkish immigrants and whatever they were called—there's a word for them—the foreign arbiters.

CL: Fremde, fremde arbiter.

KM: Or something. But I became aware of them at the railway station on a Sunday afternoon, all these men, looking very sad and sorry for themselves, and connecting with each other on a Sunday afternoon. And they were basically locked up during the week, to make sure that they didn't get involved with the German girls. It was a really strange atmosphere. It still was very uncomfortable, Germany, and Hanover was really fairly dark.

CL: So by the time you finished Motherwell, which is 1964, right?

KM: Yeah.

CL: You have already got something of a reputation in the world.

KM: I've got a little reputation in the world. I'm a little bit known in this big bizarre way, also in the petit noir [30:35]

CL: The last time you referred to yourself you were a peon. Now you're a petit noir.

KM: [chuckling] The educated noir. I'm beginning to be known around New York, in a way. And beginning to be very unhappy with the very small salary that I was getting at The Museum of Modern Art.

CL: Well, in those days, even Alfred Barr was getting a very small salary.

KM: I would have a conversation now and again with Mr. d'Harnoncourt about what to do with my life and career, which I must say was the kind of thing that, as a very young person in the Museum, was really quite a privilege, that he really talked to you, and sitting in the Mies chair that I still have, that was in his office. Everything was very accessible. You could just sort of poke into Mr. d'Harnoncourt's office, even though you were just a little twenty-year-old down-below.

CL: I even remember that.

KM: Not Mr. Barr. You had Mr. Barr and all of his ladies guarding him.

CL: The brides of MoMA.

KM: The brides of MoMA. We have to talk about the brides of MoMA at some point—which were maids of honor, which were bridesmaids, and which were brides [chuckling]. I have to talk about the whole ambience of the Museum.

CL: Oh, indeed.

KM: So anyway, I said, "What should I do if I want to continue a career in museums?" In those days you did not easily move from the International Program into the Painting and Sculpture department, because Mr. Barr guarded it. As you know, we can count on our hands how many men have been in that department since 1929 very easily. Even Frank O'Hara, he got into it about a month before he died—he was only put into the Painting and Sculpture Department near the very end.

CL: He had been in the International Program?

KM: It was really only after the Motherwell show and the [Reuben] Nakian show. It really was a couple of months before he died.

CL: But Bill Seitz?

KM: Bill Seitz, and Selz, it was a big deal at the time that they were both brought in. And before that you only had Sam Hunter, James Johnson Sweeney, and Andrew Ritchie. That's about it. And of course, Mr. [James Thrall] Soby. But that's about the whole extent of men in the P&S department from the beginning. I think there may be one or two others.

Anyway, so René's suggestion was, it would be good for you to go somewhere else, and then think of coming back. And the problem was, where to go, especially since I had this not-being-an-American problem.

CL: At this point the Jewish Museum was acting in a very un-Jewish way, wasn't it, already?

KM: Yes.

CL: Alan Solomon?

KM: Alan Solomon had been there, but the un-Jewish thing really starts with Meyer Schapiro, who decides that there are a lot of young artists in New York who are Jewish and who should have shows early on. He was the one who really sort of started it. And I think he had an early show of [Mark] Rothko, and Frankenthaler, and so on. And then they brought Alan Solomon in, who did Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg, both of whom are not Jewish, and the program turned into being not a Jewish program.

CL: How did they come to you?

KM: All of a sudden, Martin Friedman, at the Walker, decided he wanted a young curator. And Frank O'Hara said he thought that Sam Hunter was looking for someone, so why didn't I just go on up to the Jewish Museum. It became a coincidence that Martin was looking for a young curator for the Walker, and Sam was looking for a curator. And of course, after my Michigan experience, which I won't go into, I really didn't want to go back to the Midwest. And also, it was cold there. I didn't think with my limited income I would ever be able to fly to Trinidad, or that I would see anybody that I wanted to see from my European connections or from my Trinidad connections. You would see people a bit in New York, in people's travels. My parents might be going from Trinidad to London, and they would fly through here, but they're not going to fly from Trinidad to Minneapolis to go to London. And Sam was also offering the job, and I think he was starting to work on a Larry Rivers show, and of course I knew Larry. So there was kind of

a little nudge that I should think about. And in those days, my dear, 92nd Street was just as far away as Minneapolis.

CL: Oh, not quite.

KM: It's just like why it was called the Dakota, you know? So was the Jewish Museum. It was far, far away. It was like another world. And so.

CL: But it brought the world to it, at that point.

KM: So I went up there. It was another kind of experience. And it was done with the approval of Mr. d'Harnoncourt. He said that perhaps from being up there for three or four years, you may be able to come back, and we will discuss that at another time, the coming back, the reenter.

CL: By which time you had become legendary.

KM: In my Blackglama mink coat, a legend.

CL: Something called Primary Structures, not your mink coat.

KM: [laughing] I didn't have a mink coat. Never have liked fur, actually. And then they sort of grumbled about my being up there: "Mr. McShine, who has been sitting in this museum, had these ideas of shows." That's really why they hired E. C. Goossen, to do The Art of the Real.

CL: So The Art of the Real was a reaction to Primary Structures. That makes sense.

KM: They felt that that was their way of catching up. And they bought the [Ronald] Bladen piece from my show.

CL: A great piece.

KM: Primary Structures has a lot of repercussions in my life, and in—

CL: Many people's lives.

KM: And a lot of things to say and to be proud of. Tony Smith never had been shown publicly in New York before.

CL: It's a historic show. It's a landmark exhibition.

KM: Mr. [Donald] Judd and Mr. [Robert] Morris—

CL: And all it has to commemorate it—there's only a little brochure, right?

KM: [whispering] I can't find mine. But it wasn't a brochure, it was a little catalogue. I constantly feel Lucy has to get credit for helping me with the title, a long conversation one night on the phone. I didn't want the word "sculpture." She really should get credit. You know, my only time in Maine was going up to stay with Lucy and Bob [Ryman] for a weekend, which was like another world. I mean it was really fog and cold and misty, and all you felt was that you had been in a car for twenty-four hours, and you stayed for twelve hours, and you cooked mussels, and you got back into the car and drove back home.

CL: Robert Ryman was here too, wasn't he?

KM: Bob, yeah, that's how he and Lucy got married.

CL: Right.

KM: They formed a romance. I used to work in the Victor D'Amico Education Department in the evenings, taking attendance in the art classes while Sol LeWitt was downstairs at the desk as the receptionist. That has to show you the poverty that we had in those days, that I had to do this night job.

CL: Did they pay you extra?

KM: Yes, like three dollars an hour or something; I don't remember. That's how Sol and I got friendly, because we would be there three or four nights a week together. And I think at that time Krushenick was in the frame shop. Al Held had gone already.

CL: And how about Flavin? Was he here yet?

KM: Flavin was here as a guard, and Sonja [Severdija], his wife, was the person who dispensed stationery and was the telephone operator at the same time, to tell you how small the Museum was. I can't remember if Mel Bochner was here. Mel Bochner may be part of the Jewish Museum's staff, he and Brice Marden. And Harvey Quaytman and Joel Shapiro, they were my silver cleaners. And I had Neil Jenney helping me install.

CL: At the Jewish.

KM: At the Jewish. There were a bit of a crew up there of young artists.

CL: It's much less of a phenomenon these days. I mean, about every third well-known American artist in New York has worked here.

KM: Yeah, the front desk is a whole other story about this museum. I mean you have Scott Burton, you have John Button, you have Frank O'Hara.

CL: Endless numbers of people at the front desk.

KM: Yeah.

Then there's the thing about my going to René d'Harnoncourt's birthday party. It was soon after I came here. It was probably his sixty-fifth birthday, and it was either in the summer of '67 or '68, early summer, like May or June. It wasn't the celebration of his retirement. It didn't have that feeling to it. Here am I, a little one, invited to the dinner in the garden. It was all red and white tablecloths and so on, and I was seated next to Anne [d'Harnoncourt]. And I think Waldo and Gary Rasmussen were at the same table. And it's one of those things I can say about the Museum over the years: the lack of snobbishness. The lack of prejudice. Some little innuendos here or there that some specific people had, but in the long run that has not ever been a big deal in this place at all. Nobody can really accuse this place of prejudice.

CL: I think that there was a quota system mentality. And if I can be really bold: you didn't have that kind of competition.

KM: One of those things that we won't go into right now, but my thing—as I am very aware, both when I was at college and here—is that there's a mitigating circumstance: that I'm not American.

CL: I think that's also true.

KM: And therefore, my manner is not African-American, if I can put it that way.

CL: No, your manner is not [chuckling]. It's unique.

KM: [laughing] Rule Brittania, rule Brittania. We're just chit-chatting about the atmosphere at that point. [That party] is a strong memory for me of the beginning of the friendship with

Anne, which then, of course, ends up with our doing the [Marcel] Duchamp show together.

CL: Yes, of course, and that bridging the strike.

KM: Well, but it was more important being in Philadelphia. That was [Richard] Oldenburg's idea, actually. Or somehow it came up, somewhere, somehow: I suggested Duchamp, and they said, "Well why don't you do it with [Anne]." That was her first big show.

CL: Well, of course, one can't do a Duchamp show without Philadelphia.

KM: The idea really started with her being in Chicago. She was really the big link with Teeny [Duchamp] more than I could have been.

CL: They were very, very close.

KM: I think that probably came from her father, and Marcel being with her father and Teeny. Because I only meet Duchamp when I'm up at the Jewish Museum, at a lunch of Jean de Menil, for Matta. That was one of the grand lunches I've ever been in, with Matta, Max Ernst, and Duchamp.

CL: Good heavens.

KM: And I came out of that lunch reeling down East Sixty-something Street: My god, here am I!

CL: When was this, more or less?

KM: This would have been about the time of the Max Ernst show at the Jewish Museum, a show Sam did when I was there. I worked on it with him, the Max Ernst sculpture show. But it happened at the same time that Matta was having a show in New York. So the lunch was really for Matta.

KM: I'm thinking you'll have to start bringing martinis when you come here in the afternoon.

CL: That's what de Kooning said Jackson Pollock was: really, really interesting when he was halfway drunk. He wouldn't talk when he was sober, and he was incomprehensible when he was drunk, but he was really smart when he was halfway drunk.

KM: I don't think that applies to me.

CL: Well—we left you deciding not to go to Minneapolis because you didn't like your experiences in Ann Arbor, and because your parents wouldn't go to Minneapolis on their way to London, and perhaps because you enjoyed life in New York more than you expected to enjoy life in Minneapolis.

KM: Well, that was fairly clear. Even if it was in Siberia on 92nd Street and Fifth Avenue. The only thing I can think of 92nd Street was the movie called The House on 92nd Street, to which I was now being sent, and that was a movie about a lady having a fashion house on 92nd Street which turned out to be this spy headquarters of the Germans in New York. But anyway, that's an aside.

Of course the Jewish Museum was in the Warburg mansion. And had a remodeled wing attached to it, which had one of the largest rooms in New York for exhibition purposes. We're jumping a little ahead, but it was because of that room that I did this show called Large-Scale American Paintings and had Al Held's biggest painting at that time, in that room. And it was sort of one of those low-budget shows that one had to do there. The Jewish Museum then didn't have that much money.

CL: Was your debut exhibition there the historic, legendary Primary Structures?

KM: Yes. Because I had worked on it here a bit. It was something I had started to think about when I was here.

CL: Do I remember correctly that Lucy Lippard was somehow involved in this?

KM: Yes, as we mentioned last night, we had been talking about it and talking about it, and some of the people who could be in it, and she was in touch with some of them, and I was in touch with others. But then I added a whole large component of British sculptors in the show, it's not just Americans. I, at my own expense, went to England, as the Jewish Museum didn't have any travel money.

CL: You're still mad.

KM: Yes, of course. I'm still mad about all museums and their lack of funding things. And thinking that you do the research from waving a wand like some magical fairy godmother or godfather.

CL: That was then.

KM: Eh, well now, you know, some people get paid well. In those days you didn't get paid and you didn't get travel money. So I went to England and I did some research, and had people like Phillip King and Peter Phillips, Michael Bolus. It was sort of a little bit of an explosion of British sculpture happening. And they were as much featured in the show as the Americans, probably, to not pun, but had a lot more weight, in terms of concept.

CL: I remember, around 1968 or in there, British sculpture was really hot. Did that come out of this show?

KM: Well, an introduction of the British sculptors to New York was in this show.

CL: That was basically what I was trying to ask you.

KM: And then the courtyard was quite marvelous, because there was, actually, I think the piece belonged to Bill Rubin, an [Anthony] Caro, and it was a very low, low piece. And at that moment the Caro achievement was quite radical in its way, really grounded on the floor. And then across from that was the Tony Smith 81 More, which we now own. His first public showing ever was at the Wadsworth Athenaeum under Sam Wagstaff, and then his first public showing in New York was this piece at the Jewish Museum. And of course it caused a bit of a sensation. We won't go into the whole story of Tony Smith, but he, as most people know, was quite an interesting figure in New York art history and architectural history. And then there was a large Ronnie Bladen, and there was a big [Robert] Grosvenor, a fantastic Judd piece. There was Sol LeWitt, there was Larry Bell, I think. And then, of course, some of the other radical things were Carl Andre and Flavin. I think it was their first public museum outing. And Bob Morris, a big piece. So there were several things that caused little flurries.

CL: Well, the little flurries, or the reaction to the show, was not not noticeable; it was very noticeable.

KM: Well, it was obvious in the work. The work showed it.

The Primary Structures show really had an extraordinary opening. Afterwards everybody went up to Harlem and danced.

CL: You were an excellent dancer, I am told. I suppose Lucy Lippard was there, given that she was engaged in thinking up its title, along with you.

KM: Everybody. She may not have gone to Harlem, though. The two big crazy parties after openings that I've had, and one was everybody going on a boat after the Rauschenberg opening, along the harbor, drinking. And I think there are two photographs of me, when I first arrive on the boat, and a photograph of me when I'm leaving the boat. And they're really worse than the [Andy] Warhol paintings of Before and After [laughing].

CL: [laughing] Well, I don't recall ever seeing them.

KM: They're missing.

CL: But at the time, did one know how historical this show would become?

KM: No, you don't. Do we know what we're doing, as curators? [laughter] Only the idiot curators know what they're doing. I think you don't really know what you're doing at certain moments. And with this show, I certainly didn't think about what I was doing, except putting up a large body of work that hadn't been seen and hadn't been known. And that was sort of just below the surface. I mean, like [Robert] Smithson. It was the first time Smithson was in public. [John] McCracken, with one of his leaning boards, from California. I was sort of fortunate to have somehow managed to do an interesting sweep.

CL: But you couldn't have done it had it not been work that you had been following.

KM: Well, there wasn't much to follow because they hadn't done much work. So then it was kind of easier to not have followed it. It just existed in the last year or two before the show happened. And it was just sort of seeing these little, I mean, it comes from a kind of observation, and seeing that something was happening that was not Ibram Lassaw and Seymour Lipton.

CL: Or, in the Four American Sculptors here, it's pretty different from any one of them: [Wilfrid] Zogbaum, [Philip] Pavia, Lassaw, and [Richard] Stankiewicz. Is that right?

KM: Yes. It's sort of like—well, it doesn't happen as much in painting, it's not such a break in painting, but I think one of the things that was happening was, and it may also have a

little to do with my having worked on Albers before that, was suddenly seeing geometry arising.

CL: Well that makes sense. In fact, it's quite great, if you talk about Albers and you say, "See geometry arising"; it quite literally arose.

KM: And there were lots of little clues. Like Judd as a critic.

CL: Morris as a critic.

KM: Things happening at the Greene Gallery. [Richard] Bellamy. Even Walter De Maria. I'm not sure I had him in this Primary Structures show, but it was a lot of—

CL: I think a lot of those sculptors felt to some degree indebted to Brancusi.

KM: Well, Morris did his thesis on Brancusi.

CL: I know he did. Judd talked about it, so did Flavin. So did Andre.

KM: Right. And people questioning the pedestal. There was a lot about that. And somehow it was counter to the other world that was rising, which was Warhol and Oldenburg and Lucas Samaras. Lucas was at Columbia at the same time as Donald Judd, and they were all very friendly, but Lucas was more on the assemblage side of life. And the Oldenburg/Warhol thing was just another phenomenon that hadn't yet been categorized or whatever, and [Roy] Lichtenstein . . . but I don't know, I guess I felt the geometry looked better in the mansion.

CL: In the largest exhibition space in New York, you might as well show the largest sculptures.

KM: So then I was saddled with Mr. Hunter and his other exhibitions and having to work on the things he was doing, so I would have to work on [Jean] Tinguely, and work on Larry Rivers, and work on Ad Reinhardt, which actually Lucy Lippard had something to do with, too. So I was sort of his glorified curatorial assistant on those other shows, while I was trying to do things of my own.

CL: Which you brilliantly managed to do.

KM: So then I scraped myself again together and went to Europe to do research on Yves Klein. That's one of the shows that I am most proud of in terms of the installation. I seem

to have been attracted to all of these mythical figures like Duchamp, Klein, [Joseph] Beuys. And Beuys I offered a show at The Museum of Modern Art, but he was too terrified to come to America, so he told me no. Until he then arrived, eventually, with a coyote in the back seat and played downtown with René Block. But anyway, that's another story.

CL: But in this period, Beuys? That's looking ahead.

KM: I went to visit him in Düsseldorf. And that's the time I bought the little sled that we have, which is the first Beuys to come into a museum collection in America.

CL: I was unaware of that. Well, back to the Jewish.

KM: So then, the Yves Klein show, which actually, I have to say, I wish there were a lot of photographs of it.

CL: Was there a catalogue?

KM: Yes, it's very small, very slender. But, you know, I had a lot of the anthropometries, the bodies, the stretched things. I had this wonderful circular pedestal which was surrounded with little rocks and water, on which I had a whole array of his sponge pieces, and it was really quite beautiful. And then, of course, as you know, he worked in red, blue, and gold, and so there were certain parts of the installation which carried these colors, red, blue, and gold. Red is really kind of a pink. And then the dragged bodies, the blue anthropometries. And then portraits like Brigitte Bardot. And it had a very beautiful rhythm to it, and I wish I had good installation photographs. I'm not even sure the Jewish Museum has them. I think it was a really, really beautiful installation, and it was a big surprise to me. Oh, and actually, the other thing about it is that it has to do with the New Realists and Sidney Janis. Sidney Janis showed Klein.

CL: I had forgotten that.

KM: I was probably struck by it. But the Janis shows at that point were really all quite amazing. He had a big show on 57th Street of Pop, with [Tom] Wesselman and stuff.

CL: The New Realism.

KM: The New Realism. And he probably had Martial Raysse, I think he had those people there. So I think I probably picked up a certain amount from that.

And then there was this show of Gene Davis, Richard Smith, and Robert Irwin. Don't ask me why I put them together, but Gene Davis, of course, was stripe paintings, Richard Smith was shaped canvas, and Robert Irwin was, again, an introduction to New York of this work. I probably, at that point, had gone to California and seen it. And then I did another wonderful little small show of prints, it had a certain moment of printmaking that happened which included the Warhol Marilyns, a Frank Stella series of prints, and several other people. That was a nice little print show. And then, I did this show of Italian painting and sculpture— that was also a lively moment in Italian art at that point, and it was, again, introducing some other things to New York that hadn't been seen. And around that time, of course, Sam Hunter was getting ill, primarily heart problems, so I had to become acting director. So I was doubling and tripling time. And I was in charge of the Judaica, and having these young men come in to clean it and take care of it, like Harvey Quaytman and Joel Shapiro. But it started to become quite a difficult situation financially. And the [Jewish Theological] Seminary felt that because of the '68 war, money was not coming in, and the money had to go to Israel.

CL: In the problem with money, was there any factor that had to do with people on the board feeling the museum was not remaining Jewish enough?

KM: I don't think it was the board as much as the Seminary. But it also had to do with the board people wanting their money to go to Israel, because it was the time of the '68 war. But they had some extremely generous supporters—Vera List and a couple of other people were quite pleased with what went on. And actually, it continued even after I left, for a while, and then Sam Hunter left. But things were also changing in New York. I think the Jewish Museum had its impact in sort of awakening the Whitney and the Modern a bit.

CL: I think that's absolutely true, and you were crucial in that.

KM: They weren't dealing enough with very contemporary art.

CL: No, it was pretty ironic that it was the Jewish Museum that played such a seminal role.

KM: But then René d'Harnoncourt retires, and he hires Bates Lowry to be the new director. And Bates Lowry invites me to lunch. Which I know is because of Mr. d'Harnoncourt inviting me to come back as an associate curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture. So René's prediction is that was what I should do, and I had proven myself up

at the Jewish Museum. Anyway, I remember going off to Europe on holiday, and I think I've mentioned to you, I think I was sitting on the floor by myself reading the Herald Tribune, and came across the announcement of René's death. And I went into shock; tears flowing.

CL: Well it was very, very shocking.

KM: And so I came back and started in September, as one usually does, in the Museum, and it was in a very, very upset state. And part of it was that the calculation had been that they had hired Bates Lowry because he had been a big fundraiser for the floods of Florence, when he was a professor at Brown, and he was a Renaissance scholar. But they thought he was a good fundraiser, and Eliza Parkinson pushed it. So Bates comes in and doesn't know how to do anything. Also, besides being director, Lowry insisted on being the head of Painting and Sculpture. And I think Mr. Rubin had arrived—

CL: Alfred brought him in.

KM: So Mr. Lowry was presiding over Mr. Rubin and Mr. [William] Lieberman, five associate curators, or whatever, several curatorial assistants, and several blackbirds on a tree. One of the first things that I tried to do was this Rauschenberg mural, which is about 12 feet, 14 feet long, called Barge, which I thought this Museum should have. And it was really, in those days, not very much money, and it was Rauschenberg. And a certain curator sabotaged me. She was jealous that some younger person was bringing in this wonderful thing.

CL: On the other hand, Kynaston, you were very young to have such a formidable opponent.

KM: I was just young [laughs]. But I remember taking Bates to see it in a warehouse, and he was all for it.

CL: Bates had to go after a year or a year and a half or two. It was short.

KM: I think the [catalyst for the Museum's] international exhibitions was René d'Harnoncourt doing a Venice biennale exhibition. There was [also] a very big, grand exhibition in Paris of great French drawings in American collections.

CL: Yes, I remember.

KM: At some point in the preparation of the catalogue Helen Frank lay on the floor and started to scream. Helen Frank was a character around this Museum. She was basically an editor, and a writer. She did that book An Invitation to See, a standard thing of nice clear paragraphs on a hundred major works. It was sort of the model of entries for that kind of book of the collection.

CL: She had a very quick temper.

KM: And she was actually quite marvelous about standing in front of someone's desk and reading upside down whatever was in front of them. She would stand in front of René d'Harnoncourt's desk, or Porter McCray's, and read everything upside down, which is one of the great talents. But she was also quite a remarkable person in terms of editing many catalogues around here.

But anyway, we owned the [American] pavilion in Venice, and so it was incumbent upon us at one point to do a show. We were in charge of the U.S. representation in Venice, and we did it once. But I think the main thing was this [Paris] show [50 ans d'art aux Etats-Unis: collections du Museum of Modern Art de New York, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1955].

CL: Were you involved in that?

KM: No, no, no, no. I came in right after the French drawings show, because I remember having to translate the reviews for the files of the department. With my small knowledge of French, that was what I had to do, précis the reviews and put them into the files.

CL: By this time, you've been at the Museum how long?

KM: I came in '59. So we were creating an atmosphere about the domestic circulating exhibitions, and we got a lot of guest curators do them. It was a very big, active program, and we had a staff in Porter's department.

CL: But the things in those shows were all in our collection, is that right?

KM: No, we did loans. My collages show was loans. There were a few shows that were only from the collection, but they were basically also loans. But it's in the record, the files, what a lot of these shows are. And they covered a lot of ground. As I mentioned, I think,

they hired Bernard Rudofsky, who was an Austrian sort of architect, and he did a show called Are Clothes Modern? He did a show on staircases. And he did a show called Architecture without Architects. They were all landmarks. In those days, we were in the big brownstone mansion next door. And, you know, somehow he was set up there, up on the top floor, in the attic. It was sort of like the nursery floor would have been, or servants' quarters.

I don't remember us doing any Russian stuff at that point. Russian stuff was not really in the canon in those days, at least not on that level. The Russian whole thing has never been what it should be in this Museum. We never dealt with the history of constructivism. Never did, for example, a Malevich show.

CL: Well, I don't think it was possible to do.

KM: This is true. But the real serious show about the Russians in the late nineteens—

CL: I think Alfred would have done it if he could have.

KM: Yes, well, the material was not available.

CL: It must have had a great deal, too, to do with the fact that Russia was this big communist monolithic mass.

KM: Yes, well that's part of political history of exhibiting and collecting and curating, there's an undercurrent. I think it took a long time for us to do German shows after the war.

CL: But it was the turmoil in Europe in the '30s that allowed us, on a very small budget, to collect the magnificent things that we did. Plus the French indifference to what was made in their country.

KM: But I think there was a reluctance, in terms of what New York was, to exhibit German work. I think it took until the '60s for it to happen.

CL: I think you're right.

KM: While at the same time, we were sending off American art to Germany. What I think is interesting is, at the same time, there was a whole group of European descent, or actually coming from Europe itself, who had collected this stuff, and had it in their private collections in New York. And then I think later on, somehow, a certain amount of that

work filtered into the collections here. But they were private collectors, people who still were collecting German art, and of course, collecting the Austrians.

CL: Do you want to go back to Circulating Exhibitions after Collage?

KM: So American Collages was really the first exhibition I hung here. I sort of came out of a bed at Lenox Hill with pneumonia to install this exhibition. I was allowed not to exert myself, so for the opening, I sat in the Garden. I had to sit in the Garden. I was not allowed to exert myself.

CL: The future is prefigured.

KM: The future was prefigured, quite in a remarkable way. And then there was the sculptors show, as I've mentioned.

CL: Yes.

KM: Then also what happens in Circulating Exhibitions, I've started to do all of these embassy selections, and I had to spend a lot of time at the warehouse.

CL: That was a program, Art in Embassies?

KM: And I seem to have been the one who ended up doing it. Which I have to say, was probably very good training. Because I had to go around and borrow things from artists and borrow things from galleries, so whatever shyness I had, I had to get out of myself to go ask Sidney Janis for whatever, or Claus Oldenburg for a watercolor. Even including asking people for something like a Prendergast, because these things were not just about contemporary, it was a lot of things like having to get watercolors of the '20s, Marsden Hartley or something like that, for various places. So I had to run around town to do this, and sort of be decorator, because it had to be choreographed for the size of the walls and the colors of the sofas.

CL: There was a certain amount of trustee or International Council involvement in that.

KM: That was the International Council involvement. But anyway, in doing all of this, I somehow ended up in the warehouse, and having to go to artists' studios and learning. And then I would have to deal here with Conservation, and so. But it meant that I hung out at the warehouse, which was called Santini 7 Brothers, 449 West 49, and we had a whole floor there. And I sort of ended up being a kind of warehouse manager. And

occasionally we did have little shows there. We did a show called Hans Hoffman and His Students, before it traveled,

CL: In the warehouse?

KM: We hung it in the warehouse before it traveled around this country. And Alan Kaprow was part of the Hans Hoffman show. And Lee Krasner. But we would have a show over there, it would be the staff and trustees, a few patrons, and it would be up for two or three days. So it was, again, another kind of wonderful hanging and learning. And, you know, even putting sculpture on top of their crates, that sort of thing. And it had this nice informality, but it was kind of creative. And it was sort of trustees slumming by coming to the warehouse to look at the art.

CL: I'm sure they liked it.

KM: They liked it, and these shows were really quite good. But it was the only way some of them were shown before they left.

CL: And these were mostly for university galleries?

KM: Yes, and small museums. So that was a kind of a funny chapter in the early 60s.

CL: At that time had you yet done a major show here?

KM: No, I didn't do a major show until I came back. The first major show here, I think, is Information.

CL: And that approached the historicity of Primary Structures. I mean, it is now a legendary show.

KM: Yeah, it is legendary. In the meantime I was going to the Institute at night. So I got the job at the Jewish. Then I come back as an associate curator in '68, and the first show I do is called New Media, New Methods, which was a kind of Waldo suggestion, and I probably had a little bit to do with it.

CL: You were the director of that show?

KM: Yes, and that again was a circulating show. But that included [Richard] Serra, and Neil Jenney, and it was all these people who were using various materials. And I had even included some art that was computer generated. And Neil Jenney, in those days, was

doing sort of sculpture. But it was this sort of beginning, you know, and then there were people with plastics, I think from California. So it was, again, a nice, compact group show.

CL: Which put you very much in contact with contemporary artists, some of whom grew to be extremely famous.

KM: And some of whom we never heard of.

CL: Dropped off the map.

KM: Well, as I've always said, you know, when you're doing exhibitions, one-man shows are supposedly love affairs; three or four are a dinner party; and then the larger shows, the group shows, are cocktail parties. And in the cocktail parties you have some of those who you want, some of those who you have to tolerate, and some of those who you invite and you never will see them again.

CL: Well, I can remember at least two major cocktail parties you threw, Information being one, and the other—

KM: The International Survey. That was very much a cocktail party, except I was not allowed to invite any photographers. The whole problem of photography and Mr. McShine in this Museum.

CL: I remember something Bill said to you. It was, I think, Hamish Fulton?

KM: It was Hamish Fulton.

CL: And it was a photograph, a landscape.

KM: A series.

CL: Yes. And you brought it in, and Bill said to you, "If you think I'm going to go tell John Szarkowski this is a sculpture, you're crazy" [both laugh].

KM: And then, of course, I was vulnerable with Richard Long, too. And several others, including down to Cindy Sherman, who I acquired here in our department, much to their chagrin, and now they gleefully are delighted with it. And then, of course, there were the Becher photographs in Information. It's very amusing that in recent years, the Photography Department has embraced the Bechers quite solidly. Just in the same way,

I acquired a Cindy Sherman based on an old master, a great big thing, and again, I had a little bit of denunciation about it, but now Cindy Sherman has become one of the patron saints of the Photography Department.

CL: I remember.

KM: When we were acquiring [the Bechers], one person said, “Well isn’t this archival material for the library?” Another one said, “Isn’t this for the architecture department?” Another one said, “Isn’t this for the photography department?” And “Why isn’t this for Painting and Sculpture?” But, I mean, things like the Bechers were issues that also arose from the Information show.

CL: Yes. They were around, but the Museum hadn’t paid attention.

KM: And then there was the Tinguely destructive machine [Homage to New York] in the Garden. That was set up more, I think, by Peter Seltz.

CL: That caused a sort of major article in The New Yorker, didn’t it, amongst other things?

KM: Yes, and it was a wonderful machine and Tinguely was working around here for a while. One got to meet him. It was one of the first openings of the Museum to an artist doing something, almost like you would call it a project, in the building and in the Garden. And it was a dark and stormy evening, as we would call it. It was raining. We have a remnant of the machine in the Museum, and we also have drawings. And of course Niki de St. Phalle was around, and I met them very much. And all of these things turned into tributaries or rivers. And the machine really, well, it was going very well, and there were lots of people. It was a sort of invited audience, and everybody was standing around, really truly in the rain, as this machine huffed and puffed and stuttered and sputtered. And then it started to explode, and the fire department came and stopped the whole event. And it was very revelatory to me about possibilities of art making, because it was so completely a contrast, this machine, a Rube Goldberg sort of situation in contrast to the quiet and meditative Monet.

And so that was a good thing. And then Frank O'Hara did a show of New Spanish Painting and Sculpture, one of a series of shows that were being done of groups of artists from various countries. Bill Lieberman did Japan. Bill Seitz did Israel. And Frank's Spanish show was really very good because it was, again, the birth of several very good Spanish artists, like [Antoni] Tapies and [Eduardo] Chillida, [Manolo] Millares, [Antonio] Saura. It was a very good selection of artists.

CL: In a way, it was like the Tinguely, a relatively unknown European artist.

KM: Yes. And some of them were using strange materials. Tapies of course used raw canvas, burlap bags, and so on, and quite a few of them were using various materials like plastics, and there was a kind of diversity in what they were doing. I don't want to go through the whole history of exhibitions in the Museum, but they sort of were catalysts for a lot of things that happened, not only on a personal level, but I think had a real impact on the New York scene.

The Rothko show in '61, strangely enough, considering the respect we now have for Rothko, was not that well received. It wasn't as accepted as it should have probably been.

CL: Where was Abstract Expressionism at that moment? And I think Abstract Expressionism at that moment was oozing out; it was about to be confronted by Pop art and what not.

KM: Yeah, the other people were coming forward, like the stain group.

CL: The second-generation Abstract Expressionists.

KM: And then, a couple of shows that I just wanted to mention as being very interesting and really off the mainstream of the Museum, shows done by Bernard Rudofski. I would call them humanist exhibitions, they were more cultural history, in a way. [There was] Visionary Architecture, in 1960, and then another one called Roads, in 1961. And there was another one called Stairs. They were done for traveling around the country, and they were basically exhibitions of photographs mounted on board. But it was a kind of broad look at things that you really don't—it included Michelangelo's stairs, a complete variety of stairs, stairs in India. I think one thing that people seem not to remember is the whole diversity of exhibitions this place has. I mean, for some reason, now it's looked on as a total orthodox cathedral of exhibitions, but there is this past. The Museum has had a nice kind of eccentricity.

CL: Can I just ask you one question?

KM: Yes.

CL: How were you aware of Polish art?

KM: Oh, somebody invited me to go to Poland and look around and try to do a show of young Polish artists. So I accepted and I went. I think I had a bodyguard at all times, and it was still very much Communist time.

CL: You would have been a remarkable person in Poland at the time.

KM: It was revelatory. And the thing is that there was a lady who was around New York, and she was Polish, and very involved in wanting to promote Polish contemporary art. And so she got me a travel grant to go to Poland to look at art. And of course it was quite an experience. Poland was still under the Russians, and it had such a semi-oppressive air. And the hotel had a lady sitting in the corridor to watch whoever went in and out of the rooms, and all of that sort of stuff that people nowadays don't really want to remember of that atmosphere.

CL: Well, it was typical of countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain.

KM: And there was a wonderful young gallery called Foksel, which I think still exists. And they showed really good art, young artists and so on. And I had a man shadowing me, or accompanying me everywhere I moved. And according to the Poles in the Communist regime, artists who were in school were not considered artists. You had to leave school before you were considered an artist. And I heard of these two young men who were very good artists who were in school. So I had to tell my "bodyguard," "I'm tired, I'm going up to rest for a couple of hours." And I made a date for these guys to come to the hotel. And so we had a cup of tea and I talked to them. They were terrific, and they were on the way to good ideas. They were playing with the conceptual ideas that were around. But then I went to Lodz which had a museum of modern art run by a man called Richard Stanislawski, who was very much a presence in the art world. And I went through and they had this collection which was of artists in the early '30s, and which included several interesting women sculptors. And this stuff, I realized, was not known at all in America. And these artists had a big link to Paris, and they were very friendly with people like Léger and several others.

CL: Well, at the height of neo-plasticism in Paris.

KM: Right. And so they begged Léger and several of these other artists to give them works for them to set up a little museum. The town really is very depressing, because it has these huge solid barracks where the textile workers lived, in sort of almost like slave quarters. It looks like a concentration camp, these rows and rows of little wooden structures. But also, in a way, it's a wealthy town because of the owners of the textile factories. So they managed to get a space, and they set up a little museum of modern art. And it precedes The Museum of Modern Art. It's earlier; it's like, '26 or so. And so then this place becomes a repository of all of these artists' work. So being the good doctor that I am, I came back to this lady and I said, "The one thing that I think we could do that would really be wonderful, and nobody knows it in this country, is to do a show of the works from this museum, and its women, and its artists that nobody's heard of, and obviously they've made a contribution. And then these men," a couple of them were still alive, actually, and, "I think it would make a very good show in New York." And it went to Detroit because there are lots of Polish Poles in Detroit. So it was really quite a wonderful, small, special show, a historical show.

CL: I remember it vividly, because it was just wonderful things that one had never seen, or almost not heard about. I mean, the Polish branch of neo-plasticism is now on the map, which it certainly wasn't before that show. So, encore.

KM: And then I went from Poland to Venice and I found it really amazing, the difference, seeing the Venice water and boats. The Adriatic was quite a wonderful refreshment.

CL: [laughing] Well Venice is one of the most seductive cities in the world! You were going from one that you say was dreary beyond belief to the queen of seduction, in terms of cities.

KM: I know. But I have to tell you one little funny story about being in Poland, in Warsaw, which is that when I first arrived, it was a day or two before Nixon arrived on a trip to Poland, a state visit or whatever. So I was looked upon with great suspicion, as if I was there to assassinate Mr. Nixon.

CL: [laughing] You had to go to Poland to do that?

KM: And then one thing I realized that had happened that it was the day of what we call Corpus Christi, a very Catholic holiday. And they're very Catholic. So they were all out

on the streets because there's a procession, always, of the host, and there's a certain way the priest and nuns and little children are dressed in first-communion-looking clothes and so on. And on television that night, or the next day, the American television was claiming that this was the reception of the Poles to Nixon's visit to Warsaw. It was one of those times I realized how news can be manipulated. Then when I came back, Castro was visiting. So then I was embraced as a Cuban, and they would all start speaking Spanish to me. So it was really very funny, I went from being an assassin to being a great friend within a few days. And these guys in the hotel would come, trying to talk to be, as if I was part of the Cuban press.

CL: There was a unity of opinion about you. You were against Nixon, and a man of the people.

KM: [laughing] Probably. Anyway. And the Polish trip had its travails, because it was not fun. I mean, I met nice people, but moving around with this man was just not for me. And then I gave him, unfortunately, I gave him—I was stupid—books to mail for me, and of course, they never came. He said, "I'll do it; I'll do it." And they never came. But there were lots of little elements of that trip that were really kind of wonderful.

CL: So you went to Venice.

KM: I went to Venice, and that was the biennale where I was supposed to be on the committee. And we all rebelled and resigned. It had to do with, at that time, Europe being a little bit, artists being a little bit restless. The same thing happened to me in documenta. Both Pontus and I resigned. One of the reasons we resigned was because neither he nor I could speak German.

CL: Pontus couldn't speak German? I'm astonished.

KM: And we were on this advisory committee for documenta, and the townspeople of Kassel insisted that all of the meetings had to take place only in German, and they would not provide a translator. So Pontus and I went off and had dinner in Darmstadt, looking at the installation of Beuys, and we resigned.

CL: Your Polish trip, then, would have happened shortly after you came back here from the Jewish?

KM: I think the Polish trip could have been ’68, because it was the year of chaos in the Biennale because of Europe and protests, and things like that, and I was commissioner for Venice Biennale.

CL: Yes. So the show that actually took place in ’76 had been sort of curating in your mind, so to say, for quite a while.

KM: Well, yes, well, it took a while: a) funding, b) The Museum of Modern Art being slow, and it involved that much diplomatic stuff. The Poles were very happy with it happening.

CL: The next one I have circled is [Arshile] Gorky, 1963.

KM: That was a very beautiful exhibition. Again, Circulating Exhibitions. It was suggested first to do, as a traveling exhibition, an exhibition of Gorky drawings. And it really was a very different age, because I had the entire oeuvre of the estate of Gorky drawings. And they were put into a secure room in the 666 building across the street. I had to go there every day, in isolation, and catalogue them, and then get Rudy Burckhardt to photograph each one. So I think somewhere in the museum they must have these albums.

CL: Did you organize that show?

KM: No, I was a peon at that time, just an assistant, for that show. My first show, really, was Albers. But anyway, it was quite an amazing experience to sit there every day, measuring each drawing and cataloguing them, numbering them. I don’t remember anybody else being there except me. It was a real monastic working experience. And then feeding them to, you know, ten sheets at a time, or whatever, for Rudy Burckhardt to photograph. And then from that, I don’t remember who made the selection. It probably was Bill Seitz. But I think that it sort of [chuckling] says something about the Museum that here is this innocent young person being totally trusted to have the entire oeuvre of a major artist.

CL: It speaks to the wisdom of the Museum.

CL: I did push you ahead slightly on that Gorky thing, but there is, the other circled ones that I have are, The Art of the Assemblage, in ’61, and The Last Works of Matisse, also in “61.

KM: There was such a collegiality at the time. I was very aware of [the Assemblage show] happening, from Bill Seitz, and being very curious about it. And at that time I was very friendly also with Lucy Lippard, who goes on to have her own place in history.

CL: She was an employee here in the library.

KM: She started to do the bibliography, and I was also a student at the Institute of Fine Art. And I was quite fascinated with the material. It was sort of in my sensibility, collages and assemblage—I think all of my pack-rat instincts sort of liked the idea of the miracle of turning all of these scraps into great art. So I volunteered to help Lucy with the bibliography. And since I did a lot of French literature in college, there was a lot about French poetry involved in the bibliography. So we would work on Saturdays, primarily, for Seitz. And when Seitz saw all of this dedication, I said how much I liked Joseph Cornell, and I liked the Cornell boxes. That was actually probably my first exposure with them, unless I had seen some in the Museum's collection.

CL: It was here that you first saw Cornell?

KM: I think so. [His work] really rang a little bell in my head, a poetic bell. And so I talked to Seitz about how fascinated I was with the aviaries, and being a tropical bird myself, I was quite thrilled with the parrot boxes and cockatoo boxes. So he said, "Why don't you write something about them? I need an entry for the catalogue on it, and if it's good enough, I will publish it." So I slaved, and I condensed a lot, probably not as great as it should be or not as good as it should be, I condensed a lot into about six or seven paragraphs, which he liked and which he published in the Art of Assemblage catalogue. And so that is my first appearance, formally, in a museum catalogue. And of course, it was a wonderfully beautiful show, and quite successful.

KM: George Montgomery lived with Dan Wagoner on the top floor of the building which I subsequently lived in, 791 Broadway.

CL: That was a famous building.

KM: It was a career and not an address, my dear.

CL: Yes, yes, yes.

KM: And the floor above me was where Frank lived.

CL: When did Bob Rosenblum move in?

KM: Bob went in there when Frank died, and then I moved in in ’68. And Robert lived there until he married Jane, and then they had children, and then they moved to NYU. But the building, 791, goes back, even, to the fact that I think the floor that Robert and Frank had was Elaine de Kooning’s studio. And of course, with Frank living there, most of the great downtown poetry world passed through the building, and artists, Larry Rivers, Mike Goldberg. And then the other wonderful thing that used to go on in my house was that people would go to Max’s Kansas City, which was at about 19th and Park Avenue South. And of course, this apartment, which faced Grace Church, 791 Broadway, was on their path to go back downtown. So I would suddenly have these visitors at 2 in the morning, like Brice Marden and Helen and a few others, looking for a last late-night drink. And the one thing that I learned at the time, [chuckling] because I had no really interesting art on the walls, but I remember having this Frankenthaler print, well, a kind of poster thing up, and really being attacked for having this hanging. So I learned early that if you want to have artists around, don’t have any art around that will bother them. So now I just have photographs of questionable taste [laughing]. Really, at 2 in the morning, a little hostility would arise. But it was kind of a nice sort of a moment.

CL: It sounds wonderful to me.

KM: Brice was the studio assistant of Rauschenberg. Rauschenberg lived down on Lafayette Street. There was this really easy community, an easy openness. And the whole scene with Richard Serra and Smithson, and Warhol in one corner, and the Flavin from Primary Structures in the corner. But what is interesting about this, if we think about it, too, is, there was a kind of less macho scene than the Cedar bar. I mean, there was drink, but it was a little bit less of the turbulence of the Cedar bar.

CL: Well, the Cedar bar people were of an era which sociologically was different, and also, American art hadn’t hit it yet. And by the time you have Marden and Rauschenberg and those people, to be an American artist was a quite respectable thing.

KM: Somehow, I think that that generation were economically a lot better off. You know, Serra and Philip Glass, and Chuck Close, they worked hard as movers, but then people had a basic income.

CL: Also there was a gallery scene, which there wasn’t in the ’30s, to speak of.

KM: I think what's interesting is how certain exhibitions at the Modern influenced the New York art scene. We did this exhibition, I think Monroe Wheeler was the curator, The Last Works of Matisse. It was primarily the big cutouts, and it was installed, to a large extent, in the lobby. And it really was extremely beautiful. And, you know, given Abstract Expressionism, the sort of hard edge of Matisse cutouts and the brilliant color and verve of it all, had a big impact on New York art. I don't really want to name specific artists, but I think even Al Held. I mean, it was something that was extremely talked about. I think even some sculptors really got a great deal out of it. And, you know, certain exhibitions became landmarks for changing a lot of what happens in New York. And I think this show really had that big impact.

CL: That's very likely. As a counterforce, vis a vis Abstract Expressionism.

KM: And you know, there's a kind of mystical thing in museums. You don't really know, quite often—a show happens, and then suddenly it becomes a catalyst or influence on the art world. And I think that's really one of the good things about New York is this interaction of critics and the museums and artists.

So we'll end with The Responsive Eye of Bill Seitz. That was a show of Op art, which Bill had as a large group show of European and American artists, both painting and sculpture. The big hit of that exhibition, of course, was Bridget Riley, and it brought Bridget Riley's work into the world. And there became a lot of controversy because there was a patron of the Museum who was in the garment district, and he took one of Bridget's paintings and adapted it into dress fabric. Which of course Bridget has never forgotten, and has been infuriated ever since by this travesty of her paintings. But since then we know about Mondrian dresses and Warhol dresses and other things more to that point.

CL: Pollock. All kinds of appropriations.

KM: But the show was very controversial. People found the art mechanical, but it brought forward a certain number of artists. Of course, there was [Victor] Vasarely, who's quite important, from that show. But that was the Museum trying, in a good way, to pinpoint a certain activity in the art scene.

KM: Okay. So, to resume this ordeal, in early 1965, when I'm still in the International Program, Frank O'Hara, who was also in that department, and being a curator, was asked to do a big Motherwell restrospective. And I probably didn't have anything on the schedule in terms of work, so he asked me to get involved in it. And that was really quite wonderful, to work with Motherwell and work with Frank, and going through the whole selection of the show, even though I didn't have any specific say as to what was in or not. But Motherwell was really very thorough about how he wanted his catalogue to be, and he wanted a chronology of his life, and I was asked to do that. So that gave me the privilege of going up to their house, 173 East 94th, the townhouse where he lived with his wife, Helen Frankenthaler. And so I would go up there and we very carefully plotted the details of what to put in it. So that became a very carefully organized document. And of course, part of my involvement or fascination with Motherwell was he had done this really major book called The Dada Painters and Poets, which is a fascinating book and very unique in its time and, well, it still is.

CL: I think it remains a fundamental document.

KM: I was very attracted to that. But anyway, Motherwell, in the chronology, does this thing about saying when he meets certain people, which had never been done in chronologies before in catalogues. And it became, in a way, a model for chronologies in other catalogues of the Museum for quite a long time. And then, a footnote: Ad Reinhardt, who was maybe a couple of years later on, up at the Jewish Museum, having an exhibition and there was to be a catalogue. Lucy Lippard was involved with that show.

CL: You were at the Jewish.

KM: I was at the Jewish but I didn't really work on it. And Ad did a complete parody of my chronology. I thought that was one of the most flattering things, to have Ad Reinhardt do a parody of a little peon's chronology [laughing]. And if you look it up, you will see how funny it is and what he had done.

Going back a little bit, I included Motherwell, some of his collages, in the American Collages show. So that also led me into working with Motherwell. And I think another little footnote was, being at the house, working with Motherwell, I became very aware of how difficult it was for two artists to be married to each other. Later in life, I found quite a lot of friends or acquaintances being married to other artists, and most of the time it ended up in trouble because of the competition, especially with the women feeling, in

those days, that they were not taken on an equal footing, even if they were as grand and as important as Ms. Frankenthaler. So I had to pay for it, in a way; it was demanded that I come to her studio quite often.

CL: That can't have been unpleasant.

KM: No, no, no; that made me become a friend of Helen's. And it was a marvelous studio, on the corner of something like Second Avenue in the 80s. And there was P. J. Clark's, a wonderful hamburger joint right next to it. And of course the Rothko studio was also right there, after he left the Bowery. But [women] really didn't have the respect, I mean, that generation in the '60s, like Joan Mitchell.

CL: Well, Joan is a subject unto itself.

KM: She was wonderful, and great energy. And I have a wonderful Joan Mitchell story, which is that Donald Allen, a major editor at Grove Press, and he worked on the magazine Evergreen Review and things like that, did this really significant anthology called The New American Poetry, which included Kenneth Koch, Ashbery, Schuyler, Frank O'Hara, whatever. It's like the real handbook of poetry of the late '50s to '60s. He's the one who suggested I come to the Museum and work. But anyway, so, I'm a little bit friendly with him and of course there was Frank O'Hara he was very friendly with, and I think about a year later or so, a year or two later, one evening I went to Donald Allen's for a drink, and he also had my friend Derek Walcott, who is also from the Caribbean, who, as we know, becomes a Nobel laureate. And then, at a certain point, at about ten o'clock, and Donald Allen had this apartment which had a sort of raised—you came in at the entrance and then there was the dining room, and then you had two steps down to the living room. And so Derek and I are there, and Don Allen, and the door opens, and it's Frank with Joan Mitchell. And she comes in, in all of her gloriously tipsy way, and sees Derek and myself, "Where have you found these beautiful men?" And she steps down and falls as she steps into the living room. And it's quite a memorable entrance [laughing].

CL: That's Joan. That is definitely Joan.

KM: Anyway, that's a slight footnote about how I met Joan Mitchell. Gloriously. [laughing]

CL: Well, I think a lot of people met Joan Mitchell that way. I did.

KM: And it took a long, long time for the Museum to have a Joan Mitchell, which I think I had something to do with.

KM: I went to the Jewish, I think, in September of ’65. Soon after Motherwell. Frank dies in ’66 as he does the Nakian show, while that show is on. The Pollock show, he was supposed to have done, and then Bill Lieberman took it over.

CL: ’67. And did you contribute something to the Frank O’Hara book [In Memory of My Feelings]?

KM: No, I helped Riva organize in terms of the artists.

CL: Riva Castleman?

KM: Yes, Riva Castleman. It was a book project in his honor. Jasper Johns was one of the people who really pushed the idea of this book happening. It was a wonderful publication, a nice document of the marriage of poetry and painting, of poetry and artists.

Then I did this show called Rauschenberg Soundings. That was a time when there was a lot of interaction of art and technology. Rauschenberg did these pieces which were large silkscreened transparent discs with images, and they were on a machine, and they all revolved. A little bit of Duchamp as well as a little bit of kinetic art, a combination.

I have to just mention that, you know, in ’68, and having come back, the whole transition of the Museum happens really about ’68, and it’s really Alfred Barr’s retiring. And that was also part of the whole big trauma of René dying and Alfred retiring. So it really was the beginning of Bill Rubin in the Painting and Sculpture department.

CL: But Bill Rubin, however, was already there. I mean, Alfred had appointed Bill Rubin.

KM: Yes, but where I’m heading is to say that the first big show that Bill did was an exhibition, Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage. It was a very important exhibition, and again, it’s part of my whole history of being fascinated by Dada and Surrealism—we just mentioned the Motherwell Dada Painters and Poets. And Bill really did an extraordinary exhibition, including the [Ed] Kienholz car, a making out of a drunken couple in a crashed car or something. But it really brought a lot of fabulous things out from loans, and I think it was really one of the first great big shows of Dada and Surrealism.

So then the Machine show [The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age, 1968] is again another extraordinary exhibition of the Museum. And I don't know who had the brilliance of asking Pontus Hulten, and he did this really groundbreaking show of another look at a lot of the early twentieth century, including a lot of Russians, which people had never really seen here, like the Tatlin tower. And Jenny Licht had a lot to do with him, and of course, there's a wonderful catalogue, which had a tin cover, with a photograph of the Museum in tin. And again, these sorts of exhibitions also brought a lot of artists. I mean, the older art history was really brought to the fore, and then both of these exhibitions, the Dada show and this one, brought a lot of contemporary artists into view in an interesting way and in the context of the whole century.

CL: Well this is a period when you and Jenny were kind of "the" curators who knew the contemporary art scene. Was it not, or am I misstating that?

KM: I think so. But you know, when you're doing this and you look at the list of exhibitions, you realize The Museum of Modern Art has not been asleep in many ways, as much as people criticize the Museum. That's a footnote that can be repeated on occasion. Here in the short space of time, you have those exhibitions.

KM: This New American Painting and Sculpture show—that was a great sort of push by Bill [Rubin] to acquire two or three artists for Abstract Expressionist work. We're now reveling in the glory of how more important they've become, the early pictures that he got from, particularly, people like Rothko and [Adolph] Gottlieb. He really built up the collection at that point in a great way. And then there was Alicia Legg who did the Oldenburg show, which again was quite a wonderful and beautiful exhibition. And it was really the correct moment for it, as Claes had done all of the work with the Store and had done his happenings.

CL: There's a wonderful picture of Alicia almost running, pushing Claes,

CL & KM: In the wheelchair.

KM: Now the wheelchair should be mentioned as a tradition of the curators, when they're doing exhibitions. As you arrive for the first time to start hanging, a wheelchair is brought in, and it's used as the working office, in a sense, that you also move from room to room, when you're installing. And you can also use it with a board as a desk, so it's like a moving desk. You put a board across the two arms and you use it if you have to write

notes or something while you're down in the galleries. But it was used very much in making it a little easier, the mobility, when you're having an exhibition with many rooms, moving it around. So that's been a tradition in the Museum. I'm not so sure how much it still goes on.

CL: I think not much.

KM: But it was a big thrill when you went for the first time, installing a big exhibition, and the wheelchair arrives. As much of a big thrill as when the first picture arrives on the floor, or sculpture.

CL: Well, that is a true thrill.

KM: What, the first painting?

CL: Yes, well, when they're being unpacked. I mean, when you're organizing a show and you've been seeing these things on paper. You of course have seen them in person, but you have been looking at paper.

KM: It represents all of the begging that you've had to do [laughing], all of the difficult times you've had, and for it to just start to happen.

CL: Now, the next thing that I have marked is Ocean Projects. It's the end of 1969.

KM: That's one of those crazy McShine things. And I don't know, I really can't push the genesis of it, but it has to do with my running around town, and I somehow got—as you know, I come from Trinidad and Tobago—and I somehow managed to get these two guys, Dennis Oppenheim and [Peter] Hutchinson, to go to Tobago, and to do what became known as land art. They were both these conceptual people, and they both did these projects off Tobago. Dennis's, I remember, a lot to do with underwater. So that became a Projects show. It's not remembered now, but I think it was pretty strange and eccentric at the time.

CL: That's the part I remember. I don't remember it specifically; I do remember strange and eccentric. But Projects was supposed to be about the new.

KM: Well I think that's what it should have been; what it is; what it should be.

CL: Yes; experimental.

KM: And that was one of the first Projects, I think. The first was Keith Sonnier.

CL: You really inaugurated [the Projects series], in the late 60s.

So next I have something you know quite a bit about, which is Information.

KM: Ah, Information.

CL: I consider that to be a very significant show of your long and distinguished career.

KM: Well, first of all, let me clean up a little bit of history. The reason the show was called Information was because I was given the mandate to do an international exhibition of young artists, a large group show—

CL: Who gave it to you, if I may ask, this mandate? It was a consensus?

KM: Yeah. Well of course, Rubin must have been involved.

CL: He must have.

KM: But it basically came a lot from [John] Hightower. And so I kept going to studios, and I had money to travel. The International Council provided money. And so I kept going to studios and I kept not letting on that I was doing a big exhibition, and I kept saying to people, “I’m here for information.”

CL: That’s very funny.

KM: And so I decided that I couldn’t figure out a title for the show, so I called it Information. And it has taken on this other, completely mythical aura of being.

CL: It did from day one.

KM: Being the great foresight of McShine about it being the information age, Marshall McLuhan, conceptual art.

CL: Absolutely. It was taken in that light from the moment that it became officially—

KM: Well, you know, probably that was there too, in its way, a residual way. It probably invented its own resonance, or I unconsciously realized that. But anyway, it was a large group show, and it also was at the time of a lot of the unrest in relation to Vietnam. And at that point the Museum really had banners for all of the major exhibitions outside. So I

had these four banners which were white, and the word “peace” in Morse code running down them. So you could just see these black and white flapping things. And if you looked, probably, at the banner, you realized it was saying “Peace.”

CL: Well, it was only recognized by those who could read the written form of Morse code.

KM: But I couldn’t put banners saying directly “Peace.” It would have to be abstract.

CL: Under the banner of Information, it was pretty good.

KM: Now one of the first things, and not very many people remember it, but I had this huge, black, mushroom-looking thing; huge, a great big circular thing, in a gallery at the beginning of the exhibition. It was a machine, which I think probably doesn’t exist any more, designed by Olivetti. Around it there were about ten monitors, and so I was able to show a lot of the films of the time. And simultaneously, I would be looking at one, and you, on the next monitor, could look at something else. It was sort of like a big World’s Fair machine. So I incorporated design in a very low-keyed way into the exhibition, without making a big deal out of it. And then there were things like Vito Acconci’s piece, which was that he changed his address to The Museum of Modern Art, and he would come here every day to pick up his mail. There was the [Helio] Oiticica room, which was sort of like beds and people lay in them and did whatever they wanted to do in them [laughter]. And that was another idea the show represented also—besides the conceptual parts of it, it also involved a kind of a loosening up of people, of artists, and the attitudes toward the world.

CL: It was certainly shaping people’s ideas on what constitutes art.

KM: There was this Hans Haacke piece, which involved two signs, and it was a voting situation, and you had to vote for whether you approved of Governor [Nelson] Rockefeller’s attitude towards Vietnam or not. And then I had this thing, Dial-a-Poem, where you dialed a number, you got poets. And unfortunately, one of the things that I think John Giorno did was, his poem was the instructions of how to make a bomb, which, in 2010, would, I think, have me handcuffed and out of here. But that brought the FBI to find out about what was going on.

KM: Blanchette [Rockefeller] I had to take through the exhibition, and I took her through and I explained everything to her, and she thought everything was okay. But David [Rockefeller] summoned the, in those days they were called the directors of the

curatorial departments—they were all summoned in a helicopter to Pocantico to discuss the Information exhibition and what it means or didn't mean.

CL: You were aware?

KM: Yes; I had a sleepless night.

CL: [laughing] Only one?

KM: What was going to happen. Whether my head was going to be chopped off by the helicopter blades. And so they went up there and they discussed it, and I think Bill [Rubin] was very supportive. And they finally came to the agreement that this piece was not to be taken out of the exhibition, and Mr. McShine was not to be punished for what he did. But something that I tell curators they should do, which is that you always, when you have an exhibition and you have something that is controversial in it, you inform the director, so the director is not blindsided. So before I put up this exhibition, I did go in and report everything to the director.

CL: Meaning Bill?

KM: No, Hightower. Bill was kind of seeing things as they were happening. And so Hightower of course, also, again, was another one who could be quite supportive if they knew what was in the show. So anyway, they came back down, and the show continued, and the FBI wanted the phone for the rest of the show. And they did meet me. They did come and meet me and asked me a few questions.

CL: You were then a British citizen, weren't you?

KM: Yes.

CL: You weren't yet an American citizen.

KM: No, but I was permanent. I think it'd be a while before I decided to become a citizen. But anyway, of course there were other things that were in that show, like the Rafael Ferrer piece which was blocks of ice in the Garden, and they melted down, and that was the end of the piece. And then there was the furniture, the bean bags, which I got from Milan, for comfort, to sit in the show. And there was this wonderful painting—I think now it's with the Menil collection—which really struck me, this wonderful Walter De Maria painting which is all yellow, and about twelve, fourteen feet long and six feet high,

whatever. It's completely yellow except in the middle it has a silver plaque, and it says, "The color that men use when they destroy the earth." And for a little while, when I liked the painting so much, I couldn't really figure out what the yellow was, what it meant. And of course it's the Caterpillar-tractor color yellow. And it's really a fabulous picture. It belonged to the Sculls at that time, among many things. The Sculls were really very good. They owned a lot of De Marias, and the De Maria we have here was also in the show, Cage, which is a pun on John Cage's name as well as this impossible cage, a simple structure. But a lot of things happened with that show. There was also, I mean, it covered everybody. There was Smithson, there were lots of things.

CL: Well, to use a dopey word, it was almost as seminal, or more so, maybe, than Primary Structures. I mean, it was historic.

KM: It certainly was; I have to admit it myself.

And the catalogue is kind of loose. It was very much of its time, too. One of the things I did in the catalogue was give each artist a page to do whatever they wanted to do. And then I also had this sort of magazine-y thing of lots of different images without captions. And Lucy Lippard did a wonderful conceptual bibliography.

I think one of the secrets about this exhibition is, doing a group exhibition and you don't know what you're doing, and you just work it out. And if you are sort of following artists that you're kind of not sure what they're doing but you think that maybe they are of their time. It really was a kind of thing about having the idea of being in favor of one's time, which is a favorite phrase of mine, which also comes from a Frank O'Hara poem. And it was acting in favor of my time, and figuring out a few things. Even in Brazil—apparently that's also part of my history, is that I was the first person to include Latin American artists in a contemporary international group show. This, apparently, was the first exhibition where they were included as equals with other artists of the northern hemispheres.

CL: Waldo did some huge—

KM: Yes, but it was all just Latin America. That is always my pain, my gripe.

I should mention Romare Bearden and Richard Hunt, which were 1971, which I didn't have anything to do with. It was the first time that we did major exhibitions of African Americans.

CL: Well, and it was pretty blatant, in a certain way. How else could it be?

KM: Well, what do you mean, blatant? Political?

CL: Yes, it wasn't so much inserting them in a general dialogue but singling them out as black artists, which is more or less the same thing you're saying about Latin Americans.

KM: And it was also because that time was the time of the Art Workers Coalition and there's a certain amount of protest by artists about the Museum, in terms of contemporary art. Then the black community complaining that we didn't do any show of black artists, which was true. And so then, they came up with the Bearden show and the Richard Hunt show. And there was a lot of ferment in terms of contemporary artists and their feeling that The Museum of Modern Art wasn't paying any attention to them, that the curators didn't go to the galleries enough, and there was not enough presence of contemporary art, unless it was a large exhibition.

CL: The years you're talking about are circa?

KM: Is '70, '71. Information is at around that time, but other things were happening with things like the Art Workers Coalition, and Yayoi Kusama doing her bathing in the Garden, in the pool.

CL: Do you want to touch on that?

KM: And then an artist spilling ox blood in the lobby of the Museum, and it is all partially coming out of the anger of Vietnam, but also anger at the society and anger at the governance of museums and what they thought was only very establishment. So there was a kind of unrest, a moment of turmoil, of ferment, in the Museum, and a lot of conversations about what to do. We did an analysis of what African Americans were in the collection, what women were in the collection, and the statistics. They did a whole big study about the collection at that point. So we had several meetings about what should be done and what can be done and so on. And the one thing that I remember [the trustee] Jeff [Byers] always saying was, "Don't worry, time is on your side." Time is on your side, which is, the Museum would change and become much more open to contemporary things. And I don't know whether he meant it in terms of directors or just the interest of the people. But anyway, they became a big sort of moral support to push contemporary art and be the advocates of it. The Junior Council became very involved in this in different ways, subtle ways but, you know, trying to have things happen. But one

of the things that really came out of this, and it's really a very important part of the history of this place which is very much unknown, is that because of Barbara [Jakobson] and Carter [Burden] and Jeff and the Junior Council, they pushed that there be a museum in Harlem. And it is basically from this museum that the Studio Museum in Harlem was founded. It became a real center for African-American art, and it had studios, and it became a big force. And it gave a lot of different people, not only patrons, but it gave the artists a focus, the African-American artists. And I was one of the first board members. It was a struggle at the beginning. It still has its own struggles, but it has become much more of a landmark. But people don't really know or realize that this really came out of The Museum of Modern Art. And it was part of this whole ferment of the early '70s.

Anyway, that's a little bit about what surrounds this Bearden, Richard Hunt show, a little bit of the trying to open up the place. And then the other thing that happens in that sense, of course, is that I'm asked to do small one-man shows, modest budget, include the other young curators, almost supervise them into a program. So they decided to use this space, in those days, a small room on the corridor down into the restaurant. And they basically designated the space for Projects, and made different artists use it. And then I, again, can't explain myself in some of this, I don't remember how I thought of Keith Sonnier. Keith did a Project which involved sort of a platform across the middle of a room. And it was sort of sculptural, and also with sound. So it was a kind of a very unusual installation for the Museum. And that was the installation, the first of Projects. In terms of other sound things that happened, I got Laurie Anderson to do something; she did a Project. Then there was an interesting little Project which was called Pier 18—Jenny Licht got several photographers to do things on Pier 18, a mixed bag of work, basically conceptual. And there was Mel Bochner, whose piece involved masking tape and measurements of the galleries. It was primarily a lot of non-orthodox painting. It was really involving the art that was really becoming part of the time. There was also a Project of Sam Gilliam, another African American, who lived in Washington, lives there still, probably. And his work was, he painted the canvases, and then he hung them in sort of a drapery way. And it was kind of a radical attitude towards painting, but it was really quite, quite wonderful, in its way, creating another sort of environment.

So before we go on to some other things, we go back to the summer of '71, where I do a show called Ways of Looking. That show started by my being assigned the space and being assigned to do something in it for the summer.

CL: From the collection.

KM: Primarily from the collection. But for some reason, I don't know why, in my peculiar way, I decided to think about children, and that children should have some fun in looking at the collection and learning from the collection in a way, but that it should not be compromising the adult experience. So one of the things I did was, I ran down to the Menil, and they had just done a children's show. And so I asked Jean De Menil if I could see him when I came down. Also, of course, I wanted to see the Rothko chapel and visit the de Menil Collection. I don't know if it was open then. So I asked Mr. de Menil if I could come down, and he said, "Well, come down, but you'll have to spend the night, and you can spend the night at our house." Oh, and he said, "Somebody will meet you." So I get out of the plane, and I'm there at the baggage thing expecting to look for a chauffeur, and there's Mr. de Menil [chuckling], meeting me. He was the first millionaire I had met who seemed so natural. The whole lightness of touch. And we get into the car, and we immediately drive to the chapel. And I see the chapel. And then we go to the house and we have lunch, and I think I rest. And then there was this dinner where people like Fred Hughes and all the de Menil disciples were at dinner: Frederika and, you know, they were all Dominique's disciples. And then Dominique appeared, at dinner, and then I go into my room, and then I'm not allowed out until 7 in the morning, because of the alarms [chuckling]. I have François's room. But anyway, after dinner, and I'm not feeling very well, whatever, Jean says, "We have to go see the Rothko chapel at night." So right after dinner, at 10 at night, he gets in the car and he drives me to the Rothko chapel.

CL: What do you see at night?

KM: It's very different. It's really quite a remarkable experience.

CL: I never even thought of going to see it at night.

KM: And then, the next morning, I think I took a taxi to the airport, or whatever. But I mean, that gracious memory is wonderful. They were really fabulous.

Anyway, the point is that I went to see this children's show and I was thinking about what you do in terms of an exhibition for children from the Museum. But given this place and all of its territories, I wasn't really allowed to play with photography or to play with prints and drawings to do what I had to do. I think maybe a little prints; I'm not sure. But the

way in which the fiefdoms worked, if you were with Painting and Sculpture you worked with painting and sculpture. So I set up to think about how to do this show. And I came up with, first of all, Ways of Looking as a title comes from Wallace Stevens, the poem "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird." And what I tried to do was to think of a few themes that had sort of come into my mind as I was in the Museum. And, for example, windows and Matisse, and Georgia O'Keeffe and a few other things were all windows, Duchamp. So that became one little group. Then I did a grouping of guitars, both in painting and sculpture, in the show. I did an abstraction grouping. The window pictures I put also in the window of the Museum, so you could see all of the windows as you were on the street. And there were several other themes. And it really was quite fresh and so on. But then at the time it opened, there was a strike. And so the show took about a month to open, a month later than when it was supposed to open. So that's really why a summer show ends up in November. But everybody was really happy that it was a collection show, because then the protest couldn't affect the work of younger artists, in a way, and it was an easier thing to do. Yes, and in the Ways of Looking thing, I did, of course, still lifes as a theme. So it was really broken up in a thematic way and not like, say, the way Helen Frank's Invitation to See book is. But it was really quite a nice, elegant exhibition and another way of using the collection.

CL: I remember it beautifully done.

KM: So we go from that, and again, I seem to have been the one with the burden of, "We have an empty space, fill it" person. I think that seemed to be a lot of the labor of my life, in a way. It's the bicentennial of the Museum. It's the bicentennial of the United States of America. I, who am not the American, am made to do the bicentennial show, in 1976, by edict of William Rubin. Anyway, it turned out to be a very beautiful exhibition. But these tasks were placed upon me at the last minute. But so, suddenly there was this empty space in the gallery on the ground floor. And so I asked Tony Smith to do something. So Tony Smith did this wonderful piece. He did one sculpture which filled the whole gallery, which was called 81 More. And it was this large triangle on which there were eighty-one pyramids. It wasn't made in steel, it was made in some other material, not exactly cardboard. But Tony Smith, as I've said, had never had very much exposure in New York as a sculptor, even though he was very much of an intellectual presence. So that really was a big moment for him and for the Museum to have done that, so he was

extremely happy and he got to be much better known. I don't remember when we got the piece in the Garden, but it may have come before. It came out of Primary Structures.

CL: Could be. Tony Smith was in Primary Structures?

KM: Yes. It was the first time he was publicly seen in New York.

CL: Bravo again, McShine.

KM: The first time he was publicly shown was by Sam Wagstaff at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford. People forget, Sam Wagstaff was also a curator and not just a collector and connoisseur of photography. He did a lot of very interesting things in Hartford when he was there.

CL: Well, he had a tradition in Hartford.

KM: He was the first one to get Tony to be shown. And then I had Tony in. Yes, the entrance to the [Jewish] Museum, which was sort of an open patio from Fifth Avenue before you went into the real building, was, on the right side I had Tony Smith, and on the left side I had Tony Caro. I mean, that's the accident, but it was two Tonys as you went in. Because, as I keep reminding people, the subtitle of that show was Contemporary American and British Sculpture.

And then we have Nancy Graves's Camels, which was also fun; another forgotten one.

CL: "72 we're talking here. Also Projects.

KM: And I think whatever we acquired of Nancy Graves was not exactly the right work. She really did these sculptures of animals, particularly of camels.

KM: All right, so, here we are, as we plod along in terms of the travels in The Museum of Modern Art of Mr. McShine, his meanderings and wanderings.

CL: Are you saying that because you're beginning with Richard Long?

KM: Brilliant. So, I'm now realizing that I did really do a lot of, perhaps we could call it prescient, Projects. And we have Richard Long, who walked everywhere in the world,

and photographed certain moments of that as, you would call them souvenirs but they also were the works of art. But he actually also did physical works, with stones in circles, and a very different approach to sculpture. It's on the ground. I mean, very different from Carl Andre—Long is much, much more grounded in nature. And he dealt also with maps, mapping out his walks and so on. I was getting a little bit of rumbling when we acquired Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, another artist who also did walks and did wonderful photographs based on the walks. And I got into a great deal of trouble with the photography department over these artists. And Szarkowski condemned me for these photographic works, and denounced these artists as not knowing anything about photography, et cetera, et cetera. And that has always been, in those days, a very unpleasant part of the Museum, the sort of war lords controlling their fiefdoms and Szarkowski being really rather conservative and not seeing and understanding where the art was going, especially with the use of photography, even though it was all around. I mean, even Sol LeWitt and Jan Dibbets, and so on and so on and so on.

CL: You were the first step in the present ecumenical attitudes.

KM: Well, yes, and I bore the burdens of it, unfortunately. But that seems to have been my life at The Museum of Modern Art, bearing burdens. But then, just to continue this little footnote for a moment, when we were reopening the Museum in the early 80s, and I was deemed the one to do an opening group show for the reopening, a survey of painting and sculpture, I was completely forbidden to use any photographic work. And at that point, work in photography, cross–pollinating works, was certainly a major, prevalent thing. And I was really dissatisfied with the show because it could not be a proper survey of the moment, because works that had photographic components, by decree of Szarkowski, I couldn't have in the show. So anyway, that's a little bit of a situation that was really very unpleasant. Rubin was very good in supporting the acquisition of these things, I have to note that. He did not find it amusing, the attack on his department.

CL: He wouldn't have.

KM: So then we go to another really weird artist who did these paintings, Emmanuel Pereire, a very eccentric Frenchman, and he did paintings of angels. He was very involved in angelology and knew a lot about angels and the whole mystical thing of angels, from Persian angels to Catholic angels. And so it was another funny aspect of Conceptual art,

but going into a kind of history, and then pretending he was a mystic in terms of painting these angels.

CL: He died young, didn't he?

KM: He died in the plague, unfortunately. But he came from a very aristocratic family, one of the grand Jewish-French families of banking. Their house was the British embassy in Paris, it was bought to be the British embassy; and there's a Place Pereire, and whatever else. It was one of those things, you know, people who came from rich families, and you walk past your great house and say, "I grew up there" [laughing].

CL: In the British embassy.

KM: A really grand house on the Faubourg Saint-Honore. The thing is, he was a true Parisien. He was really sort of Proustian. He hated noise. He had a soundproof bedroom and totally dark. And he lived in a very old building, too, on rue des Saints-Pères. On the left of the entrance is DeBauve et Gallais, the great chocolate makers from the eighteenth century, and they're still there for all of this time.

CL: That's true.

KM: We have to do these little meanderings to embellish a little.

CL: Okay. At the end of the street is that hotel that we always used to stay in, I can't remember

KM: The Danube. That was where one stayed because it was cheap and crazy; and that had its history, too. Because it was a house where the Polish ambassador to Paris lived, and next door to it or inside it is where the independence of the United States of America was signed. The Polish people were the neutrals and the British signed for the independence, with Franklin signing for the independence. So we were all in a little bit of grand history. And do you remember that we used to have this favorite luncheon at Café Bonaparte, on Rue Bonaparte, which was the long hot dogs with melted cheese on top of it, grated melted cheese, and a beer.

CL: Or a verre du vin.

KM: Then the next thing that I did was a show of sculpture from the collection, really contemporary sculpture. It was primarily very contemporary sculpture like Donald Judd,

and it was revelatory in terms of people not realizing what we own and what doesn't get shown. My contemporary sculpture show was 1979.

To energize several of the young curatorial assistants, I did sort of become the catalyst for them to do some of these Projects exhibitions. Because I didn't want to do them all, and Projects was designed for the young curators to get some experience on forming exhibitions. And the other thing to bring up is that Riva Castleman in Prints would not allow any of her curatorial assistants to do any Projects, because she felt that they all had too much else to do, and it would be working on these shows on her time and not on their own. And therefore, one of the things you will find is, that Projects through the years, until recently under Debbie Wye, that there are no print curatorial assistants. And then the same thing, basically, to a large extent, also with Photography. And the program was to really work on the interdisciplinary idea of these artists, and not be, you know, provincially by departments.

CL: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that the Department of Painting and Sculpture was about as liberal as the departments came, in terms of letting young people in the department do their own thing, if they could do it and accomplish their jobs at the same time.

KM: Yes, well, that was the thing. And they were not asked to write, the Projects were done on a very, very slender budget. So the rule was, no catalogue, no opening party or whatever, totally frugal. But we started to do little pamphlets, because the artists really asked to have some sort of record of having a show here. So then we would produce these sort of fold-out little pamphlets. Which didn't really, again, cost very much. Nowadays, I don't understand it, but something that was really very slender now turns into being a fortune, the way things are produced around here nowadays. It was just really, really simple. Okay, we had to do a pamphlet. The curator writes something, and you got it out, printed, easily.

CL: Well, as they say, that was then and this is now. What are we off to now?

KM: So now we arrive at Marcel Duchamp.

CL: Which is the big show.

KM: Which was a very big show. Which I did in association with Anne d'Harnoncourt, who was a curator in the Philadelphia Museum, who subsequently becomes the director and

has an illustrious career in the museum profession. An amazing person. But the thing is that it was a wonderful collaboration, particularly because she was quite friendly with Teeny Duchamp, Duchamp's widow. And so we all got along very, very well. And it was kind of wonderful because we would go to her apartment on West Tenth Street between Fifth and Sixth, and go through a lot of papers and a suitcase full of papers and finding a lot of things.

CL: That must have been really wonderful.

KM: And with Teeny sitting there, who's one of those warm, wonderful ladies, who, by the way, was American and from St. Louis, I think. She was from the Midwest somewhere. And as you know, she was first married to Pierre Matisse, Matisse's son.

CL: The subject of The Piano Lesson.

KM: Right. And she had a daughter called Jacqueline Monnier, who is a wonderful person. And maybe there were some other children; yes, she had with Matisse. But you can't get more than this Matisse aristocracy of Teeny after having been married to Matisse, for Jackie to grow up with Duchamp as her stepfather and Matisse as her grandfather, was really quite grand. And yet they were also the most wonderful human beings. They all had a great warmth and loved art to an excess.

CL: Well Jackie is an artist.

KM: But Teeny really loved it, and well, she loved Marcel, too, but she really understood it all. And they all played chess. She played chess with John Cage, who was one of their great friends. Well, these are parts of the benefits of good curating and history.

The Duchamp show did not open on time because there was a strike at the Museum, and I had to stay at home as an impartial person waiting on the show. But what I had to do was I had to fly to Milan, secretly, quietly, to beg Arturo Schwartz to extend his loans for the show.

CL: And you were successful in that endeavor?

KM: And I was successful in that. And then, of course, what happens is, he comes to see the show, and he's in the Hilton Hotel, and we're checking out, and his suitcases are near a

bench or chair, and so he started at the counter, and his luggage got stolen. So The Museum of Modern Art was blamed for the luggage getting stolen.

CL: Well, good thing it happened before rather than after.

KM: I had to go to—it was the first time I had done anything like this—I had to go—it was deemed that the only person who could do this was me—so I had to go to a vault in a bank in Switzerland for L.H.O.O.Q. and the perfume bottle, Belle Haleine. And so I traveled with the boxes of the two things. And then, we thought we had all of the papers settled. I had gone through all sorts of security. And we got to the plane, TWA in those days. I had bought a seat next to me in business class or first class or whatever it was at that point, to have these "ladies" sit next to me. And it was really about the beginning of high security times, believe it or not, 1973, and they insisted that they could not travel with me. And I had to, to my great horror, allow them to go to the hold.

CL: Oh god.

KM: Totally nervous, because especially with the perfume bottle, which now belongs to people in Abu Dhabi or Qatar or one of those places. So there I am, met by security people and all of that at Kennedy, and I have to stand there and see these boxes, small boxes, of course, come down this huge chute and hit the carousel. I mean, I've had many heart attacks in my life, but that was really one of them. And thank god, nothing happened to them. But it was frightening.

But it was kind of, you know, surprisingly, one of the first retrospectives; it was basically, the first retrospective of Duchamp.

CL: Oh, it was a groundbreaking show.

KM: And it was really quite extraordinary. And of course, Duchamp is the key to an alternative path in art.

CL: Well, that's so generally recognized now, but even late as this is, 1974, I think it was a relatively small group of people who understood the importance of Duchamp. This show kind of kicked that off.

A relevant point about it being here, is, you mentioned that it was late opening because the Museum had a huge strike.

KM: A huge strike, and that's really why it opens in December 28, right at Christmas. [36:15]

CL: And it wasn't a strike of menial workers. It was the curation, as Bill used to say. [laughing]

KM: And very unpleasant; a very unpleasant strike. But I really was very proud of one of my installations that I think was really quite informative, very well done.

CL: The show itself; yes.

KM: Yes. And Anne, of course, was fantastic, and we also had a lot of fun. Well, I wouldn't call it necessarily fun, but we enjoyed very much putting the book together, which still is a fairly good document. Since then, a lot of other stuff has happened on Duchamp. In a way, you almost can't keep up with it, other things have happened with Duchamp that have been really very good. And also, because of Anne and Teeny's affection for Anne, it opened Teeny to give her papers to Philadelphia and to the archive. So it really brought on the Duchamp capital of the world being the Philadelphia Museum. Unfortunately, we never have had that kind of center of anything, to a certain extent. Well, maybe with Picasso and Matisse we are, in a way.

CL: I would say we surely are, in terms of Picasso.

KM: We lost on the Arensberg collection because they wouldn't keep it by itself, so Alfred turned it down. So it was one of the collections we have lost.

CL: Well, I think we lost a number of important collections because we wouldn't break up the collection.

KM: The Museum didn't want individual collections separate from the whole basic parade, panoply, of works we have. They felt that the collections should all be integrated, and works should be—

CL: In their historical places, instead of a monument to—

KM: the collector. But Philadelphia, in those days, had a lot of room and a lot of empty galleries. And the director then embraced it very happily.

CL: So, the next show I've got marked here is Barry Flanagan. Is that something you wanted to talk about?

KM: It was the height of a lot of good British art. He was one of them. [Giulio] Paolini was another.

CL: Both Flanagan and Paolini were part of your contribution to Projects.

KM: Well I think at that time, because I was traipsing around, half on my own and half on couriering trips, I was very familiar with what was going on in Italy and up at the Jewish Museum I had done a show of Italian painting and sculpture. I had, somehow, my nose to the ground in terms of knowing what was going on in Italy and England, particularly. And they were both countries with a certain kind of energy in the early 70s. And Germany a bit, but we hadn't really put our toes too much into the water in terms of young Germans.

CL: That came a bit later.

KM: It came a bit later. I think psychologically we were still holding back on German art, to a certain extent. And then Rafael Ferrer—

CL: Again, we're still on Projects.

KM: Yes. I first had a piece of his which was great big cakes of ice in the Garden at the time of the Information show. But he also did paintings and drawings that had a certain Caribbean island flavor. And the point, really, with a lot of Projects was identifying where the energy was.

Translations by Jess. He was a San Francisco artist. I had him in my Collage show. He was not really very much known. And his paintings had this thick texture. Again, he was somebody with a lot of literary content. He lived with Robert Duncan, a major American poet, and he was basically, I wouldn't say a recluse, but he really was outside of the whole general art world, except he knew everything going on, and also Duncan was very involved in art in a general way. We acquired one from the show; I wish we had acquired more. I had a little sort of feeling he was a little bit like a West Coast Cornell in some way, which is part of why I think I got attracted to him and the whole involvement with poetry and literature. Which is part of one of the threads in my mind, that somehow attracts me to certain artists, their thin link to literature.

You know, I should get Grunewald into my story, because in my very first year at the Museum, and I hadn't really traveled that much in Europe, but it says something about

the relationship between the director in those days and peons, that in talking to me at some point about where I had been in Europe and so on, Mr. d'Harnoncourt said one of the things that you have to absolutely do as soon as you can is see the Grunewald altarpiece. You cannot be in the world of art without having seen the Grunewald altarpiece. And it took me a very long time, until probably the early '80s or something like that. I had been in the world of art for quite some time. And so I finally got there for a day, by myself, on a train from Basel. I don't remember what I was doing in Basel. It was not the Fair—in those days I wasn't allowed to go to art fairs, Dick Oldenburg never allowed you that. But I was doing something at the Kunstmuseum, probably begging for some loan. And so I went, and I started to cry, because I think I had never ever seen anything like it, and just to walk around it was just so amazing. And then now, more recently, it appears in a lot of Jasper Johns's paintings. I've been to the Grunewald now about three times, and it's really one of the great, great works of art that one has seen.

CL: I would agree.

KM: And of course, the first time I went, I really thought about Mr. d'Harnoncourt and, well, he is right; this is really something to have seen, to have experienced.

CL: Yes, yes, yes. But from the heights to something that may interest you, is the Ger van Elk, which is also right around this time. It's 1975.

KM: Yes, and the really interesting thing is how I sort of dug up these people who then have these long careers. Ger van Elk—I don't remember how I met him, I may have met him in Amsterdam, but he's an interesting biography, because his father worked in animation in Hollywood. So he grew up in Hollywood, and he went to art school where he was taught by somebody people do not remember but who was a really important lady called Sister Mary Corita, who was primarily a printmaker. But two of her students are Ger van Elk and Allen Ruppersberg.

CL: Wow.

KM: And she herself had a quiet career. And of course, one is fascinated by this nun in the art world. But anyway, so Ger was a very pixie-like-ish person. The work has a kind of levity to it, a little sort of naughtiness to it. A lot of it has to do with self-portraits in some way, and photographic work, in a way. And he did this series called Symmetry of Diplomacy which, as you know, when we have these basic posed photographs of heads

of state, each one sitting in a chair with a table in between them, and they're sort of dissolving the world, really, rather than solving it. So that's what he did a whole series of, retouched photographs. That's thirty years ago. At the time, he photographed me in his hotel room at the Stanhope as one of these sort of diplomats. And somebody was in the office today who said that this photograph of mine is the revenge of the colonies, because I look like the master, and Ger is cringing a little at the domination by the colonial person [laughing]. One of the many interpretations that it can have [laughing]. But it describes the kind of conversation of two men discussing the world at different ends of a sofa in hotel furniture.

CL: Well you are, in this picture, you are a commanding male presence. This is a person quite sure of his pouvoir, and Ger is not.

KM: And another way one can look it is, another allegory of artist and curator. Because it is part of it, too.

CL: Yes, one definitely could. It's a very funny interpretation. Poor artist. Sort of preening, self-confident curator. "I'm imposing my judgment on you."

KM: But the Bechers we did a Projects of. And then Constructivism in Poland.

CL: Was that not partially inspired by the Bicentennial?

KM: The Bicentennial, September '76. And Poland is January. It was a beautiful opening because it was a very snowy day. We stood there drinking little shots of vodka at the opening, and it was quite an interesting exhibition.

CL: Well, it was revelatory.

KM: Well. So then we have The Natural Paradise.

CL: Yes, glorious show.

KM: Which Mr. Rubin assigned to me. All of a sudden, in the summer of '75 or whatever, everybody woke up and decided that we had to do something for the bicentennial. And so it was put upon me to do something. Nobody wanted to do anything, and Bill Rubin said, 'You have to do something with the bicentennial, Kynaston; I'm not interested."

CL: Little did he know what you were going to do.

KM: And I, who didn't know very much about nineteenth-century American painting, I must say, I learned rather quickly.

CL: Did they have any idea of how far back you were going to go?

KM: No.

CL: And did you?

KM: No. They just said, "You have to do something for the Bicentennial." I had to really think through what to do. And also the point being, given what other people were doing, a lot of ideas were sort of shut out. One show that I had always thought of doing was a show to do with exiles coming to America, or the whole thing about immigration. And that, I think, was done in Washington, at the Hirshhorn, or something like that. But anyway, there were several shows around, and it was kind of like a chess game—you were blocked out in going in several directions. And then I went back to thinking about [Robert] Rosenblum's book on Romanticism and the idea of the sublime, and thinking about the Abstract Expressionists, which were never really carefully thought of as the sublime. And then moving from that to thinking about nineteenth-century concepts of the sublime, like the Hudson River Valley school.

CL: It was a beautiful show. Did you enjoy doing it?

KM: Yes. I hung out at Dartmouth and did the research at Dartmouth. And John Wilmerding helped me. The one thing I have to admit, is, I was never too shy to get advice. I was never too proud to ask people things I didn't know. And then the other person who helped me was Barbara Novak. I sat with her for a few little meetings, because she liked me. There was a big collection in The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and she knows that collection very, very well.

CL: Well it's her field, isn't it?

KM: I went to the nineteenth-century people to get some things. And then the overreaching arch was somehow influenced by Mr. Rosenblum. And that's how I ended up with one of the most beautiful rooms ever in art history in this Museum: I got the white Clyfford Still, the white Barney Newman, a white Pollock. . . and I think a Rothko appears at that point.

CL: It's hard to find a white Rothko.

KM: It wasn't white, but it was okay.

CL: Well, it was a delightful show. Natural Paradise and The Museum as Muse allowed this institution to show the kinds of pictures that they never show.

KM: Rosenblum made me go towards thinking of taking a different take on Abstract Expressionism and the romanticism of it and what is American about it. It was a progression through American painting from the early nineteenth-century to the grand generation of Clyfford Still, Newman, and Pollock, which were all of the white paintings, and moving toward the idea of the sublime, and going from paintings like Frederic Church's Niagara Falls, several of them, and New England painting from Rhode Island and Boston, and the paintings of the Hudson River Valley School. The installation was really rather good. I got various colors from the revival of Williamsburg, which worked on the colors of nineteenth-century walls of houses. So the show went through Martin Johnson Heade and Frederic Church and Niagara Falls, and paintings from the royal collection in Sweden, a Church from the royal collection in Sweden, which was probably taken from England, because Church had a big show in England when he took the Niagara Falls to Queen Victoria to look at at Windsor. And Tennyson was also there when this painting was shown to her. And then it was on view in London as a one-painting show. People paid to come and see it. And then, of course, the Bierstadts were also in that sort of history mode of seeing the landscapes that you couldn't see, so the Bierstadts also went to England and traveled.

CL: Did anybody here give you a hard time because you went so nineteenth-century? Or because it was the bicentennial, it was okay?

KM: Yes. But the thing is that also, the queen had a lady in waiting who bought one of the Churches. She was a duchess, the Duchess of Sutherland, I think, in Scotland. So there was this great big vertical Church, which I of course found in Scotland in a basement, and had to agree first to restore it. And of course it was wonderful and hadn't been seen since the Duchess of Sutherland bought it a hundred years ago or more, at that point.

CL: Did our conservators restore it?

KM: Yes. It was not so bad. But anyway, the whole show really was wonderful and historical and so on, but it was also giving this grand background as to what happens to American Abstract Expressionism, and where it came from, and the wonderful white Pollock, and

the wonderful white Newman, and the wonderful white Clyfford Still, and that was sort of where the show ended, with these basically white paintings of Abstract Expressionism.

CL: That too was a player in kind of bringing an awareness of the historical background of abstract expressionism.

KM: The thing is now you don't think anybody got these lessons. You begin to feel that nobody learned anything from museums and the shows they have done.

CL: I think it played a dramatic part.

KM: Not only mine personally, but I mean, you wonder what you do this work for: what people see, what they remember, what did they come to a museum for.

CL: Well, I think it enters consciousness.

KM: Robert Rauschenberg.

CL: 1977, spring of 1977.

KM: It's partially started by Walter Hopps. We heard of Walter doing a Rauschenberg show, and we thought we should get on the bandwagon. And Mr. Rubin kind of pushed it to happen. So then I became kind of the co-curator and worked on the selection with Walter, and we had the show here. It was a lot of fun. And at the end of the opening, several of us got on a boat in New York harbor, organized by Leo Castelli and Rauschenberg. And I think somewhere there are still photographs of me when I boarded the boat, and photographs of me when I'm getting off the boat, and I think there is a very distinct difference.

CL: Well, you had a good time.

KM: It was really one of those absolutely wonderful parties, post-opening parties, that ever existed. It was just everybody having a lot of fun.

CL: Well, I like the whole idea of being on a boat.

KM: I know. I think it was Rauschenberg's idea. Which, you know, when you think about his work and you look at his work, it involves water in a lot of ways, and a lot of vessels of water are involved.

CL: I think he liked to bend tradition.

KM: That was part of it, too.

CL: I remember when finally the Bed came to us and there was that sort of ceremony upstairs in the Trustee's Room. And Rauschenberg asking, "Where's Kynaston?" He wanted you in the photographs.

KM: Well, bless his heart. I loved him too much to—

CL: That's good enough.

KM: Many a nice drinking night at his loft on Lafayette Street. He had this wonderful house on Lafayette Street which was also his studio. It was like an early orphanage, because it has a chapel, which is where he stored a lot of the work. But at that time, I think the Museum was looking too much at Jasper Johns and not really enough at Rauschenberg.

CL: Well, that was true almost throughout the career, wasn't it?

KM: Kirk made an effort, but we don't have silkscreen painting as much. I worked on it for years and years and years, but there was a lot of stubbornness; I don't know why.

CL: Well, I think there was always a kind of belief that Rauschenberg didn't do all of his own work, and that was part of it.

KM: Because he was silkscreening?

CL: Yes.

KM: But Warhol was silkscreening.

CL: I know. I know. But I do think it was part of that reaction.

KM: Well I'm surprised to hear that. I would have thought this place knew a little bit about silkscreening.

CL: Well it does. But I still think there was an attitude.

KM: I just mention Max Neuhaus because that was another peculiar Project, digging a hole in the Garden underneath the marble and putting in a sound piece. As you walked in the

Garden you heard this little sound. For a simple work like that, it cost a lot of money, let me tell you. Borofsky was kind of lively, painting floor to ceiling.

CL: That's '78, another Project?

KM: Yes. All of these Projects opening at the same time. Isn't it interesting? [Fred] Sandback, [Anne and Patrick] Poirier, Laurie Anderson, Hamish Fulton. It was Projects Week! And then at the same time, we have The Architecture of Lutyens, Sir Edward Landseer Lutyens.

CL: Well, it's a commentary on the exhibition program.

KM: Yeah, I think it's kind of, quite interesting.

CL: Eclectic, let's say.

KM: Then there's Jackie Winsor in '79.

CL: Which you did?

KM: Yes. I think the thing of Jackie, she had a good career at Paula Cooper and I probably looked at the work there quite a bit. And she had those cubes, some of which were exploded. I liked the work that looked like nothing you had ever seen before kind of thing, too.

CL: Well she was pretty good at making stuff that looked that way.

Then we have Larry Rivers and Terry Southern, and David Hockney, The Blue Guitar. And I'm fascinated that the Museum did an Anne Ryan show, her collages. She too was in my American Collages show. Charles Simonds and Mary Miss were a Projects thing.

KM: [laughing] Well, in my perspective, Bill Rubin and Carolyn Lanchner produced an extraordinary exhibition of Picasso, in which he authoritatively emptied the entire museum—it was a real production—and filled the entire place with Picassos.

CL: Nothing but. Dominique Bozo was really the co-director with Bill, for that show.

KM: And there is a formidable catalogue, too.

CL: With no essay whatsoever.

KM: No essay except a chronology.

CL: It was art history in pictures, according to Bill.

KM: But it was an extraordinary experience that you cannot forget, of having to walk through this. I mean, it was quite grand, compared to even what happens at the Musee Picasso in Paris, which doesn't have certain works of art, and is a very difficult space, being a hotel particuliere.

CL: The entire Museum was devoted to it, so it was like the Picasso museum of all time. It was a major hit, not just in the art world. Do you remember, there were people standing on the steps next to the Museum hawking catalogues?

KM: Yes, they bought the catalogues and they were selling them on the street, for the black market. I think they were stolen from the publisher's warehouse.

There's one aspect of it that I really liked very much, which I'm very fond of, which was Picasso's involvement with theater. It had the great backdrop, and a lot of the drawings connected to Diaghilev, and because of his lady friend.

CL: His first wife, Olga.

KM: Olga, yeah. And so he got very involved in the dance and theater, and it's a whole body of work of Picasso's that's kind of wonderful. That's the one show that I feel has never happened at the Museum that I would have liked to have done, is Picasso and the theater. It's never really been done thoroughly here in this country.

CL: Well, there's still time.

KM: And it showed you that he was a monstre sacré, in terms of his energy. But the Picasso was sort of the beginning of the renovation of the Museum.

CL: Yes, absolutely.

KM: And then I came after it with the Cornell show. Which was, again, another beautiful installation. I went through all of the phases of the Cornell boxes and tried to create a magical, romantic installation for his work. And again, it's sort of one of those things about people thinking they know an artist's work, and they haven't really seen as much of it as they should. Cornell's name was very much a New York name, but the show was

really quite revealing to people—the range of the boxes and the subjects, and how grand the poetry was.

CL: And he's an artist that you had been interested in from the very beginning.

KM: Yes, since I wrote my little thing in, as we said earlier about, in Assemblage. And quite surprising that he had never really had a big show at any museum. And not really known, well, in surrealism shows he appears, but his main thing was always with the Julien Levy gallery, which I didn't know, which was before my time.

CL: That's true. I don't know to what degree he was known in Europe.

KM: Not very much. And it being the Cornell show and its fragility and all of its problems, especially with all of the glass of the boxes, there was a lot of insistence that we travel and help do the installations. Which meant we had longer periods of time in various places than one would usually have.

CL: Now what have we got for you after Cornell? You went into a somewhat reclusive period. Ah, the International Survey. Well, that took some time. And that was the opening show of the new Museum building.

KM: On which I have already remarked in the sense that I was not extremely happy with the exhibition because I was limited with not being able to use photographic elements or work that involved photography, and it was a moment when it was really part of the whole scene. But it was also the moment of the German generation arriving, and Italians, [Francesco] Clemente and so on. So it was quite lively, with David Salle—

CL: You had some French boys in there, too.

KM: Yes. And [Jean-Michel] Basquiat. And a few South Americans. So, as I said of cocktail parties, you have a few people whom you don't really want to have, but you have to by obligation, and then you have people that you really like, and then you have some that are just sort of associates that you have to also tolerate. And that is the mix in a big sort of survey show or group show that you put together. And it's coherent and also not cohesive. People expect too much out of group shows. And the favorite game is always guessing who has been omitted, and that is just like in upper-class cocktail parties, people look around to see who is there and who is not there; who is in black dresses and

who is not. And wanting to make sure that it's the crème de la crème, but sometimes the crème is a little curdled.

CL: Well, the crème was still rising to the top. It wasn't quite clear who what was going to land there.

KM: And how quickly it might curdle.

CL: Yes. All of those things. But you were pretty open to that general trend.

KM: I was very open, and I had a few people who were not well-known names of this moment, but I thought of it as an open-house kind of situation, within limits.

CL: Which is not inappropriate for the opening exhibition of the new Museum.

KM: And it was a little bit misunderstood, of course, as those things are, but that's the way it is.

CL: "Primitivism" is the next one that I have circled.

KM: Yes, but that was a big, crucial show, with Bill Rubin, and he brought in Kirk Varnedoe, and that was his sort of first introduction of Kirk Varnedoe into being around the Painting and Sculpture Department. Kirk did a lot of the work on the catalogue.

CL: He did quite a number of essays in that. His own major debut, of course, was the Vienna show, which, I guess, was later.

KM: Yes. It was a fascinating show and it brought together a lot of African art, tribal art of Africa and the south seas, especially in relation to what Picasso had seen and the artists of the early 20th century, what they had seen in Paris.

CL: And it was, I think, also the show that instated the phrase "tribal art" as the correct one, as opposed to "primitivism," which caused something of a stir.

KM: Well, it was a long, long, exchange of letters in Artforum between Bill Rubin and Tom McEvilley. And this also came out of a thesis of Robert Goldwater, who first had written a book on the relationships of African art and modern art, and who saw what, which had fascinated me when it first came out. And it is by coincidence that he was my major professor at the Institute of Fine Arts. So we had had many conversations about that,

because at that time, early on, I was also very interested in, for obvious reasons, in African art and what he was showing across the street.

CL: The official name was the Museum of Primitive Art. That was before that became a taboo expression.

KM: So Goldwater on occasion had us to his townhouse, and I was introduced to his wife, who seemed to be this strange, difficult lady.

CL: She was. [laughing]

KM: We knew her as Madame Goldwater. She was later on known as Louise Bourgeois. And the point is also that, given her biography, one of the things that I think is not really said enough is that it's only after Goldwater died that she really flourished. Nobody really knew how good an artist she was when Goldwater was around. He absolutely made her into this domestic wife. And the other thing is that she probably was very involved in this whole concept of primitivism, and which comes up in some of her early work, including the big phalluses, really basically primitive, that she has under her arm in the famous [Robert] Mapplethorpe photograph; there's something fetishistic about it and tribal about it [chuckling].

CL: Which may extend to the western tribes as well as the African.

KM: Exactly. But you know, as time went on, one sort of regretted that when one first met her, she was put into this role of just pouring tea and serving sandwiches.

CL: I can't imagine it. Well, she was a very complex person.

KM: Well, there was also with all of this, she was also quite opinionated. She wasn't completely a meek and mild wife. She was a force of her own.

Almost the first big show of a contemporary artist after the reopening of the Museum was Richard Serra. There was sort of a moratorium on shows of contemporary artists because of not wanting to give people specific dates, given the reopening of the Museum. And so shows of living artists were being postponed, and some decided not to wait, like Twombly. Twombly went off and had a show at the Whitney, and Serra was willing to wait. And he had quite a beautiful exhibition.

CL: Did Roz Krauss do that?

KM: Yes, and Laura Rosenstock was the curatorial assistant on it.

CL: And Douglas Crimp wrote for it.

KM: And it was a big, heavy exhibition, as we would say. And then, of course, later on, in the 2000s, we have another big Serra exhibition.

CL: Well, I'm sure we'll come to that.

KM: Here comes Berlinart.

CL: 1987.

KM: Yes.

CL: Do you know something about that show, Kynaston?

KM: [laughing] Well, again, you know, McShine, with his complete madness, jumps into things that he doesn't know very much about, and manages to work it through. But I don't know what prompted me into thinking—maybe visiting Germany a couple of times and thinking that there was a certain amount of art that happened just at the time of the Wall going up. And 1987, was when I did the show. But there was a kind of energy that was taking place in Berlin. And Berlin had become, as everybody knows, a sort of international city, even though it was all divided. Some people had come over the wall from the East, like [Georg] Baselitz and [Gerhard] Richter. And if you lived in Berlin, you got stipends as artists, and you also didn't get drafted. So Berlin had become the magnet for young Germans from around Germany, especially those wanting to be artists. So there was a young generation, as well as the earlier group, like Baselitz and so on, being very aware of the separation of Germany, and that was incorporated in their work.

CL: But tell me, Kynaston, this 1987 Berlinart, didn't that come sort of midway in the period in which German art was really coming to the fore?

KM: Yes.

CL: I mean, people like Baselitz, you could see, for instance, in Vienna, several years previously, but they weren't known here. All of a sudden, it was coming to American attention.

KM: Yes, because America had also been sort of resisting Germany since the war. Not much happened in terms of museums and German art. Very few exhibitions took place. And this is one take, I just decided to focus on the city, really, rather than a sort of sweeping look at West Germany.

CL: Well, it was prescient.

KM: There were some really good essays in the catalogue about Germany between the wars. And then there were things that happened in Berlin because of its sort of free-state scene, like Beuys doing performances there, and there was a whole group of Austrians who went to Berlin and they even had their bar, the Paris Bar. [Martin] Kippenberger, for example, was a major figure in Berlin. He was a man about town—he was being an artist and doing a lot of books, and he was running one of the major night clubs. He even got very badly mugged. And he represented the Berlin scene in a big way, but there were some others, like Luciano Castelli, and Salome, and Rainer Fetting. There was a whole group of them who were sort of almost like Fauves, of the late 70s, 80s, and also going back to the sort of violent expressionist look of things. And expressing a lot of what was going on in the city, in the night and the night life. And there were quite a few others.

CL: Yes, this was all Berlin art that was in the show.

KM: It really hit a moment. The good thing was my having to do the research and go to the studios in Berlin, and go to the museums. It gave me a wonderful opportunity of hanging out in Berlin for quite a while, and pulling it together. And I think it was one of those shows where, you wouldn't think it, but it was just a very warm research moment. One was very happily and warmly received. Nobody had paid a lot of attention to a lot of these artists, like [Markus] Lüpertz and several of the others. And they were really quite happy to have the attention and this show being put together. And it really was a show about the flavor of a city, and a city that had gone through everything.

CL: A city in the process of a resurrection and rebuilding in every sense of the word.

KM: After devastation. When I went there traveling, even at that point, it was still quite a lot of rubble. It's been a bit less now.

CL: Well I remember if you went into East Berlin, it looked like the bombings had taken place yesterday.

KM: Well, some of the West, too.

CL: It's probably the most vibrant city in Europe.

KM: A very sexy city. It has had its own sort of aura around it of intelligence and decadence.

CL: Yes, and a little sinister.

KM: Even nights in the early 80s in Berlin seemed very sinister. It was really very, very dark. Going in a taxi really felt quite strange. The night life, going to these restaurants, very simple places like Kreutzberger's, you really were going into another era. It really seemed like the '20s in the back rooms. It was all still very much like that. The artists kept that going, too.

CL: And where do we go from here? I don't seem to have much circled until Anselm Kiefer.

KM: Oh, and talking about the Germans. [laughing] I seem to have moved from all of Berlin to Kiefer—he did do a few things in Berlin, but he was very much not of Berlin. And an exhibition was organized by San Francisco on Kiefer's work.

CL: Was this Kiefer show organized in San Francisco?

KM: It was Mark Rosenthal, and then it came here. I did my best with it and installed it. I mean, I liked his work a certain amount of the time, no question about it.

CL: There is a very theatrical side to it.

KM: So then, you know, then I came to do the Warhol show.

CL: 1989.

KM: Yes, and the thing is that Andy died in, I think, '87, February of '87. And it was something I had always wanted to do. And I ran to Bill Rubin and I said, "Should we try to get to do the retrospective, especially now that he has died." I said, "I'm very close to the estate and Fred Hughes and so on, and I think if I negotiate, we could probably get the show." And there were other people who were after doing the exhibition. So I got to do this show, which was kind of marvelous,

CL: It was.

KM: And again, took a lot of work. Going through the whole estate, which ended up with my being advisor to the Warhol Foundation. But of course, with a show like that, there again, you have somebody whose work hadn't been looked at in a certain way. And I was given access to everything in a wonderful way. But now as we look at it, in the last twenty years, there's so much other work that has revealed itself, like the last group of paintings, which all were large scale. You know, the Rorschach tests and the piss paintings, which, I could only do, let's say, one or two. I mean, you couldn't do the late paintings of the Last Supper and so on, there just wasn't room to do a lot in terms of the grand-scale work, because one had to go from the very beginning. And it was a true retrospective, but with Warhol, who worked in series, it was difficult to bring out that point to a large extent. Like with flowers, you would want a whole wonderful room of flowers, and so on. But we had the soups. And again, I'm very proud of the book. And I ended up managing to have the show have a pretty good rhythm, both upstairs and downstairs. I think, of course, I could have been given more space—there was a little stinginess about giving contemporary artists the space they need. It has gotten a lot better. Not having the faith that every artist needs space, even though they were there working on a large-scale basis.

CL: Late as this was, there was still—

KM: Antipathy to Warhol.

CL: Considerable feeling that this wasn't really art.

KM: Well, it was very difficult to fundraise, unfortunately. None of the corporations would touch it.

CL: There was a distinctly snobby attitude about Warhol.

KM: No corporate person would support it, not even Campbell's soup. We tried even them, to be corny about it, and nobody would do it. There was this resistance to Warhol on some complicated levels. Even museums—when one was doing the show, one realized that there were very few museums in the United States that had Warhols, that he had not been collected. I mean, it was like, the Art Institute of Chicago, maybe Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York—the Whitney and the Modern.

CL: There was this certain amount of bravery in doing it, because I think there was a good chunk of that sentiment within this institution, and a real feeling that this place should not put its imprimatur on Warhol.

KM: Well, I think they're very glad they did, now. Now they're quite thrilled.

CL: of course, they're very glad they did, but at the time, you had to buck all of that stuff.

KM: And there again is a whole thing about Pop art being more accepted and respected in Europe rather than here, at the beginning. The Museum Ludwig in Cologne had absolutely great Warhols. There was also the champion in America, the de Menils and their collection, and the Dia Foundation.

CL: I have got circled, which means that you told me to do so, Scott Burton on Brancusi.

KM: It was the first Artist's Choice show, a program that Kirk initiated, and Scott—who was first involved in performance, then involved in furniture—by a show of the Brancusi pedestals was an artist really making a contribution to art history, really making people consider carefully the pedestals in relation to the sculptures that Brancusi put on them. It was sort of a little intellectual exercise. And Scott, who we have quite a considerable amount of work of, left his estate to the Museum, and we still benefit from his estate, in terms of the works that are still to be produced, or have been produced. His art looks like furniture but isn't.

CL: I have Henri Matisse.

KM: The Matisse show was one of the landmarks, which John Elderfield did. And it was, again, a show that almost took over the whole Museum. And it was marvelous to see the Swimming Pool, which we hadn't had out for years and years, which is a treasure of the Museum that is hardly ever shown. And one day we hope it will be out more than it is. But it was quite a glorious show with all of the luxe and volupte one expects from a Matisse exhibition.

CL: And next, Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism.

KM: Well, da, da.

CL: Yes? [laughing] That's your comment on it, da, da? Okay.

KM: Well, it's an exhibition that was done in collaboration with Walter Hopps and probably the De Menil Collection in Houston. And it was just on one period of Max Ernst, which was, as the title implies, his Dada and Surrealist time. And it continued one of the strains of the Museum programs, which is exploring Dada and Surrealism in different ways. I was just asked to take care of it in New York. Taking care of shows on occasion is a lot of work without the reward of having the love and affection of the artists you're going to show. And with this show, I really was very detached. Even though I like Ernst collages, but it was very much a show of somebody else, and I never got a grasp of it, and so I just installed it and didn't have a particular love for it in a certain way. But it is certainly, also, the kind of exhibition that on occasion the Museum should do. And then, ironically, at the same time there was a show of Dada and Surrealism from the collection, and a show of John Heartfield, so those seem to have been almost a Surrealist convention in the Museum at that point. Which is not bad, when shows somehow, when the Museum sort of programs several things at the same time.

KM: And then, the Drawings of Joseph Beuys show, a really wonderful show in terms of our dealing with European ideas and European artists. Very important.

CL: And he was not an artist one had seen a lot in this place, even though by this time, he certainly had a major reputation.

KM: Just a footnote, we did a Robert Ryman show in 1993. And I think it sort of should be gratifying for the Museum that somebody who was once a guard here is canonized by having a big retrospective. There are not too many who have had that. And his work being really not so simple and a little bit difficult and intellectual, it was really heartwarming to see that the Museum did an exhibition of his work. And in 1994, we did a tribute to Merce Cunningham. Which is, you know, this Museum did have a kind of breadth. And then we had a Cy Twombly show, and he gave us his Four Seasons, which is a marvelous, beautiful, lyrical set of four paintings. And at some point it was hung across from the Kandinsky Four Seasons, and it was really quite a nice dialogue and conversational piece.

We can muse, ponder, meditate. You know, the Museum program is really quite fascinating. I think a lot of it happened by chance, but also happens by varied interests of various curators. And when you look down this list, it's kind of a lot of fun. Mondrian, Annette Messager, Drawings, Carrie Mae Weems—

CL: I'm sort of struck by the simultaneous appearance of Refining the Sports Car: Jaguar's E Type and Picasso and Portraiture. They are running simultaneously in 1996, in spring through summer.

KM: Bill Rubin did the portraiture show. Which, in a way, was an unusual thing for this Museum, which always stayed away from doing portrait exhibitions, for one reason or another. So it was surprising that Bill chose to do that, in terms of portraiture and Picasso.

Then I notice photographs From the Grace Mayer Collection, and we should just make a little remark about Grace having been here for many, many years. She first started off as the assistant to Edward Steichen, and then was really one of the mainstays of the Photography Department for many, many years. She also left a certain amount of good photography material to the Photography Department. But she was a very tiny lady, very birdlike, but basically friendly.

We also had another one, who was not completely a grand dame, called Frances Keach. She worked in the Publications Department night and day. She almost felt that she lived in the Museum. And I remember one funny thing she said when the Museum staff was on strike, she said, "I don't know what they're striking about; they can buy half a pound of hamburger meat and a tin of DelMonte peas, and they have two meals for two days."

CL: Well, that may be what Frances did.

KM: But one of the things about Frances was that she had a large collection of Marilyn Monroe paintings and memorabilia. And I think we inherited a couple of her Marilyn Monroe paintings. But it was sort of interesting, this quiet spinster, iron willed, working at the Museum, and somehow that her secret love was Marilyn Monroe was really quite surprising. I mean, it's a part of the Museum history that there were these wonderful women working there. And the whole entertainment of eccentricity, which I think was a very, very big fiber in the Museum, which, of course, I think, led to why the museum has the collection it has. Because these people were not completely academic. They're also very broad in their culture and intelligence and education. Not "broad in their intelligence," that's not a good phrase; but they were big liberal-arts types.

CL: They were very curious about modernity, to use a word. It was a new thing when they were all young.

KM: And that included the trustees, like Nelson Rockefeller and Philip Johnson.

CL: Yes.

KM: And even David. But I think that it gave a real richness. I mean, from René d'Harnoncourt to Frank O'Hara to everybody, there was this real aggregate, and it certainly made it not at all corporate.

CL: Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life.

KM: Margit Rowell did that show. It didn't get as much attention as it should, as it needed.

CL: It's not a sexy title. The next I have circled is the Dannheisser.

KM: Elaine was a wonderful lady around town. She went around to galleries all the time and acquired a lot of very good art of the '80s and '90s. And it had a certain boldness and bravery towards collecting and collecting contemporaries. And she really got good things, both in terms of younger Europeans, and Robert Gober, and [Bruce] Nauman, and well, a lot of other people.

CL: There were things that we didn't have or didn't have enough of.

KM: They were things we didn't have in terms of contemporary art, and it really filled in the gaps in a way. Matthew Barney, particularly artists who were not being in a completely traditional mode. Christopher Wool, she had a really very wonderful one that we got. And she was a no-nonsense type. It's a collection that had a lot of things that we needed to have, and it was great that she did that. I was very friendly with Elaine, and probably she was, again, an eccentric lady, and a New Yorker. And it was a very, very daring collection. She had a storeroom on Duane Street, which was a sort of an open storage that people could go and visit. She was a wonderful character. She had CNN on television all day in her house, and she played bridge almost every day at a bridge club somewhere on 57th Street, I think. There was a level of unsophistication in her, but at the same time, she was really one of the great eyes of the time.

CL: The Museum as Muse.

KM: Oh dear. We're not amused.

CL: That was a very original show, as its title indicates. As its impresario, do you want to say something about it? [chuckling]

KM: Yes, because in my own peculiar, humanistic way, I became, since I worked in a museum, quite fascinated with the whole history of museums, and the whole aspect of collecting. And that, of course, took many thoughts.

CL: The title, you had in mind all that time, I think.

KM: Yes. And then I realized that there was one thread in some of the things I did, like Cornell and Duchamp even, that one of the threads was their collecting instincts in what they did. And then I was very aware of artists' being influenced, say, by The Museum of Modern Art, and being in New York, realizing how much contemporary artists looked to the Modern for inspiration and education, which is part of the reason that I think New York became such a rich creative center.

CL: The show was already historically grounded though, too. I mean, you had [Charles Wilson] Peale.

KM: The great painting of him unveiling his museum.

CL: That's early nineteenth century, and you had right up to the present in that show, many artists that were completely contemporary.

KM: And also including some photography of, like, Thomas Struth, his photographs of people in museums looking at works, and setting up a kind of a dialogue between our looking at people looking at work. And some installations. I think there was a great breadth of material in it.

CL: The show was extraordinary in its range.

KM: And there was a lot of range. It was a show I enjoyed a lot in doing. And it took a lot of research. It was quite a dialogue. It was quite fascinating to look at everything in it. There was even Jeff Wall, with a huge photograph of conservators working on a large panorama in Switzerland. It's a marvelous photograph, too. I think the show was also really also like a conversation of the place of the viewer and the place of the artist and the place of the museum, all in the world of the moment, or of the last many years.

CL: I think that's a very apt way to put it, a conversation. It was an intriguing show that made you think of how it could be enlarged, almost endlessly, in a certain sense. It was very crowded, but that's the way it should have been.

KM: There was Broodthaers, of course. One is always aware of artists' use of museums, satisfying their curiosity in terms of what other artists did, but especially here at The Museum of Modern Art. A lot of the art of New York and America really comes from this very rich exhibition program that the Museum has always had, as well as what we collected. And slowly I also began to realize that artists used museums, and museum gardens, particularly, also, as their catalyst.

CL: Stimuli.

KM: Yes. And for obvious reasons, [I was thinking about] not only their own ambitions but also really thinking about the museum in various ways and what it was as an institution, what it is in its history, and how it relates to them.

CL: It really struck me in terms of the historical range of it, and I think that this show was something that you were thinking about for a really long time. This was done in 1999, and I think you'd been thinking about it for at least a decade before.

KM: I think probably, in a way, in terms of my interest and involvement with museums. And yes, I think it was just sort of one of those threads of thought, because I had always been thinking about museums and its place in museology, and artists' place in museology. And I think one of the things that really probably also started it is realizing how many New York artists [have a] love/hate relationship to the museum, and also what they got from the museum, from our range of exhibitions. People like Picasso and Matisse really heightened the artistic talents of quite a lot of artists. And I vaguely remember somebody like Al Held being absolutely thrilled by a show of Matisse's collages, late works. And that was really a big hit in New York for people like Al Held or Joan Mitchell and several others.

CL: Well, the current show of Abstract Expressionism, one could claim, came to be as a result of those artists having seen people like Picasso and Matisse and the generations before.

KM: Also the artists who came here in exile should not be discounted.

CL: No, although I think the museum was their initial encounter with it. And then the other thing, that [Museum as Muse] goes from, my memory is, Charles Wilson Peale to—

KM: Yes, the nineteenth century. I notice that I acknowledged Carolyn Lanchner for her counsel and extraordinary insights.

CL: Oh, I'm glad.

KM: So that shows. But I got a lot of information from a lot of people.

CL: I mean, you have about a century and a half of artists in there; more, a century and three quarters. Two centuries.

KM: Yes. This is an important book. It starts off with early-nineteenth-century photographs: the fact that objects didn't move allowed photographers to use them as some of their first subject matter. And then you have various photographs of people in museums. Here's a photograph of Bernard Berenson in one of the villas in Rome, and Cartier-Bresson. And then, the Peale, which is 1822, which is called The Artist in His Museum, where he's standing, revealing his vitrines of stuffed birds and animals, and cabinets, and large bones, and on a table there is his brushes and palette. And he is revealing, as he says, the beauties of nature and art and the rise and progress of the museum. Peale was almost the first American museum.

CL: Peale's own private museum.

KM: Yes. And then of course, there's a Duchamp valise, which, of course, is very important, and Joseph Cornell. And we also had Claus Oldenburg's mouse museum, which again, has hardly ever been seen. It was just kind of revelatory to a lot of people because they hadn't seen it, which is this wonderful thing of little objects that all relate to things he has made, it's in a museum in Vienna but hardly shown. I had different people write about things. But I mean I think it sort of showed this range of thought.

CL: The collecting impulse in its various forms, over, essentially, two centuries.

KM: But it's also very much about artists who also go towards the cabinet of curiosities, like Cornell. And the wonderful photographs here by Christopher Williams, of the glass flowers in Harvard; and Richard Hamilton's Guggenheim; photographs by Thomas Struth, in which he photographs spectators in front of masterpieces in great museums,

there's a whole sort of relationship of us as a viewer viewing people viewing painting. And Christo's projects to wrap the museum, which never happened. A lot of Alan McCollum and Hans Haacke. You know, as I used to say, group shows are cocktail parties, but this is really not a cocktail party. This is more like a long table banquet. There's a photograph of Merce and Garry Winogrand and Rauschenberg at the Museum. Then, dancing at the Museum anniversary party. And Komar and Melamid. And then there's an anthology of writings by artists about museums, which is kind of fascinating reading, like Judd and Beuys and Andrea [Fraser] and women in revolt—

CL: The Guerrilla Girls?

KM: It's a lot of fun, this book, I must say. [laughing]

CL: Yes.

KM: Okay. I think I should mention the High and Low exhibition, which Kirk Varnedoe directed. It was quite an impressive exhibition, with a wonderful book, dealing with the relationship of many artists to what we would call "low" material, like comic books, comics, and so on, moving from the early twentieth century, showing the relationship between what artists did and their original source materials. And of course that means a lot of pop art and the source materials for pop art.

CL: Excuse me if I interject here, but aside from Vienna, which Kirk did when he was not on staff, I think High and Low was his first major show at the Modern. And it was on two floors. It was enormous.

KM: Right. And it got very, very criticized by the press. It was very devastating, in a way, the negative criticism. Probably it was too early in its time.

CL: Well, I think a measure of it also had to do about the way it was presented, wasn't it? There was a lot of feeling that the perspective was too academic and not enough museum-oriented.

KM: Well, there was a lot of fuss, and I think that, unfortunately, it made Kirk want to stay away from group exhibitions, not wanting to deal with them. For the rest of his career, really, he only did one-man exhibitions. It sort of had a little cloud over Painting and Sculpture, and creating a little bit of a distance between trying to do thematic shows. I

think we're over that now. But I think it was a show with a lot of great material, and very instructive, and one thread of influences on 20th century art.

CL: Perhaps we should also mention that it was done with Adam Gopnik.

KM: Yes, who had studied with Kirk, and is an author, and has gone on to be an important critic and writer for The New Yorker. But I think that the book is a lasting document.

Okay. And then we had a retrospective of Miró, which was really extremely beautiful, and done by my interlocutor, whatever it is she's called, Carolyn Lanchner. And the king and queen of Spain arrived for it. And since the queen only eats fish, it was amazing that at the dinner, the caterers managed to prepare fish perfectly for 200 people. But besides the social part of it, it was a very beautiful show, and again, really covered Miró's career very, very well. It also included the Constellations, which had never been seen all together since they left Miró's studio. And there were some other major highlights of work that had been not seen since it left his studio.

CL: I think we should continue your career, my cher monsieur.

KM: Well, it's also shows that I remember. I mean, my career involves looking at the things that other people had done at the Museum. A Century of Artists Books: artists' books have been a big thing in my life, and I have given the Museum a great many of the books which were in this exhibition, like Gilbert and George books, Jan Dibbets, a lot of the artists who in the '70s were involved in making books, and so, since I'm a great bibliophile, a book lover, it was good to see a lot of things that I had owned in that show.

CL: Selections from the Bequest of the Nina and Gordon Bunshaft?

KM: Right. Gordon Bunshaft was a trustee of the Museum. He was an architect at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. The Lever House building is one of his most famous buildings, and the Banque Lambert in Brussels. He was very big on Henry Moore, so most of his buildings have Henry Moore sculptures. He also was very fond of Giacometti, and had Giacomettis in his garden, and he had this house in East Hampton that he had designed. And I was sort of corralled into working on the disposal of the works of art in the house. So we had a show of the works that he had bequeathed, which included Dubuffet, Helen Frankenthaler, great Giacometti standing figure, a very important Miró, and the large Henry Moores. And they also left the museum money which was used for acquisitions in the Department of Painting and Sculpture.

Anyway, in this little period of the 90s, I was very involved in working a lot on the collection. And then there was a large series of exhibitions for the year 2000—

CL: The millennium.

KM: —with a lot of curators from different departments working together on different little shows.

CL: it was ecumenical in many senses.

KM: Yeah, but I ain't an ecumenical one, so I was not as involved. And it brought a lot of inexperienced curators working with very experienced curators, and much grief to the experienced curators of having to deal with the inexperienced. But it was a very good exercise, because it crossed a lot of boundaries and displayed a lot of the collections in very interesting ways.

CL: Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think that the idea of celebrating the millennium with an in-house show was to save money, and it turned out to be extremely costly. You're nodding.

KM: I think it was basically Glenn's idea, too, because he wanted this ecumenical approach, and to create another atmosphere in the Museum, of cooperation between the departments. Which, as you know, we were not very, we were more independent than that, for many reasons.

CL: By independent, you mean territorial.

KM: Territorial. But it was generally very, very rewarding. It was certainly a lot to see. And it really reminded people of the richness of the collection, in many ways. And it also had a lot of contemporary art, which surprised people as to what we had.

CL: To Be Looked At: Painting and Sculpture from the Collection. June 2002, ongoing.

KM: That's when I'm acting director.

CL: Well, it was around this period Kirk left, and you were acting director of the Department of Painting and Sculpture for a year, right?

KM: A year or two.

CL: Do you care to comment on your year as Director of Painting and Sculpture, your year and a half?

KM: Well, I became Acting Chief Curator of the department, and it was sort of very difficult. Soon after he leaves, we move to temporary quarters in Queens because of the building of the Museum. And I was asked to install—which was a very difficult task, given the space that we had in Queens—to install highlights from the collection. And in a very small space, to go from early, from Picassos and Cézanne, to very contemporary work. That's what To Be Looked At is. It went through the collection and, in a small space of time, trying to give a whole idea of the range of the 20th century was a daunting task. But we managed to keep it sort of going. And going from Cézanne to Bruce Nauman and video.

CL: Well, that's a range.

KM: Which is quite a range. And so that was a kind of a fraught time of various things happening. I had Feri Daftari do this Artists Choice show. Artists Choice was a program of exhibitions that Kirk had set up—Elizabeth Murray who had done a show of women in the collection, Chuck Close had done a show of portraits. The first one was really Scott Burton, who did the show separating the Brancusi sculptures from their pedestals, which was a very interesting and intellectual idea. And then we left space for these shows in Queens, and I had Feri do Mona Hatoum. And that was really very well received, and it was really very good. The Lee Bontecou retrospective was out there. It was really rather strange working out there. We were in this really peculiar building, which was not attached to the museum at Queens. It was not what we were used to in terms of the sanitized West 53rd Street.

CL: No it was not. I believe you were one of the few people in the department who had a window, but underneath your window was the Good Humor man, making his music.

KM: Who we had to complain all the time about. And it was very hard to get to it. If you made a lunch date, you almost had to give up the rest of the day. Everybody was on top of each other. It was really not very pleasant.

For the reopening of the Museum, I was very involved in it in peculiar ways. One of my assignments was the restaurant, and I had a very hard time convincing the "owners" of the restaurant, and also some of the staff of the Museum, that the little bits of

photographs and prints were not really worthwhile. I had to argue that the restaurant had the great view of the Garden, and that the greatest restaurant in New York, more or less, was the Four Seasons, in which there was no work of art. And I had many meetings on the subject, but then there was this wall that needed something, a large wall. And you know, with all of the problems of light and the public, I came upon the idea of Thomas Demand, who is a photographer. Eventually he had an exhibition at the Museum. And part of what his work is about is, it's done in his studio. And he re-created, for example, Saddam Hussein's hideout, and then photographed it and made you think that it was the real thing; this sort of real and unreal idea. And then he created this whole bamboo forest in his studio, and it's all artificial, done with paper and so on. It's very labor intensive. And so that was enlarged, and I thought of it as a dialogue of outside and inside, that you had this artificial forest in the barroom named after Alfred Barr, a pun. And so we got a donor, and it was a very complicated process of how it was made—only one factory in Germany could do the glass for this mural. And so that was installed. And then there was on the other side of that wall, more or less, a big empty space. I was assigned that area, and I got Sol Lewitt to do a large mural, which is still there, which he gave to the Museum. And then I installed the Garden for the reopening. I was kind of involved with the ground floor to a great deal. And then just around that time, John Elderfield was made Chief Curator of the Department of Painting and Sculpture. After an extensive search, they found him in the backyard. He was Chief Curator at Large, and he was moved, becoming Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, and I was moved to being Chief Curator at Large.

CL: You did a little minuet.

KM: Well, Mr. Lowry's idea, which was really good, I think. The Chief Curator at Large title had a certain distinction to it, and accomplishment, and knowledge of modern art in the Museum, and a way of being able to go between, and having a great knowledge of all of the departments in the collections.

CL: Your Edvard Munch show?

KM: Yes. Well, when Kirk left the Museum, he left a large number of exhibitions that he wanted to do, and/or was thinking about, like the Elizabeth Murray show which Rob Storr did, the Beckmann show which Rob Storr did. When we were outside of the building in early 2004, a major exhibition of the collection went to Berlin, and Kirk somehow had the

fantasy that he was going to do all of these exhibitions himself, which was totally impossible. So unfortunately, it was sort of a major obstacle in the program to sort out all of these exhibitions that were on the schedule. And one of them was Munch. And so I was asked to do that. And of course, I screamed.

CL: Why?

KM: It's a pun.

CL: Oh, of course; excuse me. I'm sorry. [laughing]

KM: Well, when Norway becomes independent, they decide they need one poet, one playwright, one artist, one composer. And they got it, one of each.

CL: Munch.

KM: Ibsen. Grieg. Where the intellectuals used to meet is still there, a large café that's part of the Grand Hotel, which is also the hotel where all of the Nobel Prize–winners stay and congregate. But the basic culture is still from that time. And then, of course, there's the Munch Museum. He left everything to the nation, and it's the major repository.

CL: Weren't two pictures stolen from there?

KM: Yes, they were recovered, but one of the pictures that went was The Scream. So I couldn't have The Scream. I had to improvise in a different way. And all of the people who gloat said, "Well, you can't have a show. It's not going to be a Munch show because you don't have The Scream." And I think they were really rather surprised that you could do a Munch show without The Scream. And of course there are Scream prints, and studies for the painting, so it was not really much lost. And I got some really major loans. I even got some very difficult pictures to get from Sweden. I remember going on an icy day in February, on a cane, up a steep staircase, to the flat of a man who was married to this lady who is the curator of a very private public collection which had some great Munchs. And it was a very important picture that I managed to get from them. I almost slid in the snow. And we had a wonderful conversation about Emily Dickinson, and the moment I got back—this is how curators should work—the moment I got back I sent a volume of Emily Dickinson to them, which I think endeared them to me, and they were very touched. They were very touched also that a curator would know about Emily

Dickinson and know the work a little bit. I mean, there are lots of stories one could tell about the striving for loans and how one gets them, and the negotiations.

All right, so that was Munch. And while Munch was going on, Mr. Richard Serra was brewing, or had started to brew.

CL: Munch is going on in early 2006, and Serra comes when?

KM: Well, he comes in 2007. Right after I did the Munch show, in October of that year, 2006, I went in the hospital and had my knee replacement. And while I was in rehab, in October, November, in this horrible place, Cardinal Cook, the catalogue for Richard Serra's show was already in the works. So Serra would come up there and we would go through the proofs of the show, that November, 2006, in my rehab place. So it probably was good. It probably gave me something to do in my bed of pain and distraction while I was in rehab. In the late afternoons Serra would come up, two or three times while I was there, to work on the catalogue.

CL: He had just had a knee operation too, no? So he was pretty empathetic.

KM: Well, artists are not necessarily empathetic. They want to see what they have to have done, done. But I was juggling both exhibitions, and I think I had to travel both to Germany to the Serra foundry to see the sculptures being made, and also be traveling to Norway. So it was kind of a funny kind of moment, in terms of how, again, the clashing of schedules.

CL: Not to mention the clashing of artistic programs.

KM: And dealing with two sets of authors for the two catalogues, because I had several authors for the Munch catalogue, and I think the Munch catalogue was being prepared just a little ahead of the Serra catalogue. And the Serra authors were not the easiest in the world, nor is Mr. Serra. But he was very cooperative, and he's a great person. And I sat down and we did a great chronology, which is in the book that I did with him, as well as also write little things about it. And actually, the Serra show was done in collaboration with Lynne Cooke, who is a really terrific curator who used to be at the DIA Foundation, did many wonderful exhibitions there. And now she's a curator at the Reina Sofia. She just did a great show of a sculptor called Thomas Schütte, a really, really brilliant exhibition. But she's a very serious lady, knows Serra very well, wrote brilliantly about it in our catalogue. And she contributed quite a bit to the show. And it was one of the nice

collaborations on an exhibition that I have had. And we didn't get in each other's way. We both had our tasks. And she had a certain other kind of friendship with Richard that was giving a different input than mine.

Anyway, the exhibition was monumental, to say the least. The large sculptures in the Garden were large. And then the rest was brought into the second floor of the Museum. And they were really huge pieces. The Museum was generous in terms of the space that they gave the show, because it could not possibly have been done in any other way. And so the early pieces were on the sixth floor with sculptures, with the lead sculptures. And I think it was a grand exhibition.

CL: You also had a great editor, if I may say, on that catalogue.

KM: The catalogue was brilliant. And another unsung part of the Museum is, the good editors helping curators with their texts, and elucidating and advising. I think there are certain people in museums who are not really given enough credit as they should, like the people who help with the installations and help plan the installations, because curators can't think of everything, and some are more blind than others to the idea of the concepts of space. And that's one aspect of museology and museum curating that's really important. And then the publications are very important. And then, the people who see to the quality of the books, the quality of the reproductions and the designers of the books, they are all very, very important to the curatorial method.

CL: It's true.

KM: And I am very grateful that I've always, I think, had really good designers and really good editors. And I think that has helped the production of my books, which I am really very proud of.

CL: From here, we're closing in on the future.

KM: Closing in? We're closing in, but that's the last major exhibition I have done. I don't really do anything more, except probably work behind the scenes as Curator at Large in advising and still having a little bit to do with the collection. But with Elderfield's becoming Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, it was natural that I should step back and be discreet about not interfering with the "future" and that current state of the Museum. So I then retire, formally.

CL: When?

KM: I don't know. You went to the party.

CL: [laughing] I don't remember when you retired.

KM: [leafing] 2010 is my last year. 2009 is when I sail. The Museum gave me this gift of passage from New York to London on the QE2, which is a marvelous gift and really enjoyable. But it was a great experience. It really was very, very kind of them. And a big party, a really marvelous party. It was really a wonderful formal departure, with a lot of the art world, all its components, present. Very warm, and a great attendance of divas, curators, artists, other curators.

CL: Yes; it was tout de New York.

KM: A refined selection from the Museum of Modern Art staff. [laughing] The party had a great spirit to it, which I will remember for always. There was a kind of a warmth that not many people get when they're retiring. And the staff included guards and the people who hang pictures. They're another unsung group—the preparators were really some of my best friends at the Museum.

CL: Yes.

KM: And occasionally can give you advice when you're hanging pictures or installing sculpture. And usually they are very helpful.

CL: I personally think a curator ignores their advice at that curator's peril.

KM: A lot of them are artists themselves, and they should get the respect that they really deserve.