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The Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College

From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection
On View at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College
June 22, 2002 through September 29, 2002

Survey of Works Featuring More than 45 Artists
Collected by Ileana and Michael Sonnabend

Skidmore College
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Saratoga Springs, New York, March 8, 2002 – The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College will present ***From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection***, an extensive exhibition of works from the private collection of gallery owners Ileana and Michael Sonnabend. Organized by the Tang Museum and curated by Charles A. Stainback, director, the exhibition will be on view June 22, 2002 through September 29, 2002 and will then travel nationally. The exhibition will feature keynote works originally shown at the Sonnabends' Paris and New York galleries together with other rarely seen pieces from their private collection. More than 45 artists including Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, Bruce Nauman, Anselm Kiefer, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Jeff Koons, Candida Hofer, and Christian Boltanski will be presented.

Ileana Sonnabend has been a seminal force in the contemporary art world for more than 40 years, identifying emerging artists early in their careers and introducing their work to audiences in both Europe and the United States. The Sonnabend Galleries were among the first to present such artistic breakthroughs as Pop Art, Arte Povera, Minimalism, Conceptualism, Neo-geo and video art. Sonnabend has also collected artists who explore non-traditional media such as photography, video, performance, and site-specific installation. ***From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection*** will showcase works by artists who helped to shape the 20th century, including:

- Jasper Johns, *Figure 8*, 1959
- Roy Lichtenstein, *Eddie Diptych*, 1962
- Mario Merz, *Il Teatro Cavallo*, 1966
- Dan Flavin, *Untitled (To the* "Innovator" *of Wheeling Peach Blow)*, 1966-68
- Anselm Kiefer, *Baum Mit Palette*, 1978
- Gilbert & George, *They*, 1986
- Hiroshi Sugimoto, *Archbishop Makarios III*, 1999

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"By looking at the progression of artistic activity since 1960 through the eyes of this unique collector, this exhibition is a prologue for what the future of contemporary art may bring," said Charles Stainback, curator of the exhibition and Dayton Director of the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum. "From day one, the Tang has been committed to looking beyond what is expected of an art museum; the act of being daring and looking forward, as represented by the vision of Ileana Sonnabend, represents our goals for this young museum."

From Pop to Now will be organized chronologically and in thematic groupings that address in a cogent and thoughtful manner the intersection of Pop, Conceptualism, Minimalism, Postmodernism, and many other avenues of artistic expression since Abstract Expressionism.

An illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition. Public programs will include gallery tours; evening *Dialogues* between Skidmore College faculty members and exhibiting artists; a film series; *Family Saturdays*, a series of workshops for families and children; and *Upbeat on the Roof*, the Tang's popular live music series on the museum's rooftop terrace each Friday evening through Labor Day. All Tang Museum programs are free and open to the public.

Throughout the run of ***From Pop to Now***, Skidmore College will offer a wide range of additional summer programs that feature readings, lectures, and performances open to the public. These events include evening jazz performances by Blue Note recording artists, sponsored by the Skidmore Jazz Institute (June 29 through July 13); public readings by prominent authors, sponsored by the New York State Summer Writers Institute (July 1 through July 26); and a benefit performance by the Boys Choir of Harlem at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center (August 13) as part of the Boys Choir annual summer residency at Skidmore.

Designed by architect Antoine Predock, the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College opened in October 2000 and has already established a reputation for presenting innovative exhibitions and programs. The Tang's presentation of the Sonnabend collection brings one of the world's finest private holdings of 20th century art to the public in a museum space uniquely dedicated to the exploration of new visions and to the spirit of experimentation. ***From Pop to Now*** underscores the Tang Museum's ongoing commitment to presenting exhibitions that explore cultural and educational interdisciplinary communication. Recent Tang Museum exhibitions have included *S.O.S: Scenes of Sound; Vik Muniz; Mapping Art and Science; David Miller: A Retrospective,* and recent acquisitions by artists such as Man Ray, Nan Goldin, and Dorothy Dehner.

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The Sonnabend Collection

The Sonnabend Collection reflects the passion and influence that Ileana and her late husband, Michael, had on the cultural community that helped to introduce many preeminent artists and shape the artistic trends of the second half of the 20th century. The Sonnabends assembled their private collection, which includes vast numbers of contemporary paintings, sculptures, drawings, and prints (although no catalogue raisonné exists), by developing intimate relationships with the artists they have represented in their galleries over several decades.

Ileana and Michael Sonnabend opened their first gallery in 1960, and during the Pop movement (1962-64), Ileana Sonnabend was dubbed "the Mom of Pop Art." The Sonnabends introduced Europe to contemporary American artists Andy Warhol, John Chamberlain, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and Claes Oldenburg, bringing the European art scene their first taste of Pop Art. In the early 1980s, Ileana Sonnabend was the first to present the new German art in New York, showing artists such as George Baselitz, and at one point acquiring the entire contents of Anselm Kiefer's studio.

Tour Itinerary

From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection will be on view at the Tang Teaching Museum through September 29, 2002, before traveling to the Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio. Additional dates and venues will be announced.

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College is an interdisciplinary arts center designed to encourage exchange between the educational and artistic communities and the public. Opened in October 2000, the Tang offers innovative exhibitions and programs that serve as a cultural resource for the college and the public. The 39,000-square-foot building, designed by Antoine Predock, includes a 150-seat interdisciplinary space; classrooms for lectures, receptions, events and films; flexible galleries, accommodating several temporary exhibitions at the same time; and storage facilities for Skidmore's permanent collection. The Tang facility advances Skidmore's interdisciplinary mission and establishes helps establish the college as an educational leader.

The Tang Museum is open 11a.m. to 5p.m, Tuesday through Sunday, closed on Monday and all major holidays. Admission is free. For more information on exhibitions and public events, please visit www.skidmore.edu/tang, or call 518-580-8080.

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Skidmore College

Skidmore College is an independent, liberal arts institution with an enrollment of approximately 2,200 men and women. With its relatively small size and student-faculty ratio of 11:1, Skidmore is a close-knit community of students and teachers.

Skidmore offers bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees in more than 60 areas, including majors both in traditional liberal arts disciplines and in such fields as business, the fine and performing arts, and social work. The college's curriculum is designed to give students broad exposure to the world of ideas through an interdisciplinary approach to the liberal arts. The cornerstone of the curriculum is the belief that a liberal arts education is the best preparation both for a life of continued learning and for a career, particularly as graduates face a world of rapid and unpredictable change.

Founded in 1903 by Lucy Skidmore Scribner to meet the educational needs of women in the Saratoga Springs area, Skidmore was chartered as a four-year, liberal arts college in 1922. The College's history includes a number of milestones marking bold decisions that have helped define the Skidmore of today. These include the decision in the early 1960s to build an entirely new campus and the move to coeducation in 1971. In addition, in 1971, the College established the University Without Walls, one of the earliest nontraditional degree programs in the nation. In 1991, Skidmore implemented its first graduate-degree program, the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, an interdisciplinary, non-residential program.

For more information on this project or the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum at Skidmore College, please contact:

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Ileana - Various

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Other interviews

Ileana the Myth
Her magical ability to sense what was in the air (Acconci 1)

Why the Neo=Geo artists chose her (Bochner 6; Halley 1-2)

"Anti-corporate" (Bochner 8)

A "gallerist" not a dealer (Bochner 9-10)

"She takes success badly, but she's wonderful with disaster" (Homem 4)

"Ileana and Michael never think of the past; they are always in the present" (Homem 4)

"The only major gallery presenting the most challenging and difficult and impossible work" (Wingate 10)

"a witch" (Wingate 10)

"a cross between Buddha and Machiavelli" (Richardson 1,5)

Personal - relations with artists
Your mother in a basic brown dress... (Acconci 1; Bochner 7)

The artist with complaints who forgot them at dinner (Acconci 1)

Can squelch you in ways that make you applaud (Acconci 1)

Her nasty comments that only hit you hours later (Vaisman 5)

"The one gallery I really had a relationship with" (Acconci 1)

Her presence: "totally aware of her" (Acconci 3)

Getting paid or not getting paid (Acconci, Dine 1, Wingate 8; Dine 2; Baldassari 1; Winters 1; Judith Richardson 9)

First contacts with her (Bochner 1, 6; Homem 3; Wegman 1-2; Baldassari 1)

Ileana in Europe (Bochner 1-2 - Venice; Baldassari 2)

Coquettish and sexy - "Tempt me" (Bochner ~~1-2~~ 3; Dine 3)

Playing games with clients (Jeanne-Claude Christo)

Her studio visits (Bochner 4-5)

She's generous, but not financially (Bochner 3; Basilico 2)

The least bourgeois dealer (Bochner 7)

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Ileana - Galivus

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Her toughness (Bochner 8; Homem 2; Nina 2; Vaisman 2; Wingate 2; Wegman 3; Winters 1; Newhouse)

No "grudge gene" (Bochner 11)

"I do sense her support." How? "I don't know" (Baldassari 2)

Ileana and Jasper the two with whom you have to watch every word (Winters)

"Like Jasper's Decoy, full of doors that open and shut" (Goldman)

"Any recognition I have is...due to her" (Dine 1-2,4)

Johns on her pleasure in art and artists - his close and personal relationship with her, unlike his "respect" for Leo.

Her cryptic accounting (Pincus 1; Wingate 8)

Could be both imperious and humble (Wingate 3)

Stella's feelings - Point of Pines affair (Stella)

She says little (Vaisman 1)

Selfish, unlike Leo (Vaisman 2)

"A wise woman...with a streak of the sadist" (Vaisman 9)

Her cruelty: Jan groover story (Wingate 8); stopping Wegman's stipend (Wegman 2)

Knitting (Wegman 3; Ileana 43; Baldassari 1)

Startling to find that artists less difficult than dealers (Wegman 3)

Didn't want her artists to show with other dealers (Wegman 4; Baldassari 1)

She's funny and mysterious and scary too (Wegman 5)

Personal - others
Her narcissism (Brach 2)

Unforgiving (Nina 2; Wingate 9; Pincus 1)

The NY apartment (Jakobson 1-2; Pincus 2; Nina 1; Wingate 7)

"She plays games with people" (Jakobson 1; Wingate 7)

"I still think about her every day" (Pincus 1,2 - his filial relationship -- rejected as a son)

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Ileana - Various

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"deeply flirtatious...a seductress" (Pincus 2)

Humor (Pincus 3; Judith Richardson 6-7)

Shyness (Pincus 3; Nina)

Hepatitis (Crane)

Her "deeply ironic rel. with Antonio" (Pincus 3)

Not a bad mother, but our friendship came late (Nina 2)

Self-effacing (Nina 3)

"She's always preferred frivolous people" (Nina 2)

Reads Daily News (Goldman)

The opera (Wingate 9)

Generous with people - the dessert story (Richardson 9)

Her Jewish culture (Judith Richardson, 3, 7)

Ileana and Michael

Pushing Ileana to take risks - a catalyst (Bochner 1; Homem 2; Wingate 7)

"Michel" in East Hampton, her asexual friend (Brach 2)

"She wasn't Michael's wife, she was the boss" (Dine 4)

"Michael sang for his supper - passively sold a lot" (Dine 4)

M. recognizes no restraints, lives by impulse, "the first conceptual artist" (Homem 1, and Ileana invus)

Michael pushed for return to NY, but cldn't run gallery (Homem 1)

His Dante translations (Homem 2)

They have a life of the mind - not with Leo (Jakobson 2)

M's "very expansive opinions on everything" (Karp 2)

She let him exists as a student, he freed her from the bourgeois (Wingate 8)

Ileana and Leo

"a lot of contemporary culture centers around those two" (Bochner 2)

"They bring out the best in the art world" (Boone)

Power balance shifted after first Johns show (Brach 2)

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Ileana - Invus

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Leo's radar for social factors (Brach 2)

She takes more pleasure in art than he does (Johns)

Leo not a collector, but Ileana thrilled by art (Karp 2; Nina 1; Wingate 10)

Leo's gallery would have been different without her (Nina)

Leo flew to Paris to ask her about marrying Toiny (Nina 1)

"a strong personality who makes you think she needs to be protected" (Leo)

Leo on their 60th wedding anniversary (Dine 3)

"Ileana the opposite of Leo" closed vs open (Gagosian)

Leo's generosity (Richardson 7)

They separated in Paris before the war (Crane 1)

Ileana had an affair in south of France (Jeanne-Claude)

Divorced technically but never emotionally or professionally -- always consulted each other (Jakobson 2; Wingate 5; Richardson 6-7)

In early years, she "was in the background, but not really" (Johns; Karp 1)

<u>Ileana and Rauschenberg</u>
The talismanic figure for her (Pincus 2)

The lifesaver charm (Pincus 2; RR 2)

<u>Device</u> (Richardson 4,8)

<u>Rebus</u> (Pincus 3)

<u>Canyon</u> (Richardson 3,6)

RR: "My inspiration...never finish a painting without thinking what she'd think"...the studio visit with Leo..."I had all the ingredients"..."She hasn't always liked what I was doing"...Ileana and Leo told him to go to Pace (2)...Leo never really liked his work..."She still sends me a monthly check."

Ileana was Bob's champion, tho he showed with Leo (Wingate 5)

"Bob took Ileana from painting into the turmoil and drama of making art" (Wingate 10)

<u>Ileana and Antonio</u>
A. changed after Ealan left, became more confident (Wingate 8)

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Ileana - Galerius

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A. helpful like a farm child, "he milks the artists" (Wegman 5)

The perfect match (Basilico 7-8)

Her Eye
"She wanted to be surprised" (Acconci 1)

"When she's troubled, she's attracted" (Bochner 2)

Likes things that redefine the beautiful, things she doesn't understand (Wingate 3-4)

Hates sentimentality (Bochner 10; Wingate 9)

Chooses the more difficult (Boone)

"The way she presented things, they always looked important even when they weren't" (Gagosian)

"a sense of theater" (Halley 1, quoting Antonio)

Often changes her mind about work (Homem 2)

Extremely independent - "I want what I don't like" (Pincus 1; Newhouse 2 on her "bold eye, more so than Leo's")

Rigor (Basilico 1)
Never had to ask anyone else, unlike Janis (Judith Richardson, 1
Her Collection
Photographs, drawings, art deco (Bochner 3)

Showing the collection in Europe (Basilico 2)

Baltimore (Richardson 1-6,7,9)

"Curiosity and greed" (Bochner 6-7; Judith Richardson 7)

What didn't sell, she bought (Homem 3; Wingate 6)

Sold from collection to support gallery (Homem 3)

No inventory of the collection (Homem 4)

MOMA wants Canyon (Jakobson 2)

Future of the collection (Nina 2; Ileana 37)

Newhouse buys the two Johns (Newhouse)

East Hampton
The house - Ileana in background, but ran household, cooked etc. -- weekend guests - Michael ("Michel") in the attic - Ileana didn;t go to the beach (Brach/Shapiro)

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Ileana - Salvius

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Paris Years
Dine 2

Staying at Pont Royal because of concierge (Halley 2)_

Got Leo to pay for shipping etc (Jakobson 2; Karp 1)

Her great contribution: bring the RR and JJ generation to Paris (Pincus 2-3)

Ileana in Paris apt, knitting while men talked (Baldessari 1)

The 1970s
Selling not the prime thing - providing information was (Acconci 1; Bochner 3, 5-6, 8)
Gilbert + George "Singing Sculpture" (Judith Richardson 3
Seedbed (Acconci 2; Bochner 1) Judith Richardson 6

European and American versions of the new art (Antonio 2)

"Making possible something that didn't have to be defined" (Antonio 2)

Bringing European artists here (Bochner 4)

"An enthusiasm for ideas" (Bochner 9) - a "gallerist" (Bochner 9)

NY gallery in 70s: Michael couldn't run it - presenting difficult art, and selling from collection to support it (Wingate 2)

A moment of great excitement for Ileana, with Gilbert & George, Arte Povera etc (Wingate 3)

Leo and Ileana's different aspects of conceptualism (Wingate 5; Baldessari 2)
Ileana as salesperson (Judith Richardson 4-5
The 1980s
Neo-Geo group, "performance-oriented" (Halley 1-3; Vaisman 1-8; Basilico 3-6)

Gilbert & George (Homem 2-3; also CT Talk piece)

Halley lawsuit (Homem 3)

Koons (Homem 4)

A crazy time - Ileana couldn't say no - stipends going up (Basilico 3)

Ileana and women artists (Basilico 8-9)

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Chronology

1907 - Leo born in Trieste (Sept.4)
1914 - Ileana born, Bucharest
1932 - Leo sent to Budapest (spring); marries Ileana in fall
1934 - Leo quits insurance firm, joins Banco d'Italia
1935 - Leo and Ileana move to Paris
1936 - Nina born
1939 - Leo and Drouin open gallery
1941 - Leo and Ileana to New York (arrive March)
1943-45 Leo in the army, in Europe; becomes US citizen. Ileana at Columbia, meets Michael Sonnabend
1946-49 Leo in knit goods; sells paintings on side
1949 - Leo to France to sell Cannes house; dissolves partnership with Drouin. Life article on Pollock
1950 - Janis and Leo collaborate on show
1951 - Ninth Street show, Ileana meets Rauschenberg
1952 - Summer in East Hampton, with DeKoonings et al
1955 - Marianne Schapira dies
1957 - Leo opens gallery at 4 E. 77th - "new work" that spring includes Rauschenberg and Johns
1959 - Gallery moves to 2nd floor. Leo and Ileana divorce. Ivan Karp joins gallery. Stella in group show.
1961 - Ileana visits Rosenquist studio
1962 - Ileana marries Michael and moves to Europe. First show in Paris gallery 15 Nov-31 Dec.: Jasper Johns. Leo marries Toiny. RR show at Cordier in Paris
1963 - 2 Rauschenberg shows. Also Dine, Rosenquist, Wesselman, Warhol, Lichtenstein (Ileana buys Eddie Diptych and Little Aloha).
1964 - Warhol's first one-man show. Arte Povera group forms. RR wins Venice Biennale.
1966 - Rue Mazarine gallery opens 6 May. Fluxus and Minimal as well as Pop art. Arman. More Europeans.
1968 - Politics intervenes, the art market dries up.
1970 - Opens NY gallery at 924 Madison
1971 - Opens at 420 West Bway with Gilbert & George (Sept)
1972 - Acconci's "Seedbed," Bochner, Bechers, Wegman, Kouennellis
1974 - Bob Morris (with Leo); RR's "Hoarfrosts" (with Leo)
1976 - Barry LeVa, Morris (with Leo), Horst, Nauman (with Leo)
1981 - New tendencies: Penck and expressionism (fall).
1982 - Baselitz (March) and Immendorf (Sept). Terry Winters (Nov)
1983 - Baselitz sculptures
1986 - Neo-Geo show in Nov (Bickerton, Halley. Koons, Vaisman)
1987 - Haim Steinbach (with Jay Gorney)

Ileana - [redacted]inus

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Collection Sonnabend (1988 Catalog)

First exhibition at 37, quai des Grands-Augustins, in gallery on floor above the restaurant of the Relais Bisson, was Jasper Johns (15 Nov.- 31 Dec. 1962.) Johns had shown twice before in Paris, in 1959 and 1961, at the right-bank gallery of Jean Larcade, without much effect. Ileana showed "White Flag" (1955), "Flag on Orange Field" (1957), "Flag" (1958), "Target" (1958), "Jubilee" (1959), "From 0 through 9 (gray) (1960), "Good Time Charley" (1961), "Device" (1962). Several of these had been shown in the "Four Americans" exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and the Kunsthalle in Berne earlier that year. This time Johns really registered in Paris.

But before this, Pierre Restany had mounted his "Le Nouveaux Realisme à Paris et à New York" at the galerie Rive Droite (June 1961), with Yves Klein, Arman, Tinguely, Hains, and Johns, Rauschenberg, Chamberlain, etc., and the Johns expo at Ileana's coincided with Sidney Janis's "The New Realists" show in New York, which included the Paris group along with Dine, Oldenburg, Rosenquist, Segal, Warhol, and Wesselmann. One of the Sonnabends's main goals was to establish connections between the young artists in both cities.

Many French critics reacted violently against the "invasion" of American art, which was also being shown at Larry Rubin's Galerie Lawrence (color-field), and Galerie Anderson-Meyer, which opened 15 Nov.1962 with works by Sam Francis, Hans Hoffman, Michael Goldberg, and Norman Bluhm.

Otto Hahn called Ileana the "ambassador of American art."

<u>Paris-New York-Paris, 1935-1962</u>

Ileana quote on their feeling for new American art in early 1950s (p.13). It was Ileana who began buying pictures: Pollock, de Kooning, Dubuffet, etc. Ileana used to go with Allan Stone, Dick Bellamy, and Ivan Karp to visit studios, from five PM to two in the morning sometimes; met Warhol, Dine, Morris, Rosenquist, and Lichtenstein this way.

Pierre Restany, Jeanine Goldschmidt, and the French nouveaux realistes. (p.14). Rene Drouin helps Ileana and Michael find a gallery space, and they open with Johns. (14). Malraux comes (after lunch at Relais Bisson) and is skeptical, but others are impressed. How they operated -- catalogues with essays by French critics; getting the artists to attend their openings, etc. (14). Finding the collectors: Ludwig, Peeters, Codognato, Panza -- and museum directors: de Wilde, Bowness, Robertson, Hulten, Szeemann etc (15). Circulating shows to other galleries (15).

<u>Pop Art in Europe, 1963-1967</u>

Two Rauschenberg shows in 1963, with catalog (first for RR) -

Ileana - Bibliography

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"Charlene," "Monogram," etc. Much excitement over opening (15). Followed by Dine show. Pop Art group show includes Oldenburg, Rosenquist, Wesselmann, and first Warhols seen in Paris. (15). Soon there are Pop Art shows in several Euro museums. Lichtenstein show at Sonnabend in 1963 crates "a real sensation," travels to Sperone in Turin; several collectors buy, Ileana keeps "Eddie Diptych" and "Little Aloha." Ileana, despite pressure from Jouffroy, does not mix the Americans with the Euros. (16).

1964 a big year for American art in Europe (19). Warhol's first one-man show in Paris. Pistoletto. Sperone the main conduit in Italy (19); his shows of Rosenquist, Warhol, Oldenburg et al lead to formation of Italian Arte Povera group. (19). Chamberlain. Second Rauschenberg show at Sonnabend immediately precedes Venice Biennale, which certifies US hegemony by giving prize to RR. (20).

Post-Biennale, Ileana showed Oldenburg, who came for the opening, and ended the year with a show of RR's Dante drawings. (23).

In 1965, for show by the German Konrad Klapheck, Ileana got André Breton to write a catalog essay. Warhol's "Flowers" was occasion for Andy's first trip to Paris (23). After Rosenquist show, the Grands Augustins gallery closes. In June, Ileana and Michael attend opening of City Gallery in Zurich (which would become the Bischofberger gallery), and meet Antonio Homem.

Rue Mazarine gallery opens 6 May 1966 - designed by Jean-Claude Drouin, the son of Rene. (Former Moliere theater - p.32). Heart of left-bank Paris. Watts, Morris, Whitman, Flavin: the mix now includes Fluxus and (eventually) minimal as well as Pop. Also the first French artist shown: Arman, who had showed at Galerie Lawrence (Rubin) until it closed in 1966.
Other European galleries showing US art (27). New art periodicals (27). Sonnabend begins showing more Europeans, whom Ileana will later introduce in NY. Also photographs by Wegman, Bechers, Boltanski, Margritte, Hockney, Rauschenberg, Nadar, Horst. (27).

The events of May 1968 were painful for Ileana. Michael was in NY...Afterward, collectors hesitant to buy anything. But Ileana perseveres with Naumann, Morris, Judd, Merz, Judd, etc.

<u>Paris and New York, 1970-1980</u>
In Paris, she continues to show Rauschenberg, Dine, Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, Warhol, and also Robert Morris and Bruce Naumann. In New York she shows work by conceptual artists who nevertheless produce objects, images, or actions: Acconci, Wegman, Bochner, LeVa, Baldessari, and also a group of Europeans: Bernd and Hilla Becher, Gilbert & George, Christian Boltanski, Anne and Patrick Poirier, Jannis Kouenellis, Sarkis, Alain Kirili, Mario Merz.

Also shows more photographs. Not only by Bechers, Boltanski, Wegman etc, but towards the end of the 1970s, in Paris and New York, photographs by Horst P. Horst, Hoyningen-Huene, Deborah Turbeville, David Hockney, Rauschenberg, Magritte, George Platt-Lynes.

Ileana - Galerius

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In NY the gallery works with American and European artists of the new generation, including several from California. Some of them working with film or video: Acconci, Joan Jonas, Charlemagne Palestine, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Morris, Nauman. She and Leo join forces in this area in 1973, with Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films, but with little success; few museums or collectors buy films.

Michael is in charge of the NY gallery -- first at 924 Madison, from 1971 (September) at 420 WBway (p.35), with uptown space showing photographs and art deco furniture by Pierre Chareau, Rene Lalique, Eugene Printz, Emile-Jacques Ruhlmann.

New York, 1971-1981

Opened Sept. 25, 1971 with Gilbert & George's "singing sculpture" -- for fifteen days, from 10am to 6 pm, they performed it on a table (p.50). The other galleries at 420 also opened that day. G & G was followed "N.E. Thing, Inc., and then by two arte povera shows, by Pier Paolo Calzoleri and Mario Merz. 1972 opened with Acconci's "Seedbed." (53). In February, Mel Bochner's "7 Properties of Between," with nothing at all on the walls, and sheets of paper with mathematical propostions scattered on the floor. Then the Bechers, Manzoni; Laddie John Dill; group show of 13 artists chosen for Dokumenta V...(53ff). Wegman (53-54). Boltanski photos of "various facts," incl. 408 images of criminals & their victims (56).

Many shared exhibitions with Castelli -- Morris, Rauschenberg, etc. Wegman's last show there was in 1977 -- afterwards he went to Holly Solomon. (59).

New York, 1981-1987

Two new tendencies starting in fall of 1981: figurative expressionism, and a renewed interest in the object. Penck's first solo show in NY that December at Sonnabend (Baselitz, Lupertz, Fetting and Salome showed at other galleries), amid talk of a rebirth of painting that gained impetus from the "A New Spirit in Painting" show in London. (66). In March 1982 the gallery gave a one-man show of Georg Baselitz, and the following September Jorg Immendorf showed his "Cafe Deutchland" series.

Nov. 1982 saw first one-man show by Terry Winters (67). In March 1983 Ileana opned her "warehouse" space at 121 Spring St., where Baselitz showed sculptures in May-June.

Neo-Geo show in Oct-Nov.1986. (72). Ileana had shown no interest in the graffiti artists or the Schnabel-Salle-Fischl crowd, but she saw in Neo-Geo a renewal of the energy of the late 50s. She said in an invu, "My idea of a gallery is to develop artists. I take them when they are young and cheap and I make them celebrated and expensive." (72).

Ileana - [illegible]ivius

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From Bordeaux Catalog (cont)

Michel Ragon - The Rue Mazarine gallery was right behind the Academie des Beaux-Arts (?). Michael resembled a "mischievous elf."

Robert Pincus-Witten - Michael had produced documentary films, the best-known being "The Titan," on Michelangelo...The first Paris gallery was in a space sub-leased by Marcelle Dupuis, a former art dealer, whom they had met thru Rene Drouin; it was near the studio that Picasso had used during the war... Pincus-Witten worked for them...He described Ileana as a "mixture of sphinx and coquette." Their apartment was over a tabac next door...Their early shows had catalog essays by young critics Alain Jouffroy, Otto Hahn, and Edouard Jaguer...Their early buyers: Giselle Boulois; Rene de Montaigu, Atilio Codognato, Hubert and Maryse Peeters, Roger Matthys, and Philippe Dotremont (p.85)....To make the gallery survive, Ileana had to sell RR's "Odalisque" and "Charlene" (the latter to Stedelijk museum, in 1965); she kept "Hymnal" and "Canyon."...When a journalist from Paris-Match came to see the Pop Art show, and seemed contemptuous of the work. Ileana ordered him out: "Dehors!"

Michel Guy - "I owe, Paris owes to Ileana Sonnenberg the discovery of pre- and especially postwar American painting. Her activity changed the way of looking of those who, in my generation, were in line to receive this shock."

Germano Celant - On the range of Ileana's sympathies: the combines of RR as well as the "chromatic perfection of Johns and the voluptuousness of the pop artists; it has accepted the hardness and rigidity of Morris and the minimalists, captured the sensual and seductive nuances, in their appeal to the past, of Paolini and Kouennellis, of Merz and Zorio; defended the perversities of Gilbert and George as well as the piquant ironies of Baldessari...the hot dramatic density of Kiefer, the pictorial sweetness of Winters, and the glacial coldness of Koons and Steinbach."

Achille Bonito-Oliva - "...Ileana is a strong mother, able to respect at the same time the artist's weaknesses and needs."

Ileana - Obituaries

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Ileana - [redacted]vinus

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Gleeana – 1st interv (untaped) – 12/10/97

"I'm not ambitious, and I'm not competitive, really. But I love to have fun."

Questions – she doesn't go. "A very negative pleasure."

Rauschenberg's Canyon: The moment she saw it arrive at the gallery, she knew right away. "I want that painting."

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ILEANA SONNABEND

Ileana: I was born in Bucharest of a Rumanian father and an Austrian mother, just before the war in 1914. My childhood was very happy. My parents were very well off. They spoiled me to death (laugh).

Tad: You had an older sister?

Ileana: I had an older sister, who was very ~~dutiful~~ beautiful, and there was a great rivalry between us.

Dodie: How much older was she?

Ileana: 4 and a half years. But I had very happy childhood.

Dodie; Where did you go to school?

Ileana: I went to school in Lithuania, and then, I was unhappy in school. And so there was a French school in Bucharest, so I switched to the French school, and that was a bore. (laugh) Teachers were very lax, they were probably teaching much above our heads, but it was stimulating, even if you didn't understand it. And so I was quite happy there. In Rumania, you know, everybody speaks -- spoke -- now, I don't what they speak, French and German. My mother being Austrian, I had German nannies, and so I spoke German, and then when I went to prep school, I had French governesses. I hesitate to say that because it's not usual to have governesses and nannies all the time, but that was kind of society we were in.

Tad: Now, what about the story I've heard, that because you were not fond of shopping, that your mother and sister would drop you off at a museum when they were going shopping?

Ileana: Oh, yes. That was much later. That was a real story. We were traveling with a governess and my mother. We were going to Vienna quite often because my mother had brother who lived there and my father had a sister who lived there. So we used to go to see them. Vienna was the first station towards the Occident, so we would travel 24 hours in a train to get to Vienna, and then if we had to go on, we simply took a rest in Vienna and sometimes just stayed there for three weeks. I think it's difficult to realize how sheltered my life was.

Tad: Well, it was a different world, of course, then, too.

Ileana: It was a different world and it was a different culture, and I had a governess until I got a fiance, really.

Tad: Yes. I remember Leo telling me that you used to have to try to escape from your governess when he was first dating you.

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Ileana: Yes, it was difficult. (laugh)

Dodie; How old were you when you met Leo?

Ileana: I was 17. (Leo was 24)

Tad: Can we go back a minute and ask you what your father's business was? He was very successful in business, wasn't he?

Ileana; My father was very successful. He was in heavy industry.

Dodie; What does that mean? War...

Ileana; Railroads, engines, airplanes and things like that. So he was very successful and he was quite well off, and he brought us up as being heiresses. Both of us. He used to take me with him to go shopping with the Gettingberg (?), a store in Paris, and he would just say, well, what would you like. Would you like this? Would you like that? Would you like a winter coat? Would you like a party dress? (laughing) And so that's the way I was brought up.

Dodie; Did he make his own money or did he come from a family that had money?

Ileana; No no. He made his own money. So he was like a little sultan. (laugh)

Tad; Was he a very charismatic figure?

Ileana: Yes. I think he was good looking and he was totally bald, but it didn't look too bad on him. (laugh) Not really, totally. He liked good clothes and he liked to spoil us.

Dodie; What about your mother?

Ileana: And my mother was, on the other hand, she was interested in politics and philanthropy. So she was very early Zionist. And she knew the early Zionists and she worked very actively getting money for them. She also was a philanthropist. Some work that she did for Jewish children, because you know they had trouble. Poor Jewish children had trouble to get into schools, because the schools were government schools, and so it wasn't easy for them. And also, ...but mother insisted that we should go and visit the orphanage, that we should eat the food that they served the orphans, and so it was very strange upbringing, because on the one hand, we were very made conscious about inequality and the needs of people, and on the other hand, we were quite used to squander it. So that made it rather a split personality. (laugh)

Tad: But your being left in museums, was this the beginning of your aesthetic education?

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Ileana: Yes. For some reason mother and the two girls and the governess landed in Vienna, my sister and my mother were very much into -- and the governess too -- were interested in fashion. So they wanted to go shopping. Now, I was too small to be interested in fashion, so I was very bored and restless when they went shopping. So they decided that they had to get rid of me somehow, somewhere. (laugh) And since I liked the museum very much, they just took me to the museum in the morning, and came to collect me at 4 o'clock, before the museum closed.

Tad: All by yourself or with a governess?

Ileana; All by myself.

Dodie; And how old were you then?

Ileana: I think I was 7 or 8 years old. And so that was a great pleasure for me. It was just wonderful to be able to look at things at my own rhythm, and to enjoy things.

Dodie; Do you remember what you liked? Was there anything in particular?

Ileana: Oh, yes. I remember, I went back and I saw the certain paintings, and I was so thrilled. I went back as an adult. Yes, I remember the paintings, but I also remember the archeological things that were there. You know, it's a museum that was quite...

Tad: Which museum was this?

Ileana: You ask me, and I immediately forget?

Tad: Was it the Kunsthistorica?

Ileana: The KUnshistorica.

Dodie; What paintings in particular? What period?

Ileana: I liked the Titian, I liked a lot of Velasquez, and they had some Dutch paintings that I also liked. And it was wonderful. I used to go from one painting to another.

Dodie; But how did it happen that they knew you liked the museum?

Ileana: One of the duties of the governess was to take us to the museum and through exhibitions and to monuments and to sight see. So they knew that I liked the museum, and I never wanted to go away. Never wanted to go home. (laugh)

Dodie; So you didn't want to leave.

Ileana: I didn't want to leave. I think that was a great

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influence.

Tad: That must have been. Did you do that often, did you spend whole days in museums a lot?

Ileana; Yes, we used to go to Italy. and I remember seeing Venice for the first time. And it made such a big impression on me.

Dodie; And you go every year.

Ileana: Now, I go every year. And I was thrilled to get to Paris the first time. To go to the Louvre, and then at that time, they had in the Orangerie, they had the Impressionists.

Tad: But were you also, as you got older, were you studying art history and art in school?

Ileana; No. (big laugh) Not really. I studied by looking, not by reading.

Tad: That's probably the best way.

Dodie; And also, if you met Leo so young -- 17 -- what about school? How old were you when you married?

Ileana: I married at 18.

Tad: Now, I believe that you were away from home when Leo was first introduced to the family. He first met your older sister.

Ileana; Yes. He first got to know my sister. And became very friendly with her and her husband and his family. And I was in Switzerland traveling with my mother. And when I came back, there was a dinner party at my sister's mother in law. And that's where I met Leo.

Dodie; And what was your first -- do you remember your first impression?

Ileana: Well, you know, Eve, my sister, had told me about him. And I was expecting to find somebody much older and much more imposing. And he was sitting across from me at table, and I was looking at him and saying, well, you know, he's not so scary. He looks quite possible. (laugh) I liked his eyes and I liked his mouth. I thought, then, he must be okay. (laugh)

Tad: What language did you speak?

Ileana: French. French because I didn't know Italian then, and Leo picked up Rumanian quite fast.

Tad: He's quite a linguist, isn't he. He picks up languages very

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easily.

Ileana: Yes. But still, it was a real effort to speak Rumanian. French was the easier. Besides, I totally spoke French a lot.

Dodie; With the governess?

Ileana: With the governess, with my parents, because French in Rumania was like French in Russia. You know, people who were from a certain group...

Tad: It was the language of the upper class.

Ileana; Would speak French.

Tad: But, were you attracted to Leo right away?

Ileana: I was attracted to Leo right away. But he, I think, was attracted to my sister. (laugh)

Tad: But she was married.

Ileana: But she was married, but in Rumania, that didn't count so much. (laugh) We were very sentimental people.

Dodie; And also, you were only 17 years old.

Ileana; Yes. But I desperately wanted to get away from home.

Dodie; Why?

Ileana; First of all, it was very artificial, and somehow, I could feel life wasn't like that. And secondly, I was always surveyed. I wasn't ever alone. Free. I always had somebody with me who took note.

Tad: It was a little suffocating.

Ileana; It was very suffocating. And then, by then, the political situation in Rumania was just horrible.

Dodie; What are we talking about? 1930?

Ileana; I think we got married in 32 or 33. And so I just wanted to get out.

Dodie; Backing up a little bit, did your mother buy your clothes in Paris?

Ileana; Well, she bought her own clothes in Paris. (laugh) And she was very indulgent, so if my father took more interest in the way we looked and the way we behaved, she would just let him take

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over. Anyhow, it gave her more time for herself, for her cause.

Dodie: Was she beautiful?

Ileana; It's difficult to ask somebody if the mother is beautiful They'll always say yes. And I think my mother was really good looking, and she was very elegant...

Dodie; What about her background? What were her parents?

Ileana; She had a brother, her parents died when she was a young girl. I think 15 or 16. And one year's difference from each other. Her father had a brain tumor. And at that time, they couldn't do anything about it. And my grandmother died of cancer, also. And the two children were left alone. My mother was 16, my uncle was studying medicine. And they lived in a pension for students, and my father happened to be at the same pension, because he was also studying. He was studying business. So that's how they got to know each other. My father's background is quite different. My grandfather was a log cutter, I think. He was exporting wood, and esp he was exporting wood for Versendorf pianos. And he had a lot of brothers and sisters. I think they were 12. But two died, so by the time I was born, there were only 4 brothers and 4 sisters. So they were well off, and my grandmother was very good with them, and the older sisters took care of the younger brothers. (laugh) And so they worked it out quite well.

Tad; Now, Leo was working for an insurance company in Bucharest when he met you.

Ileana; Yes. You know, in the 30s, things started -- the political situation in Germany and Italy was not really favorable to young Jews with ambitions. Or even without ambitions. So his father arranged with a friend of his who was working in an insurance company, an Italian company, in a branch in Bucharest. So Leo came over. He was also full of excitement for the adventure. I know that you wrote something about the early life.

Tad: Yuh, well I had the impression that he didn't take his job very seriously, and didn't spend a great deal of time in the office.

Dodie; Was that true?

Ileana: Yes. (laugh) But I read that part and I liked it a lot, because it really was that way.

Tad: But what were the circumstances that were behind your moving to Paris?

Dodie: I wanted to ask something before that.

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Tad: Okay.

Dodie; I was going to ask, how did Leo get to your sister? How did he know your family?

Ileana: Well, we had a very good Italian friend, who was the friend of my family. And I think the friend of his family. So I think they go to know each other through these friends.

Dodie: But then to Paris?

Tad: But after a certain number of years -- you lived for several years in Bucharest after your marriage. And am I right in thinking that you collected things, that you had a collection of...

Ileana: Oh, yes. We were collecting 17th century German furniture, because there were settlements in Rumania. Saxon settlements, and they used to bring their furniture with them, and so there were a lot of things that you could find if you went to visit the peasants who had no idea what it was.

Tad; But whose idea was it to collect? Yours or Leo's?

Ileana: I don't remember how we got to know this man, but he was a real interesting character. He was Hungarian and Rumanian and he used to go to buy furniture in villages, and then...we went with him. Leo was driving. (laugh) More or less.

Dodie; We should back up a little bit again, because you're already married at this point. How did he win you over? How did it turn that he...

Ileana: Let me tell you, my parents were absolutely devastated that I should want to marry so young. So they asked me to wait for a year, which I didn't do. And by that time, Leo was coming to the house almost every day.

Dodie: How did he forget your sister? He met you and then things changed? He forgot about your sister?

Ileana; He forgot about my sister. And he was coming almost every day, for lunch, for dinner. My mother was very fond of him, and he I think was very fond of her. And my father was resigned. (laugh)

Dodie; And was Leo in a good position at that point? What kind of a job did he have?

Ileana; By then he had changed jobs I think.

Tad; He was with a bank by then.

Ileana; Yes. And that was still through these friends, the

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Italian friends, who were friends with his family and with us.

Dodie: When did you get married?

Ileana; I think it was in October 32.

Dodie; Was it a big wedding?

Ileana: No. I didn't want a big wedding. (laugh) By then, I was totally split. I wanted to be very modest and post modern. And I didn't want a white wedding gown.

Dodie; Did you wear a white dress?

Ileana: No. I wore a brown dress.

Dodie; That's unusual. Do you remember what it was?

Ileana; I remember that it was one of the quite well known fashion designers in Paris. Because there again, my parents decided that I should choose and I should have whatever I wanted, so I chose the dress and the coat that was with it. That I wore for several years after. I think it was Lelong, but it also could have been Patou, because those were the...

Dodie; Where did you get married?

Ileana: I got married in the town hall in Rumania. Then, I couldn't stop my father. He wanted to have a big reception, and he invited all his friends and the whole family. There were lots of people there, and it was a very successful party, which I enjoyed only in part. (laugh) But I was glad that he was ...

Dodie; Did you go on a wedding trip?

Ileana; Ha ha, the wedding. That was funny. (laugh) Everything was funny really. The wedding trip we took to Vienna. And we went around looking at shops, and then we went into a painting gallery. It was the first time that I was in a gallery, and I was very impressed because the people there were so patient and so nice to us. They saw that we were young debutantes (laugh). So we bought a few little things.

Dodie: What did you buy?

Ileana: I had told Leo that I didn't want a diamond ring. So instead I wanted some work of art. so we bought a little Matisse watercolor, and it was really pretty. But it was really small.

Dodie: Do you still have it?

Ileana: No.

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Dodie; And what else did you get?

Ileana: Some other things, but I don't quite remember what. They were sort of second rate.

Dodie; I love that you got a Matisse watercolor instead of a diamond ring.

Tad: Did Leo have interest in paintings then?

Ileana: Leo had interest in culture.

Tad: Culture in general.

Ileana: So he had interest in paintings, but he also had interest in literature. He started me on -- very interested in literature and history.

Dodie; And did you continue to go -- is this something you did regularly, go to galleries?

Ileana: No. It was funny because Leo's family was sending presents to us in the hotel where we were as newlyweds. And some things were really difficult to carry, like somebody sent us a porcelain lion, I think, or tiger. You know, those awful Swedish things. And we were there late and we had to catch a train, so we left the animal in our room. (laugh) And Leo was trying to explain to the elevator man that there was an animal in the room. And they had to keep it for us for next time we would come through Vienna. And so the hotel was quite alarmed. They thought it was going to be a live animal.

Dodie; Did you have a long wedding trip?

Ileana: No no. I don't think we were. I don't quite remember. A few days, I think.

Tad: But then you set up housekeeping in Bucharest?

Ileana: Yes. A very aggressively different apartment.

Dodie; How so. How was it different?

Ileana: Well, my parents had a house with a garden and a balcony.

Dodie; And what were the furnishings like in your house at home?

Ileana; And we went to live in the first apartment house. It was a great novelty then. It was very badly -- the materials were very shoddy. And so it was very modest. But I liked it. We only had a housekeeper, who would come in in the morning for a few hours, because then we didn't -- we went back with my parents. And of

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course we had lots of friends and we would have meals outside.

Dodie; Did you cook when you got married?

Ileana: I didn't cook until I came here. But then I can't say that I cooked, because I was very intimidated by the flame. So I would just boil water for the tea, and if I was very enterprising, I would boil some eggs. That was all I could do.

Dodie; Did your parents collect?

Ileana: Well, my father collected some pictures and some tapestries and rugs and things like that.

Dodie: What kind of paintings were at home while you were growing up?

Ileana: I think there was one huge really academic painting. French. And with a lot of naked ladies. (ladies) And there was a little Boudin and I don't remember -- an English painter, 19th century. A lot of 18th century prints. I think the umbrella is sensational. (she's talking about our umbrella) It caught my eye in the middle of my...

Tad: We stole that umbrella from the house of an artist.

Ileana: He deserves it. Now don't forget it.

Tad: I'd like to make a jump and talk about your decision to move to Paris. Because I've never quite understood how that came about -- what caused you to decide to move to Paris.

Ileana; Well, then Leo couldn't stay at the bank and he couldn't stay in Bucharest anymore.

Dodie; Why?

Ileana; Because of anti-semitism. Plainly. By then, Nazis and fascism were getting stronger and stronger.

Dodie; Was this 1934?

Ileana; Yes. He was offered a job in the tourist office, Italian government tourist office. Though he was a Jew. And the office people were English and great fun. At least for him. Because by then I wasn't participating in his fun.

Dodie; What were you doing at that point?

Ileana; Oh, I was visiting fashion places. I was choosing hats and ...

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Tad: So you did finally get interested in fashion.

Dodie; And what did you like in fashion when you got to Paris?

Ileana; I like Sciaparelli hats very much. And there were lots of fashion people.

Dodie; And Chanel was very much around then.

Ileana; But I didn't like Chanel so much. I liked Mrs. Gres, and what else did I like? Balenciaga.

Tad: But Leo had a job at the Banco d'Italia in Paris, which was arranged by -- was that arranged by your father? Did he get him that job?

Ileana; No. His own father.

Dodie; So he went from the Italian tourist...

Ileana; From the Banco d'Italia to the tourist office.

Tad; I see. So the Banco d'Italia was first and then he was with the tourist office.

Dodie; But the Banco d'Italia was in Rumania.

Ileana; In Rumania and then they transfered him to Paris at the Banco d'Italia and then they couldn't keep him there so they offered him this other job.

Dodie; Why couldn't they keep him in Paris? For the same reason?

ILeana; They couldn't keep him because they were fascists. And there were fascist laws.

Tad: So he got a job in the tourist office.

Ileana: But it was silly because the tourist office certainly was much more official, even than the Banco d'Italia.

Dodie; Did he feel comfortahle there.

Ileana; Oh yes. He felt very comfortable. They were all nice Italians who were anti-fascist. Some of them were Italian aristocracy was somewhat reluctant, and so they were very nice to him and to me.

Dodie; How was Leo dressing in those days? What was his sense of style?

Ileana; You know, he didn't change that much. Maybe he was a

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little more relaxed. But not much.

Tad: But he was quite elegant.

Ileana: He was elegant, he was good looking, and he was nonchalant.

Tad: Yes. He wasn't really interested in his job, was he?

Ileana; No, he wasn't interested in his job. He was interested -- maybe that's not for publication -- but he was very interested to the girls who were working in the office. (laugh)

Tad: He was a connoiseur of that sort.

Ileana: Yes. Already.

Tad: But the meeting with Rene Druin was sort of a crucial thing, wasn't it?

Ileana: Yes. Druin was the husband of my sister's best friend, and mine too. And she was a wonderful woman.

Tad: And she was Rumanian?

Ileana; She was Rumanian and he was French. And he was a designer. He wanted to expand, to go into art, and that's how they decided together into opening a gallery.

Dodie: What year is that? How long after you get to Paris did that happen?

Tad: This must have been 39.

Dodie; Did Leo stay with the Italian tourist office for a while?

Ileana: Yes.

Dodie; How did you feel about Leo being a connoisseur of other women -- being a young girl and recently married?

Ileana; Well,

Tad: It was not too unusual.

Ileana; Well, I don't know, Leo's always guilty that way. (big laugh) Well, I had my child, I had my household. I had my life.

Dodie; When was Nina born?

Ileana: In 36, in Vienna. But we took her to Paris almost immediately.

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Tad: Where did you live in Paris?

Ileana; In Neuilly. In a very good house. A new art deco house. A really good one, the architect I don't remember who, which. But it had very good spaces. It was a beautiful apartment, and just to give you an idea, we had an Italian chauffeur and butler. And his wife, who was my lady's maid. And then there was another maid. And then there was a cook. And the baby nurse. And then there was a laundress. So that was quite a big establishment.

Dodie; So you had to run that. That's a lot to manage.

Ileana: Yes. I run that until the fall of Paris.

Tad: So you were living comfortably then, and certainly not on Leo's salary. Was your father helping you and Leo?

Ileana: Yes. I suppose he was paying for our lavish entourage. (laugh)

Tad: And I think your father also put up the money for the gallery. Didn't he? When Leo and Rene Drouin took the space for the gallery.

Ileana; Yes.

Tad: He put up the money for the renovation.

Dodie: Were you involved in the gallery?

Ileana; Not really. No. I went to some openings. I didn't very much like -- it was a funny situation for me. (end tape)

Tad: The way he got involved with the Surrealist painters was through Leonore Fini, whom he had known in Trieste.

Ileana: Yes.

Tad: Was she one of his girlfriends too?

Ileana: Oh, I imagine so. But she was a nice woman.

Tad; But was this a kind of big change in Leo's attitude. I've had the impression that maybe for the first time that he became really involved in the work that he was doing.

Ileana; I really don't know. I think that it was an adventure for him. And of course it always is an adventure. But, yes, it was very good for him.

Tad; How did you feel about Rene Drouin? Did you like him?

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Ileana; Oh, I loved him. He was really a nice man. Also, a great philanderer. (laugh)

Dodie: Or is that just European men?

Ileana: Oh, I think it's rather universal.

Tad: I guess so, but maybe more so there than here. Maybe not now.

Dodie; So the gallery started in 39?

Ileana: The gallery started in 39.

Tad: And as I wrote in the profile, they had their first real show was the Surrealist exhibition. And then it closed for the summer and everybody went away for vacation, and then the war came.

Ileana; Yes. Actually I was at the seaside when it happened. I remember reading the announcement of the war and not believing it. I said, that couldn't be really.

(Antonio comes in with Ileana's coat and umbrella.)

Tad: Are you leaving?

Antonio: It's time to go. (It's exactly 6 o'clock, and her car service is waiting downstairs.)

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ILEANA SONNABEND II

I want to tell you a story about my childhood. I was four years old. I was with my mother and my sister in a little town, waiting for the results of the war. You know, Romania went into the war quite late. And because they were always hoping the French would do something. It's only when I had to give all hope up that they went into the war. Anyhow, it was 1918, and there was a great movement of troops in that little place where we were. We were supposed to be refugees, but all the troops came through. So one morning, there was a lot of excitement and a lot of noise in the street and everybody was going to the windows and going into street, and I was left alone after having taken my bath. I was in the bathroom waiting for somebody. And since they didn't come, I took two terry robes, one on top of the other (laughs), and I borrowed three hats, which I put on my head, too. And then I went down into the street. And as I was crossing, a big truck stopped just a few inches from me, and it happened that my uncle was in the truck and he recognized me. So he saved me. But I felt very good about being with the crowd and seeing what was happening, participating in the excitement. And that expression to participate in the excitement still is with me.

I could hardly walk, and this robe trailing. (laugh) The result however was that everybody scolded me. I'm giving you the motto -- scolded, but not discouraged. I could put that on my grave. (laugh)

(The gallery with Rene Druin never reopened after it was closed for the summer, because the war came.) At that time, we were taking a vacation in Normandy. And we had been there for a few months already when there was some talk of war and I remember I went with my bathing suit wet, I went to see because they had posted something. And what they had posted was the declaration of the war. So I got excited and went back. We were really innocent because we didn't know when,,, (they were in la Baule) La Baule was a big place for children because it still was very safe. So we were there with Nina. And then my father came and my mother came and we were all together. And very scared. We were listening to the radio at night. There was a curfew. And as soon as the war broke out, the French population on the whole became very very aggressive and ... So it became more difficult for us to buy candles or sugar...they kept telling us that the soldiers had much more fun and much better time because there were rations. They had one of those wine a day. Then a Scotch regiment came and stayed in La Baule, and all the French population started being very jeolous about that because they had better food, they had meat every day.

I know that we then left and we went to the South of France, where my father had a house. For some reason, I don't know, I think you maybe have to ask Leo, he will know better, my father and Nina and her nurse stayed behind in Normandy and then went down to I think it was Lyon where French army was sort of regrouping. It was before Buissy. And Buissy was an alternative to Lyon. And it

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happened there in Lyon. I don't know how and why Nina and my father stayed behind. We (she and Leo) were worried in the South because there was no possibility to communicate. Then we all (her father and Nina, and she and Leo) joined up.

(Her father's house was in a village called La Boca. The house was a large villa -- she has some photographs of this)

(How she got out of France) We met with my father and Nina and we left in Biaritz. And Leo and I came from the South to Biaritz to meet them. And by the time we got there, the troops were coming back, and all along the road, we could see people completely undone. When we arrived in Biaritz, there were a lot of people who were in Biaritz, and there was no room for them, and they were stretched out in the street. I can remember...it also was a horrible impression because some of the people...of course, as soon as it was known that the Germans were really coming, everybody locked themselves into the houses, with the blinds down, close the door, and the British deserted...So we arrived in Biaritz. We stayed at this beautiful hotel. It was totally full of people who wanted to leave. My father was there and also wanted to leave. The waiters and especially the maître d'hotel was making leaves with people, because by that time, the consulate were just impossible to reach any consulate really. The maître d'hotel was facilitating if you gave money. So that same evening, the Polish troops arrived. Now, they were going to embark to go to join the resistance. And...it was so peculiar. We went to bed very late because we were trying still to arrange things just to enter a consulate. But next day, we woke up quite early and in front of the hotel there was a big big parking lot. When we went, the parking lot was full of cars. Next morning, it was totally empty. And it was a peculiar feeling to be in that big hotel and nobody around. So my father tried to go into Spain, but he had to cross the frontier by foot and he was assured that they would not shoot at him. That there were no snipers just in the passage from France to Spain. So we said goodbye to him and we were very teary. It was a terrible moment. He had to cross a bridge, and we saw him go onto the bridge and then stop him. And finally he came back and he said, I don't think I want to go to Spain in this way because it doesn't seem safe. Although they had bribed the guards and they said that they wouldn't shoot at him, but he didn't feel comfortable. And that was really the thing, because so many other people went to Spain and then got imprisoned. It happened to Max Ernst. There were people who were tricked.

My mother went to see my sister in England, to be with her and try to bring her back to France to join us. But she got caught -- all during the Blitz she was in London with my sister. No prospects of coming to join us. So we went back to Cannes, the South of France, and from there my father got the visa for the United States, and he arranged the trip. I don't remember how we went, if it was through Marseilles. So we were left behind, because we couldn't get...We were a very peculiar family. Leo was Italian with an Italian passport. I was Rumanian with a Rumanian passport, and Nina was born in Austria, and her nurse was English. So it was complicated.

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I must say that I was very shocked, very put off by the consulate. When we went to ask for a passport, he gave us a long lecture about how lucky we would be if we got the family -- which we knew, of course -- but ... He received us in a big office, with a big writing table, on which he had put his feet. and he never removed his feet while we were talking. (laugh) So we didn't know about those customs. He was really a quite horrible man, but finally after many months, we got the visa.

(To NY) We went to Marseilles, and we were going to take the boat to Algeria, and we were already on the boat when the Germans were not supposed to do anything -- they had no right to do this, but they were controlling. Everybody was leaving. So finally there was an English woman and an Italian among us. They stopped the boat and they had first Leo come down and speak to the authorities and then Francis who was the nurse, and we were terribly upset because that seemed to us and certainly seemed to me that that was the end of it. They were going to put them in some camp. They had already had a camp where they had a lot of English nurses in the South because there were a lot of people who -- a lot of English people. And so they had made a little separate camp for them. I was lucky because Frances had escaped that. I was terribly upset. I thought that that was the last time I'd see Leo. And the boat was supposed to leave, but didn't. Because there were big discussions between the Italians and the Germans. The Italians were much more lenient. Finally, when news came that the boat was going to leave in a few minutes and the Italian police came on, headed by a very good friend of Leo's. (laugh) And my father's. He was a high-ranking fascist leader. Terribly nice person. So when he saw Leo, they embraced. And we were all very happy. And he just gave orders to let us go. So after all these emotions, we sailed. It was terrible, because Leo had volunteered for the French army and so his name was posted everywhere as being a traitor.
He came here (NY) and he volunteered, and he served in America.

My father came earlier (to NY). I must say he arranged our trip wonderfully. He bribed all the people he could bribe, knowing what route to take, and also giving us names of people who were ready to ...
My father had an apartment on 88th Street, next to the Guggenheim. He had bought a little house. When we came here, first we had the experience of Ellis Island, which was what I thought a wonderful experience because in Europe they had really run out of milk and sugar, white bread, and fat. So we were all very slim, in a very good shape, because of the time. So when we arrived at Ellis Island, they served us breakfast, and I never forget because it was such a joy, on the table there were big chunks of butter, and milk and white bread and jam and it was just wonderful. (laugh) The only thing that wasn't so wonderful was that the wardens stood behind us and they were clapping there hands saying, hurry ladies. Hurry. (laugh) Ladies and gentlemen is what they were saying. And after we left, when we left, the prisoners were coming in. So they needed the table.

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Then we had a little room to ourselves. Nina's nanny and I and Nina. So that was not so bad. Also, they immediately offered soap and a warm shower, which we also didn't have, because it was too expensive to heat water, so it was a wonderful change. Leo was here already. With us. But he had to sleep with the rest of the men.

My father was here, and after a few days at Ellis Island, there was a hearing, and we had to appear and there was a judge who had decided that he couldn't understand, even though we were speaking English. And he insisted on getting a translator from Jewish. We had no idea. We couldn't understand anything. So that was somewhat of a comedy.

(When they got settled they didn't live at her father's house on 88th Street) First we went to a hotel. It was on 53rd St between Madison and Park. A little hotel. It doesn't exist anymore. And we had a suite, so that was very nice. (Her father paid for it) Of course.

(Her father had lost most of his money) He tried to start a business here, but nothing worked out. He had some money left. You know, the house on 4 East 77th Street cost $32,000. So he had that much. Yes, he had some money left, but he was afraid of losing it. First he bought our house, and then he bought his house.

(Leo went into the army) about a year after. We took a very beautiful trip to Maine, all the way up. And at that time, it was very sparsely populated. I don't know how it is now. It was wonderful, those huge trees and it was so quiet.

(Why Maine) We were just going north. (wasn't gasoline rationed) It was rationed but our car didn't need very much. (They took Nina and the nanny) And the dog that we brought from Europe. That was a daschund. It was called Noodle. And he was very clever because the nanny had trained him not to eat because she was told Hitler had made the food. So she used to give him his plate and say, but Hitler made it. He wouldn't eat it. And then she said, oh no no, Hitler didn't make it. And the dog would start eating. (laugh)

(They arrived in NY in the summer, and it was a summer vacation) We started in Lake Champlain and it was very nice.

(When Leo was in the army) I wasn't very happy at that time because I had to take care of the house and I didn't know how to. It was my first experience. And then start cooking, but I never was very good at it. But the nurse was very good. She taught me a few things. So I had to look after the house, after Nina. So that was the time I was quite bored. So after a while I decided I had to learn English and I went to Columbia to learn English and I finished up staying at Columbia for a full year, studying all kinds of things and loving it. I was never so happy as when I was a student. After my couse in English, we had sciences -- from

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biology to anthropology and psychology, and we had some courses about classical great books. And then there were a few courses -- you could take whatever you wanted to. I took French because I already knew French. It was very easy, but very enjoyable. And I met Michael when I was in that French course. He was taking French too. He had just come back from Paris also, and at that time, there weren't very many students. All the students were refugees. And the professor wanted to know who was a refugee and who was a real student. (laugh) So she called our names and we had to say who we were, where we came from, what we were doing. And she asked Michael and Michael said, oh, I'm a refugee too. So I was really interested. So I asked him after class, how come? He said, yes, I'm a refugee from Buffalo. He was working in France for quite a long time.

(what she thought of Michael when she met him) I thought that he was so refreshing because he was totally bohemian. And he was very bright. And he knew quite a lot of things. And he persuaded me to take fine art courses. And that was very good for me.

He was taking art and on a level that was superior than mine, so we had all the wonderful professors who were there at that time. Meyer Shapiro. and others. So I would go and listen to these people. I think one was called Krautheim. And Michael made the acquaintance of Victor Ganz at that time. Because Victor and Sally were also taking art courses.

(This is where she really became interested in art, through these courses at Columbia) It was all very exciting and new to me. We would go to the museums a lot. There were some beautiful exhibitions at the Metropolitan. I don't know how they could do that at that time, but they managed. Very early after the war they had a beautiful exhibition of the museums in Munich. (Also treasures from the Vienna museum)

Now we are quite a few years later and I was interested in going to the Club. An art club. The first one I think that they had. It couldn't be the first. (The Club) I think Motherwell started it. (How she got to know the artists of the Dekooning generation) Some of them I knew through an English woman who was connected with Lord Brodovy ? and she was always talking about hungry artists and she was giving a party for them, and that was right in the beginning. And after that, by that time, a lot of Surealists and others came to NY, and Leo knew them. So I got to know them too. And from there I got to know the American artists as well. We were also giving big parties. Leo and I. At 77th Street. And you know, we used to get to know people, because somehow Bernard Reis and his wife were giving parties and always inviting us. and I thought the parties were a little bit more stimulating. Becky was a very good cook. And so she made dinner parties and she know everybody. (On Bernard Reis) I always thought that that business with the Rothkos was very unfair to them.
Leo was with me. He was the person that they knew. (Because of his association with Surrealism) I was only the wife, and as such,

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I didn't dare express my opinions of anything.

Leo also went to Columbia for a year, studying history. He didn't go with me. I came later. I think. I went when he went into the army. (end tape)

(Which were the artists of Ab Ex group that you became friendly with? Shared a house in East Hampton with Dekooning) Since we were somehow in this group of artists and Motherwell was just doing his house with Pierre Charreau in East Hampton, and he told Leo that there was a house that was very beautiful, very big, and very cheap. And it was. It was $10,000, so we bought it. It was on Jericho. Just opposite Motherwell's house. It was a very romantic, old house. It looked maybe like a Russian dascha with roses and porches and a wonderful view to the sea with potato fields in front. It was very beautiful, and the house was very big. So that's how we got to have Dekooning as a guest during the summers. And Elaine.

(Living with Dekooning) I lived in a little tower, and they were in the garage, because he wanted a space for studio. But it was quite nice. What I didn't like that much was the way he treated Elaine. that was painful to see. But otherwise, he was firstrate company. He would get drunk all the time. Elaine, Harold Rosenberg, Pollock. Pollock came, even in NY, brought by Clement Greenberg.

(How did Dekooning live at the house) We had room and it was very hot and we proposed it and he accepted. Very simple. And of course they knew a lot of people over there in East Hampton, and it was very good company. I think maybe now, East Hampton is a little bit like that for the writers.
(On drinking) Not me. Everybody around me. Not Leo. A little bit, because otherwise he wouldn't have been accepted. I was considered very weird not to drink. And also everybody thought that I was very judgmental, which was not the case. I had toxic hepatitis, and I almost died, and after a few months of hospital, the doctor said I shouldn't take any liquor at all.
(Very bohemian atmosphere out there) Yes it was. I enjoyed it very much. I liked the parties. I didn't like it so much when I discovered that people had camped in the house or in the garden and they had spent the night there. That was something else. There was some of that. On the other hand, it was wonderful to be with all these interesting people.

(Were you buying any of their work at that time) Actually, no. I bought from Pollock a group of paintings. But that was already very late. Just a few months before he died.
I wasn't buying the work of anybody, because life wasn't that secure. (She doesn't still have the Pollocks)

(Her life with Leo in those years)
We were apart and together. We were very good friends. I was trying very hard to get over Leo's excapades. (laugh) But I had

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decided that there must be an understanding and that certainly I didn't want to take it out on the girls, because I didn't think that they were at fault.
(You didn't!)
No. (laugh)
(That was very broad minded of you.)
Yes. Probably.
(But you remained good friends with Leo?)
Yes. Leo was my best friend till two or three years ago. (big laugh)

Leo was very much involved in art. He knew everybody who was here. Matta lived in our house in NY.
(in 53) By then I was furious with Dekooning. I don't remember why. But I was angry with him. He asked why Leo didn't open a gallery and I said I think he will, but when he does, you won't be in it. Something very harsh.

(You felt you were the little wife, in the background)
Absolutely.
(When did that change?)
It changed gradually. When I became more independent. But even then I didn't speak very much. It's now in my old age that I speak too much. (laugh) I want to compensate.

(You must have been developing your own eye and your own feeling about the art, knowing them) Yes, probably. The first time we went to have a drink across the street to Motherwell -- there always a little party everywhere we went. Or a big party. But there was a little party and there was Dekooning and Harold Rosenberg and Pierre Charreau, of course, and a few more people, and Motherwell offered me a drink, and I said, oh, no thanks. I don't drink. And he was so astounded. He said, oh, my God. You speak English. All this time I took it for granted that you didn't understand and that you didn't speak English. The first time he heard my voice.
(Move ahead to 57, when LEo does open a gallery. Were you involved in the decision to open a gallery) Yes. Very involved. We were deciding things together, discussing the artists we were interested in and comparing impressions. And I decided to give up the living room. (laugh) To have the gallery. By then, I knew quite a lot of people.
(Had you been talking about a gallery for a long time) No. Actually not. It just happened naturally because we always had paintings in the house and something belonged to ...and Leo was trying to sell them. And so from getting friendly with Kunst and Sidney Janis, it just became a natural thing.
(At one time it looked as though Leo was going into business with Janis. Why didn't he) As far as I know, as far as I'm concerned, I found that Sidney was very stingy. Actually I did have some Schwitters, and he made the Schwitters exhibition and he asked me to lend and I did. And then he made me pay the stamps of the correspondence (laugh) about these collages. So I understood that it wouldn't be a good idea to be associated...

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(Besides, I think it was clear that Sidney really wasn't going to let anybody enter into a real partnership, because he wanted to keep it for himself and his sons.) Yes, he wanted to keep it for himself maybe and he had hoped I think to see works to Leo. But that was the extent of it. Leo couldn't have had the gallery that he wanted to have either.

(When she began buying pictures) I think in the early 50s. (She just started buying on her own) I don't know how. I had a few things, some of my father's some from Leo. (It wasn't she and Leo buying) No. I bought it myself. I bought a Leger that was really quite beautiful. And since the gallery was so much in the middle of our life, I remember I was taking a bath and Leo was seeing a young French dealer who liked the Leger very much and he wanted to buy it right there and then. So Leo, through the door (laugh) told me about this, and I said very calmly, no. I don't want to sell it. And so the Frenchman, also through the door, was trying to persuade me to sell it to him. And I didn't. And then finally Leo came in and said, well, you know, he's offering $5,000, and I said, no, that's not enough. And I'm not selling.
(Do you still have the Leger)
No. Afterwards I sold it.
(Whatelse she bought on her own early) I had some Dubuffet. (No Matta) That was a big mistake. (No John Grahams) That was a great mistake. (He married her mother) And Nina has one, but I don't have one. Leo bought a Gorky, a beautiful one. It's in the Modern art museum now. I liked Newman very much and I liked the work very much, and I was terribly upset when he had his show at Betty Parsons because all his friends were making fun of him becuase it was just straight lines and what did he think. That wasn't art and all of that. And he was so upset. He was so wounded by all this. (Did you think about buying it) I didn't. Probably because I didn't have any money...(No Rothko) Rothko was a little too romantic for me.
(Your taste ran to the more classical) I don't know if you can say that Dubuffet is classical. (Not romantic) Not romantic as much as possible. Oh, I bought Guston in 53 I think.
(Were you interested in the new people in that 9th Street show) I was very interested in Rauschenberg (at the 9th Street show). And at the Stable show. But I had also seen his show at Charles Egan, which was the first time I had contacted the work. That was the red paintings. That was a wonderful opening. Because Morty ~~Perlman~~ Feldman was there playing the piano in the middle of all this fantastic red paintings. (Did you buy something out of that show) No. I didn't have the money. I had to look after my daughter and her nanny...there was somebody who worked in the gallery with us at the beginning that I liked very much, and that was Ilsa Getz, a wonderful woman. You know, I disregarded in my life what Leo was doing with other people. So what Ilsa a real Berlin German, very outspoken, very direct, very sincere and very loyal. And she was a painter herself, and she had a very good sense I think of painting. So I learned a lot with her and I liked her a lot.

(Was she a girl friend of Leo's) She was a girl friend of almost

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everybody else. (laugh) She was liberated.
(But this evening when you and Leo went to Bob's studio to see the work) She had really tried to persuade Leo that Bob was a wonderful artist, because she admired him very much. She was making collages and she was trying to do something similar. And so she preferred us to go and see Bob and I was interested because I had also before been interested in his work. So when we went to see him, there were a lot of very very wonderful paintings there. And he had Bed, a side of colored glass, and it looked like a throne. I know that there were lots of wonderful things (there) and I was quite excited. Until he wanted to show a big painting and he couldn't manage it alone and he proposed to go downstairs to get Jasper. And that was -- it's possible that there was a collector by the name of Epstein, Judge Epstein.
(But the story has been told so often that Leo, as soon as he heard the name Jasper, he had to see the work and that he sort of lost interest in Bob's work)
He lost interest.
(But you were still interested in Bob)
What happened was that about a week, ten days before, there was an opening at the Jewish Museum. And I didn't want to go and Leo went alone, and when he came back he said, you know, I don't know what I think about the show. I think it's good, but there was a painting there -- it was marvelous. I didn't know what to make of it. But it was a green painting, a round painting. So when Bob said he was going to get Jasper Johns, it became very thrilling for Leo to meet him. Jasper had a good studio downstairs and he had hung his white numbers all in a row. And that was really a wonderful presentation. And when Leo saw that, he became very interested. And I must say, I did too. And I bought one of the paintings. (Right out of the studio) Because I thought he was a good painter and a charming person, and how nice that these two were friends. (laugh) In my innocence. And then I was back upstairs and Leo stayed downstairs. And I went on looking at (Bob's). I knew that he had to be in the gallery. For me, it was not a matter of thinking too much. Just reacting.
(But Leo wasn't sure whether he was going to take Bob. Is that right?) I don't know. At that time, everybody was talking about conservation. I don't know if he changed his mind. I really don't know. I don't think so.
(But the story is a few days later Bob came to you and said he really had to know if Leo was going to give him a show, because otherwise he would have to make plans...)
It was in the gallery, because Leo was sitting and looking at some work and Bob was very nervous and very upset. And he asked me and I said of course. It goes without saying. (There was no question in your mind) No question. He asked me why Jasper had been promised a show before him, because he was older. And I said yes. You know, people haven't seen his work yet. There were so many misunderstandings possible about the work.

(Was it a misunderstanding on Bob's part? Bob thought that maybe you weren't going to take him on, whereas you and Leo had both decided you were?) I don't know. I think that Bob is very

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sensitive, and I think that Leo was very insensitive on this occasion. But I think that Leo also decided to show the work, only he didn't tell him.
(But that was really the beginning of the gallery. I gather that the first idea was that you would show both American and European artists in the gallery) Yes and mainly American. At that time it was so difficult for these people. There was no interest. There was no museum. So it was weak because Barr was involved with French modern, and the Metropolitan was absolutely out of it, and the Guggenheim is a very eccentric program. (laugh) The Whitney was very conservative.
(On Helen Frankenthaler) I must say I wasn't very interested in color field.
(It sounds as though the decision to take Rauschenberg really was largely because of your enthusiasm) Yes.
(The gallery) it was the two of us.
(So at that point you were not the little wife)
Yes.
(What was your feeling about Ivan Karp)
I had recommended Ivan to Leo, and I felt that Ivan was good to work...but of course there was ...He was cynical but I thought that it wasn't good, that he was putting on an act, being so cynical. It took me a little time to find out it really was true. But I like Ivan. I think he had a very good appreciation.
(Had you come to know Alan Solomon yet)
I did meet him. He came to the gallery on a very hot summer day with Tanya Grossman. And then he also came with I forget her name, she is a great collector, Ginny Wright. And Alan was very enthusiastic and he was explaining how he got a contract for one year. So he had one year to make the ...and he hoped they would renew the contract but he didn't care because...so I liked this attitude very much.
(going back to the first years of the gallery -- the decision to take on Bob and Jasper was crucial) I also did the decision of showing Frank Stella. Frank of course doesn't realize and doesn't care. But I was very impressed by the work, by the black paintings. (Where did you see them first) He was still at Princeton and we went to see him up there because ...Rosenblum and a few other professors from Princeton told us about him and told us you have to go. And we went together and we decided to show him.
(This must have been after he graduated) I don't remember. I think he had a studio at Princeton, so it must have been before he graduated.
(I would think that was not an easy decision to bring him into the gallery because that work looked so tough) Yes, but I like tough paintings.
(What was it about Bob's work that really impressed you)
I think Bob has a special way of thinking. And also talking. And his painting reflects this way of thinking. It's very brave, but very sure. When he puts an eagle on a canvas, it's because he doesn't even see that there would be another possibility. So I like his turn of mind.
(Is it the case that when you like an artist's work, it's also partly because you like the person) No. Sometimes I didn't even

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know the person. (Like Stella) Probably, but I don't think I would have liked him. (laugh) I think it's very dangerous to know people before you look at the work, because you unconsciously want to find good things.
(With Bob's work, his way of thinking, his way of feeling, comes through so indelibly in the work. The work is so much him.) Yes. Of course, that means it is very original, also.
(Who came next, after Bob and Jasper and Stella) Warhol and Lichtenstein. (But you didn't take Warhol right away) Yes. I went to his studio because Leo asked me. He was very undecided. By then I was already a little bit out of the gallery. And he was undecided. He said these two people, I don't know what to think of them, and I think they're too close. And he would also say, yes, they do the same kind of thing, but, and I kept saying is it good, is it bad, what do you think? And he said, go and see. Leo asked me to go and see what I think of the work and if it would be worthy of being shown at the Castelli Gallery. So I went to see Warhol first, because it was easy. He was on Lexington Avenue. So I went to see him. And I looked at the work and I thought it was tremendously interesting but I didn't want to give him hope. So I kept rather quiet. And then Michael and I went to see Lichtenstein, and there I was much more enthusiastic because somehow I didn't know that Leo would be agreeable, but I was very enthusiastic about the work. And I bought a few drawings, which I still have. And he showed me the paintings. And as soon as I opened the gallery in Paris, I (did a show there) (end tape, end interview)...

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(1956)

Ileana - 7/8/98

When did she start collecting? When they opened the gallery -- things began coming in. "I decided to buy some Pollocks. I didn't have much money, but I wanted to have all five paintings. So I bought them with Ben Heller. I wanted to keep them as a group, but that didn't happen because Pollock died, and Ben thought that the prices would rise, as of course they did...He sort of obliged me to sell the paintings, because I didn't have the money to buy him out. That was a really sad experience." Heller also bought their house in East Hampton,"which I really resented a lot. I sold the house because we were splitting, Leo and I."

Almost at the same time, she started buying Rauschenberg and Johns. Went to see Claes Oldenburg's Store, but he wouldn't sell to her. "I only bought because things were to be had, and because I liked them. But I never had a plan." First Rauschenbergs were some red paintings, including "Charlene." But then the Amsterdam Museum started asking to buy it; she didn't want to sell, but eventually did.

She got very involved in the work, and had the idea of making a kind of museum.

Bought some Johnses, not a lot. "That fateful day," she bought the big No.1 in white. Later, a friend who was a commercial artist, took her to see a man who had bought an important early Johns for $3000. "The painting was so beautiful and so important that I immediately said to the owner, you know, I want to buy this painting. And he said no, it's not for sale. I said, well, I understand you bought it for $3000, and I'm going to give you seven for it. He was very shaken, and he sold it to me for seven thousand dollars, so he could give up commercial art. But he never became a painter. It was a red painting, called 'Untitled.' I sold it later. When Bob won the prize in Venice, there was great pressure on me to sell his work."

"I bought some Stellas, which I liked very much. When I opened the gallery in Paris he was with Larry Rubin, but Larry had started to go home. I proposed to show the work because I liked it so much. But nothing happened. But you know, with me, unfortunately, collecting means selling. One day I got a letter from Leo, saying Stella wanted my painting, needed to paint from that painting, so I sent it to him, and I never could get it back. I almost sued him. I sued Leo [to get it back]. But I didn't want to harm Leo, so I stopped. Even now Stella is afraid to face me."

Some artists "think that I am rather stern."

Lichtenstein - "Leo asked me -- we were already separated -- to help him decide between Lichtenstein and Warhol. He thought both of them were having the same inspiration. TK who was a friend of them both, she wanted to get them into the gallery, so Leo asked me to go and see what I thought. By then I was visiting studios twice a

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day and thru the night. I went to Princeton, because Lichtenstein's family lived in Princeton...I bought some drawings, which I still have. From then on I was a direct friend of them both.

Warhol?

The Move to Europe

Michael and I wanted to move to Europe and do what we could for these artists. We spent a year in Rome. There was a gallery in Rome that was kind of interesting, La Tartaruga, owned by Premio Donati. We wanted to give that man a present by asking him to show Johns and Rauschenberg and Lichtenstein and others...But there were endless intrigues." Especially over Twombly, whose family felt she was trying to get him away from his gallery and his family. I was very unhappy there, because I didn't understand the Italians. I didn't understand their language.

Paris - "I came with a lot of material, to show various galleries in hopes they would give these artists a show. At that time, nobody wanted to pay for the paintings, for insurance or transport. It was the same problem. So, we went to Venice, for the Biennale of 1962. And there we met Annette Michelson and some American friends. I remember telling her I had these wonderful artists whom I wanted to be seen in Europe before another thirty years had gone by, and she said, well, if you really feel that way why don't you do it yourself?"

First gallery was on Quai des Grands Augustins, small but very pretty gallery, in a hotel which had a wonderful restaurant, the Relais Bisson. People came from all over Paris to the restaurant, and some of them came to the gallery. I remember Bryan Robertson came with John Russell, two charming Englishmen; and then they came again because they had organized a show called American Pop, which was maybe our third show. Roland Penrose came to that show, and he was very nice and warm." (After that Robertson did a Rauschenbnerg show at the Whitechapel.)

The Nouveaux Realistes - The woman who showed them was working with Pierre Restany. Iris Clert. She was always very nice, she helped us a lot. She wasn't envious. But Ileana felt the American artists were much stronger than the Europeans. "They felt menaced. They were trying to be generous about it, but in a way they were jealous. I used to have lunch with Jeannine, so one day she got drunk, and she started saying that she was going to see to it that none of the French collectors ever bought any of the American art." (END SIDE ONE)

Arrangement with Leo? Restany wrote to Leo that Ileana wanted to take everything away from him. Leo confronted her about that. "I said, well, I want to show what I want to show. I was furious at Restany over that. I told Leo, if I am competing with you, it's because I am serving the same artists, and I'm serving you. He understood that."

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Rauchenberg arrives in Paris during Algerian uprising (055-070)

After three years they moved to the Rue Mazarine. Larry Rubin decided to sell his gallery, they decided to buy it. Major renovations; architect was Rene Drouin's son. More and more people came -openings were big events. Recognized the energy. Michael very good at talking with them, explaining and proselytizing. What was stroger about the Americans? "I think the Nouveaux Realistes still had a foot, or a toe, in Surrealism, and the Americans didn't. I think many of the young artists in Paris were too Surrealist. The British even more so."

"I always used to joke, luckily the show didn't [sell out]. So I could buy what didn't sell. I acquired quite a lot of things. Since people would usually buy the easier pieces, I would end with the tougher ones. Which was my preference anyway. Later on, I used to joke, well, if you want to see my collection, go to the Ludwig Museum in Cologne."

The Oldenburg show made people in Paris very angry. But they were angry about all Ileana's shows. This was the threat to French hegemony. Warhol and Lichtenstein very succesful from the start.

Ileana worked not only thru Leo - also with Janis, Pace, others. "We found that in Europe people were so chauvinistic...But Americans and Italians cooperated in making anti-form, and that was the beginning of arte povera. I started explaining that to Leo, and asking him to do an exhibition, but it didn't turn out that way.

Art Deco - "When we had the gallery on the Rue Mazarine, we lived almost next door to the old gallery. And we had to go from the Quai to the Rue Mazarine. On that stretch, there were some galleries that were art deco. We would visit them on the way to the gallery and back, and that's how we started collecting. She bought it as sculpture, not for use. Stopped buying when the prices got too high.

Ending the marriage - "I left. I threw all the breakfast dishes on the floor! [laughs and laughs] That was it. But we stayed friends. We had gone thru things together..."

Chelsea Gallery - "Yes, we are doing it."

Jeff Koons - "He was taking a lot of money, and at a certain moment we had to stop. I was sorry, because I liked him, but we couldn't afford it. So now, years later, I think we both are ready to [try again]."

Selling the Johnses - In a show (where?) there was a group of Jasper Johns paintings belonging to Ileana. "So, this year, Si saw them, and he gave us his price, and David Geffen bought the other one...We never had money. We never had stock, except paintings. And I think I wanted to have some security." The paintings had belonged to Leo's gallery, "but I bought them. Actually, Michael bought the

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Grey Target."

Where is the collection? "Oh, it's everywhere. In storage, in museums, in exhibitions."

"We came back in 1970 because Michael wanted to come home. And also because in Europe things were much slower, because they were concentrating on politics from 1968 on."

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Ileana - 7/10/98

(Things she forgot to tell us last time). "At Bob's first show in Paris, and Daniel Cordier Gallery, two people were looking through the window because the gallery was closed. I was also looking through the window, because I wanted to see that everything was OK. One of them was Jean-Jacques Lebel, and the other was a French Surrealist critic, a young man, quite handsome, Alain Jouffroy. Jean-Jacques introduced us to everybody in Paris. They were young and they knew a lot of people, and we became very good friends. I had a lot of fun with those two and their friends. Unfortunately, we didn't like any of the artists they wanted to show. After a while, I received a letter from Alain, telling me I should organize shows for ------. That wasn't what we had wanted to do, so I wrote back saying his choice was not necessarily my choice. So I lost a friend. He immediately accused me of chauvinism, and turned against us." Jouffroy and others were disturbed by the amount of publicity Ileana and Michael generated. "But we felt we were just going to do this for six months and then go back to the States, so we wanted as much publicity as possible."

Before the split, Jean-Jacques had arranged the famous interview with RR by André Parinaud, among others, and introduced them to critics and journalists. One of them was Marcel Broadthaers, then a journalist, who one day showed them some examples of his work, which Ileana bought.

Michael's role in the gallery - mainly talking. The publicity was largely his doing.

Arrangement with Leo - "I bought the works whenever I could." Some were on consignment. Janis was upset when she didn't sell more Oldenburgs, but Ileana told him she was just going to buy what didn't sell, and she did so. Leo would come to the openings when he was in Paris, but it was difficult for him because of Toiny. "Toiny was deeply jealous, possessive." Leo felt guilty, and wanted to help all he could. "I was very unhappy about Leo and Toiny, because I knew Toiny was unbalanced." (see p.43)

Ileana knew about Toiny before the split. "I used to hear Leo on the beach at East Hampton, talking French to somebody. That's all I knew about it. But it was a very active time for Leo, who had a lot of other girlfriends. But I wanted us to remain friends in spite of his girlfriends. Even now, Leo and I go out sometimes together, and that is why I have accepted Barbara. I don't want to break with Leo. Toiny never wanted to see me. She was very very angry, she used to insult me in public. I remember at an opening, I came because I wanted to be seen; I came in, and I wanted to shake hands with Toiny, but she didn't shake hands with me. She was so angry at me that I started crying - I was still quite vulnerable then."

When things got very bad between Leo and Toiny, Leo would sometimes turn to Ileana for help.

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Coming Back to NY
(in 1970). The same problems in reverse: nobody here wanted to buy work by European artists. Chauvinism again.

420 West Broadway - Leo had bought the unsold floor (after buying his floor). He asked Ileana if she wanted it, and so she ~~bought~~ rented it from him. Michael was the one who had wanted to come back -- Ileana had wanted to stay in Europe. [Of course, she couldn't represent Leo's artists as she had in Paris; but eventually she and Leo would share many of them, having joint shows etc.] Ileana's idea was to show young European artists in NY.

Ileana wasn't interested in the Nouveaux Realistes in Paris. She did show Arman, who had been with Larry Rubin; when Rubin closed, Arman asked her to take him on and she did.

Gilbert & George - opening show: Ileana had seen them in Brussels the first time; they had made a performance for a fashion event. "I was very smitten with it. So at the end of the performance I went to the podium, introduced myself, and said I was opening a gallery in New York, and I would like to show them. George immediately said oh, yes, we would like that. It was a great event for them and for us.

Vito Acconci - Ileana had been to his studio, where he was making some work about cockroaches. She felt this was not exactly for her. So he thought of something else, which was the masturbation piece. "Vito to this day is a wonderful person, but very complicated." Ileana felt very badly when he left the gallery.

In those years Ileana went back and forth to Paris, while Michael stayed here. He was in close contact with the artists here. The gallery here was "very successful," but not financially. Acconci couldn't be sold. [END SIDE ONE] How did she keep going? "Well, I had Jim Dine. And Si was interested, and lots of other people. Jim was making money and we were making money with him. And we were also showing Bob Rauschenberg." How did Leo feel about that? "Well, Bob and I have a special relationship; he decided he wanted to be in both galleries, because he liked to show everything he was making. It wasn't a good idea, because he flooded his market. Now I think it's a little difficult for him. But it was very painful in the seventies." They kept the Paris gallery open until 1980, mainly on sales to Dr. Ludwig. Also to Panza, Codognato (Venice), ~~someone~~ Dotremont in Belgium. Did she sell from her collection when things got tough? "Only to Ludwig, I think." The market for conceptual art was mainly in Europe.

The 1970s - "There was a lot of difficult, interesting work being done. The artists were in revolt -- they didn't paint for collectors." Bob Morris, Barry LeVa, John Baldassari, et al.

Terry Winters and Carroll Dunham - "They were getting advances from the gallery, which I think is a very unwise thing to do. After this experience I wouldn't go in for subsidizing in this way. I don't do

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it anymore." Stopped after Terry and Tip left -- very recently. "Terry was a disillusion for me, and so was Tip. Terry even more, because Terry never wanted money, he wanted it only to make his art. I understand that, but the way in which they do it..."

Neo-Geo - Meyer Vaisman had a gallery in East Village, called International With Monument. Ileana was interested in what he was doing. It grew out of that.

The Germans - Ileana had seen some shows in Germany, one on painting curated by ???. Was impressed, especially by double show of Keifer and Baselitz. Realized that in US nobody knew about who they were. "They were very Germanic."

Peter Halley - "A very unfortunate story. I would prefer not to go into it -- I think enough, or too much, has been published about that story. I should write a book about myself and my artists, but I have to become a little older before I do that."

"I never understood Julian Schnabel, so there was no competition there. I felt the same thing about David Salle. Antonio used to go his studio, but I could never get interested in what he was doing."

"Clemente, I think is a very interesting person, and the work is very interesting too. Maybe uneven, but interesting. But one can't do everything. The Italians I really couldn't understand. The Germans were probably more conservative, but also more mature. Penck was interesting, that sort of cave painting; he was also crazy. That was really thru Michael Werner."

When they were new in Paris, a group of artists came to see them -- Konrad Fischer, Hannah Darboven, Gerhard Richter. (Apparently she wasn't interested enough, although she bought two Richter landscapes, and spent time trying to understand them.)

Antonio arrives -- talks about Michael and his "total contempt for rationality." How when Michael first came to New York, Teeny Duchamp arranged for him to make yoghurt for various people who liked it (you couldn't buy yoghurt then, and Michael knew how to make it.)

Ileana met Michael in a French literature class at Columbia -- studying Proust. Michael was also involved with the Actor's Studio, informally. He knew Brando, etc. Also very interested in art. Ileana: "I was taking some courses at Columbia, one of which was French literature. I had read Proust four times already, so I took this course. The teacher was a very interesting Frenchwomen. At the end of the first class she said she wanted to know about us, what's your name, where you come from. I said, well, I'm a refugee -- so I wouldn't have to say from where. And Michael said he was a refugee too. The whole class laughed. The professor left, and I said to him where are you a refugee from. He said, oh, well, I'm a refugee from Buffalo. That's how we met." (END SIDE TWO).

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TAPE II 7/10/98
Antonio: "Michael has been able to be the freest person, but he has not been able to be free from his own doubts. His doubts are maybe the only thing he cannot get free of...Michael never does anything that is not of importance to him."

Ileana cooked one summer in East Hampton -- breakfast lunch and dinner. At the end of the summer she said that's it, from now on I don't know how to cook.

(LUNCH WITH MICHAEL SONNABEND AND ANTONIO - 7/14/98)

Michael on meeting Ileana: "I'd never even been to high school, but during the war they needed students at Columbia, and they told me that if I'd go into a Proust class...They accepted me as a student, that's how I got educated. She was the only one who knew French, aside from me. I'd learned French when I lived in Paris -- I learned it from actors. I went to all the plays, that was my French." Earned money by being a tourist guide -- Louvre etc. "Art was business for me, never a study. I was a guide on a bus that took people to the Louvre. My main interest was to stay away from home. I had a terrible family. My father was man who sold material, but he never learned English, he spoke Yiddish, so the whole household was a Yiddish household. That wasn't my cup of tea. I ran away from home, I must have been seventeen, and went to New York and then to Paris. My idea of France was that I could get a girl there very easily -- I couldn't get it here. There was free love in France! To meet the girls who would be free, I used to look in L'Humanite, the Communist paper, where they would give you their rendez-vous in each neighborhood, the Communist meetingplace. The girls were so ugly! My main argument against Communism was that the girls were ugly."

Antonio: "Michael also took a trip to Spain during which he learned Spanish, and a trip to Italy during which he learned Italian."

Michael: "When I was a guide I only had to work two or three months, and made enough money to travel around. I was the first hippie. When I got to Paris I went to the tourist board, and told them I could take people around the war district, that I knew the war district where Americans were...I didn't know it, but I asked the chauffeurs."

Michael on Dante: "I must have had a religious vision of morality. I should have been a rabbi, but I don't believe in God. It was before I went to Venice. I translate it as I read. The thing is that I like to learn Dante by heart. It's a song, a song of the universe. So I got interested. Even now, when I go to sleep I quote it, long quotations from Dante." On Rauschenberg's Dante drawings: "Rauschenberg bought a book on Dante in the drug store. He read it, and went to Ciardi who did the translation. Ciardi said, I don't like your work, and besides, with Dante you have to know everything. Bob said it's true, I know nothing, but I don't know why you won't write something for each canto. So he came to me and

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told me this, and said would I do it. So I did. It was the typwritten story of each canto, next to the canto that he was doing." Michael's original got lost, of course; he has no copy."

Back to first meeting with Ileana - was she different then? "Not so different. She's still shy. In that classroom, there were only three of us that knew French, and knew Proust -- the teacher, Ileana, and me. So we used to go out together. She was very gracious. I like shy women. Her shyness had a kind of Dantesque aloofness."

Michael met a lot of modern artists in the cafes in Paris. Giacometti, Gargallo. Saw Picasso a few times, but didn't meet him.

"Ileana went to Europe because she was divorced. She didn't want to be called Castelli, so she married me for my name. After the divorce, Toiny used to call up and tell Ileana to stay away from Leo. So we had to go to Europe. She screamed at her. Ileana had to do something, and she had three or four thousand dollars at the time, so we had the money to open a gallery. At first we were not going to open a gallery but to show at other galleries, the Americans. In any case, we eventually decided that the best way was to do it. We had no plan, we just opened. We were told when we opened, just don't show the flag. [Because to show Johns's American flag would look imperialist.] So we found all the flags we could and made a point of showing them. But of course they thought that Jasper Johns was spitting on the flag. Pop Art became so popular in France because they thought it was a criticism of American culture. The Surrealists liked this. I used to up to see Breton."

In 1968 people wrote "Americans go home" on the gallery window, and "Sonnabend et Arman = Flic et Fric" (cops and money). "The American Embassy in Paris had a horror of the gallery, because it showed how uneducated we were."

Why they moved back to New York: "What happened was that we were so successful that nobody bought anything. They all went to New York! Instead of buying from us, they came here."

Antonio: "Ileana was very reticent about the idea of closing the gallery in Paris. Paris basically was a burden that we carried for many years. It was only in 1980, when we were spending almost no time there, that I really forced Ileana to close in Paris."

What did Michael do in the gallery? "I talked."

Antonio: "Michael doesn't do anything else but be himself."

Michael: "Ileana was the boss."

Antonio: "Ileana was always the difficult person, and Michael was the public relations person."

Michael: "Ileana begins with no. I begin with yes."

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When choosing an artist, it was always a three-way decision. With David Salle, Antonio and Ileana were unclear; then Michael saw the work (this was before Anina Nosei), and said he didn't like it, and that was decisive. The lack of enthusiasm of one would dampen the others, and vice versa. What did they respond to? "It had to be different." (END SIDE ONE)

(JULY 14 - Lunch with Michael et al, continued)

Michael: "I was looking for subtleties."

Antonio: "But Michael, you always said you were looking for the heroic. And I think that's also what you like in Dante. But you know, I don't think Michael is so interested in new work, because there is a whole dimension, a Duchampian dimension that is very contrary to Michael's point of view. With Ileana, every day she is looking for something that would surprise her, and that can come from something that it totally unheroic."

In Paris, Ileana and Michael lived in a rented apt next to the Quai des Augustins gallery. Very modest. Only impressive apt they ever had was one they rented in Venice during the Biennale, to invite people and show work. They used to go to Venice a lot, for the holidays as well as the Biennale.

Michael became part of the family with Leo and Ileana, in the 1940s. He used to go and look at pictures with Leo. Ileana never cared about cost when buying. She one told Antonio, "I never regret anything I bought, I only regret those things I didn't buy." Michael bought two Johns paintings from Leo's first show, also a Rauschenberg combine, a Twombly in Rome -- he didn't have much money, but bought what he liked. (One of the Johns he bought from first show was the Grey Target that Si Newhouse just bought from them.)

Michael: (on the artists who have been most rewarding to him) Rauschenberg is the most heroic. Jasper is the most subtle.

What other things matter to him? "Theater. There was no play in Paris that I didn't see. Ileana wouldn't go." She'd stay home and read a book. They both spent a lot of time at the Cafe Flore and the Coupole, with their long-haired dachshund Piccina, which became their emblem.

After Leo's divorce, Ileana called Michael (who was in Los Angeles at the time) and proposed marriage. He'd never been married, was skittish about it, but agreed. "I run away from everything." The divorce was painful, because Toiny kept calling Ileana and telling her to stay away from Leo. Leo wouldn't do anything about it, acc.to Michael: "Leo's strength is not to do anything. Ileana's strength is to do things, no matter what the situation."

Antonio says it's a misperception that Ileana showed only Leo's artists in Europe. Many were not: Segal, Oldenburg, Dine,

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Wesselmann. But basically she was showing Leo's artists, and he was making it possible for her to do so.

Michael on Leo: "I think of Leo as a child. Somebody has to take care of him, always."

Antonio: "Michael is the opposite. Even now, we only see him two or three hours a day." He spends his time now reading Dante, along with four or other books at a time.

Michael: "Ileana is not a child. She's a mother." Antonio disagrees: "No, no, she's a child, Michael, and so are you. I'm the only mother in this family." Michael: "But Leo is more naive than Ileana." (END TAPE - BEGIN NEW TAPE, WITH ILEANA PRESENT)

Venice was where they took vacations, such as they were - Michael spent the day in a cafe, as always, and Ileana spent much time on the telephone. Ileana had been taken there as a child, to the Lido. But Michael visited all the churches and museums, very organized. He got up early, six am or so, while Ileana slept late. She thought it was dangerous to go out that early. His cafe was on the Giudecca.

Not much interest in gastronomy. Went to Relais Bisson and then to Allard in Paris, but just because they were around corner from gallery. Sometimes to Laperouse, which was no longer great then. Ileana never drinks wine, ever since bad case of hepatitis in NY, Antonio not interested in it.

Adopting Antonio - (nothing useful).

What other art does Ileana like? Late Goyas in the Prado. Not a great fan of Duchamp (tho she liked Teeny). Duchamp the anti-heroic.

Michael: "Everything that Ileana does surprises me." Ileana: "Thank you, that's very nice."

Ileana feels she did not have real independence with Leo, as she does with Michael.

Artists and others who have hated Ileana: Lucy Lippard; Richard Serra; Dan Flavin.

Artists she would have liked to have: Cy Twombly, Sol LeWitt. They asked three woman artists to join the gallery, and all refused. Altho they show no women, the Gorilla Girls have not attacked them. The gallery has never had the sort of renown that Leo's had, which is good and bad.

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Ileana - 7/30/98 lunch

She came by herself, Antonio having left for Europe. When she was late, and Dodie called the apartment, she answered merrily, "Oh, then I should be there!" When she sat down, she said she thought she should be more outrageous in what she told us, and then, as though following thru on that, she said, "I was always so bored with Leo." Meaning that it was Michael who opened her up to the life of the mind, opera, etc.

She tells story of a tax audit at the gallery in Paris -- the man stayed three weeks, and at the end was "totally corrupted. He had decided to become an artist."

The move to Chelsea - "I'm rather attracted to the idea of a new space." Will be taking on new artists, "when we find them." She doesn't visit studios any more, but when she's interested in someone she does.

Relationship with Leo - "It's going to endure. It's not the same as it was, but we're both trying to keep. I am very fond of Leo, and I think he is fond of me too. I certainly am going to endure." Can't tell what will happen with galleries, because the Castelli Gallery "won't be Leo's any more, it will be Barbara's. Anyhow, I'm open. A new beginning requires a lot of energy." But you're up for it? "Yes, because I'm totally unconscious of my age. Once in a while I remember, and then I wonder what I'm doing... In my life I've been doing pretty much what I wanted, and I go on."

The present period in art - "I think that everything is going to change now. It is changing. We are in the middle of a revolution. All the electronics, all the communications, the attitude of people toward communications, which is so different from what I knew, everything has to be known and said and it doesn't really matter. I don't think everything should be public, but more and more it's going to be."

Will the communications revolution be the source of new art? "I don't know. All I've seen up to now is not very encouraging. But things are changing so rapidly, and I'm looking. Much of it is very banal. I hope there is something else going on alongside. Of course, I couldn't do it without Antonio. He is very clear-minded, very diplomatic, very intelligent, and he's well-liked, I think."

Future disposition of her collection -She's thought about it. But "You know,I'm not so enchanted with museums. Things change in museums, directors change, it's like a gallery. I'd much rather sell to collectors who appreciate what they've got. In any case I'm more preoccupied to leave enough money for Antonio and Nina."

Where is the pleasure in collecting what you don't live with or even see? "I'll tell you what the pleasure is. Every time you see a work anyplace, you think, 'Ah, there it is, my little painting.' In a show, or a museum, or a catalog -- it's like seeing

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old friends again. It's a very complex experience really. It's new." She always lends when asked, to museum show and gallery shows. Like children she sends out into the world? "Yes, and I'm very proud of them...I like to share enthusiasm."

See any changes or trends in collecting now? "I'd rather not talk about collectors." She hasn't stopped collecting.

Peter Ludwig - "I became quite fond of him. He is a wonderfully generous person. The first time he came to the gallery, I had no idea who he was...We showed him some things, and he said, well, I want this one, and I'll ask my wife if we want this one, too. And I said, well, don't you think that one is enough? He said, send them to me. Since I didn't know him, I said, yes, send me your check and I'll send them to you. He started laughing like crazy. He said, I can see now that you don't know who I am and I'm very happy. That was the beginning. His family had a medieval museum in Cologne, and they also had a museum that the city of Cologne had made for them. They met in college, where they were both studying art..." He had bought a few things from Leo already. "He chose very well, he always chose the most important works. He was not afraid of taking a risk. [Many] before they buy want to know if they can sell it au auction for a higher price.

"Panza had a very good eye, but he had a bad advisor -- Pierre Restany." Dotrement in Belgium was very interesting, very knowledgable.

"Actually the gallery in Paris had become a kind of cultural center." At the beginning she allowed performances, to which no one would come.

"In general, I think that gallery owners are better collectors than collectors."

Why do so many collectors say that aren't collectors? "Because greed is not good."

Ileana's saying that her primary motivation as a collector was "curiosity and greed" -- "Yes, and everybody was very shocked, because those are not virtues. But I think they are, in the end...[the desire to possess] is also the desire to save it. I would be very unhappy if certain collectors had things I like. So, if somebody that I don't like wants to buy something that I want to buy, I feel that if I bought it I would be saving it."

Do you really not know everything that's in your collection? "Certainly I don't. It's very expressionist, in the sense that it's not methodical." There is an inventory somewhere... Most of it is stored here in SoHo. There are a lot of things in Baltimore, because of friendly relationship with Brenda Richardson and Arnold ~~Freeman~~ February (?), who was the director. "They needed works to show, and I was very pleased to let them have whatever they wanted. It worked very well, until now, because Brenda isn't there anymore. Arnold

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left, and then Brenda left. The new people would like to keep the collection, but I'm not too happy about it. Some of the collection is in Princeton, because the director of the museum (Allen Rosenbaum) also needed work. He is a great friend." That's mainly why she does these things, because she likes the people.

Sometimes people come to the gallery, express interest in a painting, but say, "What do I have to do to understand it?" Ileana says, "Well, don't talk about it before you have the feeling, and then follow your instincts."

* "All I know is that if I feel strongly about something, then I can tell people about it." Felt that about Baselitz and Penck et Co, who had a big following in Europe but were unknown in NY -- that show sold out.

Has she ever refused to sell to a collector? "Oh, yes. I once got very angry at Durand-Ruel, because he had bought a Jasper Johns from me, he was very nice, very interested in Jasper and in Gilbert and George, and so I told him that when I got a new one I would call him up. And so I did. He said, 'Well, about Gilbert and George, do you think they are good?' And that was so offensive to me...His wife was always very apologetic about his boorishness."(SIDE TWO, 155ff).

Family life -- Ileana has three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. "I was a bad mother. Nina and I are very close now, and have been for the last ten years. But Nina had a nanny who stayed much too long, and I was somewhat displaced as a mother." When she had to scold Nina, Leo would take Nina's side. "The day I threw the breakfast dishes on the floor, that was the liberation. It was after East Hampton, in New York. Nina was there. Leo was utterly stunned." Never did it again - "That took care of that." Nina was already in college when they divorced -- "We waited for that." But why a bad mother? "I wasn't allowed to me a mother." Nina's nanny would tell her that her mother was unstable, don't mind what she says. The whole situation was very bad, not just Leo's girl friends.

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Ileana - 8/8/98

Ileana had asked to see us this time, because there were things she wanted to talk about, or maybe to correct. But when we sat down to lunch at Petaluma what she really wanted was to know if she could see the manuscript before it was turned in.

She said she was afraid she had been nasty about Panza, who began collecting contemporary American art very early, advised by John Cage. They met when Cage became a TV hero in Italy (see Cage profile), and Cage got him interested in Rauschenberg. He wrote a letter, in English, to Leo, but "we didn't take it very seriously." Leo sent him some photographs, "and then to our amazement he wrote back and said we want this, we want that."

Was there anything else she wanted to talk about? "Yes. Leo...I finally had lunch with him. We didn't talk to each other, we just looked at each other. [Barbara was there.] I really think that he's given up. It might be different if we were alone. It's very sad. I usually don't dare to tell him what I think. If he knew that you were interviewing me, he would be jealous... Leo has been very very good to me. He trusts me a lot. He's very generous, he would come to my shows and always say good things about them, and then I don't know what happened, but he started being competitive." (This was after she came back from Paris.)

"Leo would ask my opinion, and I would give him my opinion even when he didn't ask." Did he do the same with you? "Not quite as openly." "But you know, he's my oldest friend, and we have so many memories in common. There are things that I don't remember, and I ask him and he remembers. It's very important to me to have someone who is so close to me over fifty years. Especially I don't want to be ungrateful, because he did do a lot for me."

Do you remember what you said about him when I was doing his profile, about both of you being adolescents? "Well, now we are not any more, unfortunately."

There is seven years difference in age between them. When they met, Leo was 25.

Frank Stella - Ileana bought one of the black paintings (Point of Pines). "And then I got a phone call from Leo, saying that Frank needed this painting for other paintings. So I sent them the painting. And then I was told that it had been sold to someone else. Leo sold it. I was furious. So I went to a lawyer, who talked to the press about it. I never got it back. I think Frank has a very bad conscience. He's scared of me. I few years ago he was hiding from me, and I was very insulted. I settled out of court with Leo, to save embarrassment. I got paid and I spent all the money in Paris. Stella kept the painting. [It was not sold to someone else.] He still has it.

Vito Acconci - "You know, there are some artists who want to do

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their own ?? One day a letter came to the gallery for him, and I read it. Never a good thing to do. The letter said I would like to show you, and what are you doing with her anyhow? I did nothing, really. I let whatever was going to happen happen. I like Vito a lot. He also is not so young anymore. I found him - at that time there were wonderful magazines in New York. You remember Avalanche? I saw what he was doing, and I went to see him. He had a little small studio, and he was working on a video about cockroaches. His life with his cockroaches. I didn't show that. Michael was very much taken with that, he thought Vito was like St. Francis, in love with his cockroaches.

Jim Dine - "Jim Dine is very elegant. One day he came to the --- gallery, very nervous, and he said look, I have to talk to you. And he started telling me that he had -- three or four boys, who were going to be college age, and he needed more money for them. And so I quite understood. We weren't selling..." He wanted to go with Leo, but Leo didn't take him.

The famous visit to Bob R's studio -- would Leo have offered Bob a show if Ileana hadn't pushed for it? "I don't know."

"I think it's going to be murder in Chelsea. Everybody is too close, and there aren't enough artists. Enough interesting artists. So everybody is going to be running after the same ones. But you know, I haven't been so much involved in the gallery. It doesn't disturb me so much."

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Ileana - 11/6/98 at Savore

Antonio on the paintings in her apartment: Gilbert and George, Bob Morris (Object), early Twombly white ptg, Rauschenberg silk-screen on canvas (been there the longest), Warhol flower canvas, sometimes a small Koons sculpture, a Kouenellis -- mostly small works. Michael's suite is mostly books, but with a small RR on paper, and a Marguerite Bourke White portrait of Gen. Patton ("Michael has a great admiration for generals -- he sees generals the way Don Quixote sees knighthood.") Apt is in the old Fifth Avenue Hotel.

The November show at Sonnabend is Baldassari's "Commissioned Paintings," done in the 1960s but never shown. He gave the idea, and commissioned someone else to paint it. (This was after the statement that he would "make no more boring ~~paintings~~ pictures.") Each painter received a photo of Baldassari's hand pointing at something, which they then painted. This was in reference to Bob Motherwell's statement that Pop art was just pointing at things.

Ileana
Bob Rauschenberg and the life saver charm -- given when Ileana was going away to Paris. He cast it in sculpmetal, and she wore it for years -- she's wearing it in Warhol's portrait of her. (check). Stopped when told it was dangerous to wear the metal.

When she saw Bob for the first time, at the Ninth Street Show, she said, "Who is that young prince?" He asked her if she was southern. "I guess it wasn't the accent, it was just the way of being." She doesn't remember the first thing of Bob's she bought. He's given her many things over the years.

The Pollock ptgs she bought early - five smaller paintings, on canvas. One she bought from Ben Heller, before the others, before he bought Blue Poles. Ben was staying at their house in Easthampton, and he was asking everybody if he should or shouldn't buy (it), for $7,000, which seemed a lot then. He bought it, and Pollock was so grateful that he gave him a black-and-white painting in addition; this was the ptg that Ileana bought from Heller, for $2,500. Her first Pollock. She bought the others soon afterward, while Pollock was still alive. Ben wanted to buy a block of ptgs, but said he didn't have enough money, so Ileana said she would go half and half -- she gave him the money so he could buy. A few weeks after Pollock died, people started asking to buy them. "Ben became very impatient. He wanted to sell them. I kept telling him that it was silly, but he obliged me to sell them, because I also did not have enough money to pay for them." (to buy him out). She kept the first one "as long as I could."

Rauschenberg paintings: Odalisk. Michael was friendly with Victor Ganz. By then Odalisk, "which was mine, had been in several exhibitions. Peter Ludwig wanted to buy it. I would say no, it's not for sale. And then we were in Venice, having coffee at ??, when Victor appeared and had coffee with us. He persuaded me to sell Odalisk to him." How did he persuade you? "He offered me more

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money!" Victor eventually sold it to Ludwig. This was soon after the 1964 Biennale. Ileana bought it out of Bob's show.

Charlene - "Charlene was a wonderful painting. We all wanted to sell it to the Modern, but the Modern said no, it's a conservation problem and we can't deal with it. There was a very nice curator involved, and he was shattered. I wanted to be agreeable, and that was my undoing. I still wanted to place these things. Bob was very disappointed, of course. So I said, well, never mind, I'll buy it. ...That painting was in three or four shows. All the European museum directors came to see the Rauschenberg show, and there was a lot of enthusiasm, so I got a few offers. One of them was from de Wilde in Amsterdam, who told me he had to have a painting for his museum, and I kept saying no. He said, well what will you do with it? I said that ideally I would like to make a kind of little chapel for Bob, with this and some other paintings. But then he insisted so much that finally I sold it. And it went almost immediately into a closet. It comes out every three or four years maybe." [The Stedelijk wouldn't lend it to the current RR retrospective because it's so fragile].

Hymnal - "I always loved this painting very much. I saw it in Bob's studio and was very struck by it." Still has it -- it's in Bilbao now. A real conservation problem, it has a telephone book embedded in it, looking like a bible.

Ileana has Canyon and a few other RRs left. Now that the Met got its two Johns, MOMA really wants Canyon, as does the National Gallery and now the Met too. "But I don't want to sell it. I want to be able to show it, but there is a problem with Customs. They let the painting go out, but they won't let it come back in. Why? Because an eagle is a protected species. Of course the eagle is a lot older than the regulation, so I don't know. I think probably we'll have to work out something..."

Ileana has very few Johns left, only lesser (?) ones.

Her knitting - "I make dozens and dozens of sweaters. It's just to be doing something with my hands. I think it's more fun than any conversations I had. I was thinking of starting it again, because it's a very good protection. You get interested in your knitting instead of in the conversation."

Is it true that when Leo was thinking about marrying Toiny, he flew to Paris to ask your opinion. "Yes. But my opinion didn't count for him." [laughs] [END SIDE ONE]

Re buying the 420 West Broadway space - "It really was a condominium. He bought a certain amount, which turned out to be two floors. And then he rented one floor to us, for a wonderfully cheap price, I must say. For two years we were paying him. And then, TK needed money for the building, and offered his space to sell to me, so we bought it from the gallery.

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When did she buy Stella's Point of Pines? From the show.

Is it true that she won't sell to Larry Gagosian? "I don't know how to get out of this one! (laughs)...I have no confidence in him." Larry "was instrumental in getting some people out of the gallery, into his own."

Showing Oldenburg in Paris - "The response was very divided. Some people were charmed, others didn't get it at all, they didn't know why it was up. They were making heavy jokes about it. But all in all it was successful. Big collectors bought, and what didn't sell I was happy to buy. This was after 1964. I have a few Oldenburgs left, I like them a lot."

Kiefer - "He had a show in a German museum...The show was very impressive. During the summer I had seen some works at the Biennale (1978). I saw Kiefer and Baselitz sculpture, and the whole thing was so strong. Then I saw Giacomedes, who was interested. After that I think we went to see Kiefer in his studio in the mountains. He was then painting oil on canvas, but I really prefered his oils on paper. Very Germanic. Everybody thought it was a mistake to sell such nasty-looking paintings, but everybody came to see and everybody bought. It was a catastrophe for us, because the prices couldn't be equal to our ??. I had bought a very large number from the studio, and drawings, and showed them in New York. I hoped to represent Kiefer here. But Mary Boone got into it, and Marian Goodman went to Leo and begged and pleaded, and Leo came to me and said, well, I can't help you." This was "the new Leo. I was very unhappy about that."

"Kiefer is not a complicated character. He is very simple, but devious. He said, well, what are you going to do with these paintings now. I said I would like to show them, so we started this dance." She never was able to do a Kiefer show. Kept some, sold the others.

Were you surprised when Leo became so successful? "No. I had a lot of confidence in Leo. I thought that was very well-deserved."

Leo now - "It's very difficult for me to talk about Leo, because he's a person I don't know. I don't any more. It's very sad. He's so shut off from everything." The gossip is that Barbara keeps his hearing aids in her pocket. "I think she's a very intelligent girl. She tries to be very secretive, about her doings and the gallery. She sacked everyone who was working there, so she now is at the gallery regularly, sitting [where Leo sat].

Frank Stella - "Today Stella is afraid of me." And Leo? "I think Leo is scared of many people. He professed to be scared of me, bnt that wasn't the case."

"Leo calls me up, we go out for lunch, and he doesn't say a word. I chat with Barbara...I try to keep it as smooth as possible."

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What about Chelsea? It's uncertain now. The building they had settled on keeps raising the price. "We hate Chelsea. We don't like the idea -- it's so barren." Don't know when they'll open there, but probably "next season," meaning next fall. They don't have to sell their present space, are quite relaxed about that; the sale of 420 to Esprit is very tangled right now..."like a soap opera." But someone else will undoubtedly buy it.

Ileana also owns a space on 9th street. It was a gallery, they use it for storage, but if need be they could show there. The bldg is occupied now by artists. "I think everything is going to sort itself out."

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Ileana 12/11/98 (not taped)

The Pollock suicide episode - she didn't pull him out of the water, as sometimes reported. Pollock and DeKooning got into a argument at the Castellis in Easthampton, about DeKooning's "Woman" painting. They were both pretty drunk. Pollock stormed out and headed for the beach. Ileana, worried, said someone should go after him. DeKooning went, found him walking in the surf, and got him to come out.

The rift with Bob Rauschenberg - Ileana learned that Bob had agreed to have a show with Doug Christmas in Paris. "I was furious." I gather the fury lasted a while, then passed.

Ben Heller and the Pollock(s) -- she still says there were four or five, but clearly doesn't remember too well. Leo would remember, if he weren't gaga.

Her collections - She never collected lace, and she has only a few pieces of antique jewelry.

Gilbert and George - She had heard about them, and received their things in the mail. On a trip to Brussels for a Jim Dine opening, Ileana and Antonio learned that G & G were havibng a show there, so they went to see it. They were doing the Singing Sculpture. Ileana and Antonio watched for about an hour, fascinated, and afterwards Ileana went up to them and said, "I am thinking of opening a gallery in New york, and I would love to show you." Their performance, she said, had a physical shape to it, because of the repetition. "You watch it the way you watch sculpture." It really was sculpture.

Mel Bochner - They were interested in him before the MOMA Projects show, and the show came as a confirmation. Ileana also knew he had been approached by other galleries. At the same time, ~~view~~ twin were aware of Brice Marden, but they didn't really consider him -- they felt he was more about painting. "What I was interested in was this kind of total marriage of painting and performance, and even music and dance. This was very much Bob's [Rauschenberg] idea, too." Antonio: "We were interested in means of expression that were very, very new." Michel Guy had asked Ileana, in Paris, to organize a series of artist-performances at the 1972 Festival d'Automne, with European and American artists. She did so, but not many people came. "Michel Guy was the only person who understood what I wanted to do."

Her feelings about Leo's decision to give Bed to MOMA: "I thought it was crazy. It was a very valuable painting. It would not have been my choice, but after all he did well for the painting -- and not too badly for himself."

Her sale of the two Johns paintings to Si: "I had very mixed feelings. They were wonderful and I was unhappy to part with them. But, the way I had conducted the gallery, money wasn't always plentiful, I think it happened when I realized my age. I had denied

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myself so many things just to keep the paintings. It was an occasion never to have to think about money again." Grey Target was bought by Michael, from the show. The other pts was Flag Above White, which Ileana bought very early. (The first Johns she bought was a small White Numbers; this was the one she paid for on the stairs, on first meeting Jasper.)

"I never had any money. Whatever I had went. When Si made the offer, I started realizing what my age meant, and I thought it would be nice to have some security."

"I have bought a few things since then. A little Warhol..."

She is "really sorry to leave SoHo." They are about to close the deal on the ground-floor space on 22nd street, next to DIA, which they thought they had a deal on some months ago -- that deal came apart, but now it's on again. She says they probably won't open there for a year or more, and will continue showing at 420 in the meanwhile.

Photographers who have shots of the gallery in Paris: Harry Shunk, Andre Moran (sp?). Also William Burke.

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Ileana & Antonio - 12/31/98 at Petaluma

Nina's birth - born in Vienna because Ileana's uncle was a well-known doctor there.

Separation from Leo in 1938 - "anything was possible...yes, there probably was." Leo moved out.

Art history courses at Columbia -- not with Meyer Shapiro, doesn't remember with whom.

Lace? - No lace. Judith Richardson was wrong. A friend gave Ileana some lace long ago. Later, at the flea market in Paris, she bought another piece of lace that looked like the one she had. That's it.

Antonio adopted in the early 80s -- must get date. His mother had died 1973 but his father was living (died 1983). Ileana: "I was just thinking that, from a son, you became a father. His son fits into our family perfectly." Antonio's son lives in NY now.

Has art dealing changed in last 30 years? Ileana always went her own way, paying no attention to how the profession worked. "In the beginning, the artists were very close. It was a smaller world. The dealer was totally committed and the artist knew that. In the late 80s, the artists really thought the galleries were there to serve them totally." Artists became dominant. Antonio says this is not just 80s, it's a product of success; Picasso expected gallery to serve him totally. "Ileana never acted like an art dealer, she acted like herself. The relationship was with Ileana, not with the art dealer."

"I want to say something about my experience in Europe. I didn't understand it at first, but what the artists and the dealers really hoped to do was from me to get themselves to Leo. I was a stepping stone..." This realization came in late 1960s, with success of pop art. Antonio: "Ileana was keeping the situation in control, and then everyone found out that Leo -- you were there to be the bad policeman and Leo was the good policeman." Ileana would refuse to sell Warhols for less than she thought they should bring, even for offers that Antonio thought were very attractive. Leo the other way, selling for discounts sometimes. It upset European dealers that she had these works she would not sell; it was seen as capricious - one complained that "nothing is ever for sale in this gallery." Ileana wanted to defend the art work, even when the artist or Leo would be glad to compromise.

Gian Enzo Sperone asked her what he had to do to get closer to Leo -- he thought she would get him there. Ileana told him to get on a plane and go to New York and see Leo. Ileana resented being used that way. This stopped when she opened the gallery in NY, and became known for showing work that had nothing to do with Leo.

"Bob Rauschenberg always made it clear that he wanted to be with you and not with Leo...he wanted to punish Leo."

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Meyer Vaisman wanted to be with Leo, not with Ileana. Leo was not interested in him, only took him on because Meyer was with Ileana. Antonio: "I think we did two awful things in our life. We sold Meyer to Leo, and we sold Michael Werner to Mary Boone!"

The Collection - probably a lot of it will have to be sold. At one point Ileana thought of buying a building for it. But Ileana never wants to have that sort of responsibility. "I don't like housekeeping." But "I still love that idea." A. says if she loved the idea enough she would have done it. [END SIDE ONE]

Antonio says the collection is "the sediment of Ileana's life, the things that have sifted through. What has remained. It's not even important for her to see...Ileana and Michael and Leo have absolutely no need to go back, they are always in the present going forward."

"Strangely, I'm not very possessive." [acquisitive but not possessive]. Her Chekovian side: she goes on with her life, and when it becomes necessary she sells something.

Does she have favorites? "Not any more." (all sold). Canyon? "If they built a pyramid for me, I would like it in there with me."

Sy Newhouse handled Ileana just right, by not pressing her on sale of the two Johns ptgs. Ileana needed time. If he'd pressed, she might have said no.

"I'm not under oath, and I can even lie."

"I want to tell you something about Leo. What is so sad for me, is that Leo has lost his elan. He doesn't want to think about the future in any way. It's very good for Leo, but..." Antonio: "It's funny you should say that, because for the first time in Leo's life he is basically living like you do. The first time in his life when other people's opinions count less that his own peace of mind. He doesn't give a damn about anybody, he just wants things to go on the way they are."

Koons: "I adore Jeff Koons." He is doing some small pieces that Ileana will show, but they are not involved with the "Celebration" series.

Chelsea gallery will not open in May, as originally planned. Opening show as to be Ashley Bickerton, but that will be at 420 WBway instead.

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Acconci

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Vito Acconci - 8/28/98

"She came to see me sometime in 1971, in the summer." At that time he was mainly doing films, "basically me and my body, me and my own person." Ileana, Michael, Antonio and probably Ealan came and watched maybe two hours of Super 8 film of "I doing something to me." That was at a little apt on Christopher Street, a five-floor walkup. "I remember what a long time it took them to come up the stairs." She had heard about him from Harry Shunk and TK Kender, the photographers who did a lot of work for Avalanche, put out by Willoughby Sharp and Lisa Bear. "She always had this magical ability to sense what was going on in the air; she might not know what it was, but she knew how to find the people who knew what it might be."

"Ileana was a myth. We had all heard of her...that she was the person who really discovered pop art. The physical presence of Ileana was kind of daunting in a way, because you had heard about the myth, and suddenly here was your mother in a basic brown dress. She was careful not to talk as much as your mother talked. She forced you to talk."

His first show was in Jan. 72. Everything happened very quickly. She saw Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, Mel Bochner, et al. Did she know what your first show would be? No. "As much as anything, I think she wanted to be surprised. That was true for a very short time in the art world; it's never happened again. It started to change around the mid-1970s. Not that she didn't want to be surprised -- she always wanted to be surprised. But what happened in the mid-70s was that -- in 1971 SoHo was just beginning as an art neighborhood, and at that time it almost didn;t need sales, it needed attention, it needed publicity. Selling wasn't the prime thing. The first shows she did were shows that were not bringing sales, but they would provide a lot of publicity. They brought people in, and then of course she could sell them something in the back room. But she was just as interested in what was going on. By the mid-70s, it needed everyday maintenance, sales were more important."

In 1976 the configuration of the gallery changed, from a relatively unstructured space to a corridor leading to two sales rooms. There began to be more paintings, easier to sell. (This is Vito's reading).

But you couldn't talk to Ileana about this sort of thing. "I can remember another artist in the gallery saying, 'I would go to dinner with Ileana, and have a list of complaints; the dinner would go on for three hours, and I'd be on my way home and realize I'd forgotten to mention any of the complaints.' That was so typical. She could always change the subject."

He remembers Ileana going into a restaurant in Dusseldorf, and asking to change the table. "Dinners were very important for her. They'd take a long time. The choice of a table was very, very momentous. It was almost like in those books of Carlos Casteneda,

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she'd have to find the right spot. At a dinner in 1979, she and Antonio asked me how I was getting along, and how I felt about the gallery. So I talked for about three minutes, and suddenly her attention shifted to Antonio. 'I think I'll have to knit you a new sweater,' she said. 'That one's getting very ragged.' She could say things that totally squelched you, yet gave you reasons to applaud. And I've felt that way ever since. It's the one gallery I really felt I've had a relationship with."

"She took on a number of people whose work seemed almost anti-gallery-directed. Maybe domesticated it, made it part of gallery art."

"I left in 1980 -- probably one of the greatest mistakes I ever made in my life. I was with Max Protetch for a while, because my work was getting more architectural-like and I thought he was showing architecture-like stuff. Which he was -- but he wasn't bringing the art world round to architecture, he was bringing architecture to the art world." How did he leave her? "Certainly not in person or by the phone. I made sure it was during the summer, and she was in Venice not New York, and I wrote her a letter." This was early 1979.

In 1973 he had great difficulty getting his show ready. The opening was delayed. Two years later, prior to his 1975 show, he got a telegram from Ileana on his birthday: "Glad your birthday is on time. Hope the show follows."

Her reaction to "Seedbed." "At that time shows happened very fast, in the sense that the gallery didn't know a half year before what the show was going to be. Probably didn't really know a month before. Neither did the artist. I didn't know what the show was going to be until maybe ten days before. The opening date wasn't so much a finished body of work that we're now showing, it's more that, here's a kind of activity...So, sometime in that two week period before the show, I knew what I was going to do, and I talked to the gallery. Ileana wasn't in town. She was back in Paris. I probably told it to Ealan Wingate. Then there was a call from Ileana, saying I hear you want to do something very strange in the gallery. I sort of hemmed and hawed, art talk. She said, You really want to do this? I said yes. She said O.K. I don't think we really talked directly about what I was going to do, but she knew."

1971-75 - very much into the idea of art as process.

Michael Sonnabend - "I always felt very much that it was his eye and his voice," but never directly. He was around. He would have dinner with you, if it was before nine pm.

Acconci was on a stipend at first, very low -- began at $600 a month, rose eventually to $1000. After 1975, 1976 you began to have the feeling that there had to be something to sell, that stipend was a loan against sales.

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Connection with arte povera? Yes, certainly. "I thought that the interesting thing about Ileana at that time was that she was showing a kind of European version of a certain kind of thing, and an American version. There was a connection, but there were real differences. The American version was much more involved with tangible, living fact; the European stuff was more involved with metaphor. The gallery was a kind of meeting place for artists. On the one hand, Dennis Oppenheim and I; on the other hand, Mel Bochner, could be in the same place and talk...and could meet Kounnellis, or Boltanski. It was a time when all of us were feverish to know what's going on out there...a time when distribution, in the sense of information, was important to people. Because of the kinds of artists Ileana showed -- there's something that connects all those people, but there were also differences, and you could air those differences.

"It used to be felt that Leo showed Kosuth, Weiner, Barry before Ileana showed any of us, so Leo made the real move and Ileana, sort of once the door was open, stepped in. But I don't think that's true. Maybe Leo showed more programmatic versions of what was becoming loosely called conceptual art, whereas Ileana's version of it was more inclusive. On the one hand it dealt with ideas, but on the other hand it still dealt with something earth-centered, something that was very much about tangibility. It's more complicated than I thought it was."

What did you all have in common? "The one thing we all had in common was that none of the artists she showed were media-specific. There were artists who thought doing something, and then would decide what kind of medium it would be. At that time I don't think she showed anyone who started out by thinking, now I'm going to do a painting...The art she showed was exploratory, in the sense that you would find the medium. That was pretty generally the case. Baldassari, out in California, was teaching a course in post-studio art -- pretentious on the one hand, but kind of interesting." They were the generation that lived by the Whole Earth Catalog.

Ileana's contribution -- "Making something possible that didn't have to be clearly defined. Ileana's conception was kind of mind-and-body joined. It was something about that curiosity and greed -- she wanted both to be done at once."

He left the gallery in 1980. In 1987, he saw her, and they discussed the possibility of his coming back. "She certainly didn't welcome me with open arms, but she didn't say no. It was Ileana's ambiguity again. Nothing happened."

"You'd go to Paris to do a show. And while you were in Paris, she'd decided you needed some money. She'd take a stack of cash, and start peeling off bills -- and you were in the position of thinking, Don't stop. You never knew."

"She's an incredible person. Magic and myth is so much a part of her...There are certain actresses who can't be called beautiful,

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but you're totally aware of them every time they're on screen or off-screen. She has that kind of presence. And her gallery had this sort of sons-and-daughters quality, it was where you gathered."

"Avalanche was really important at that time. It kind of introduced a lot of us to each other." Naumann, Beuys, etc.

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Baldessari

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John Baldassari - 11/15/98

Met Ileana in 1971 or 72. He was showing with Konrad Fischer. She and Antonio asked if he'd like to show with them. John gave them a list of galleries in Europe where he'd had shows, and Antonio said, "Where do you show in Iceland?" "I remember she said one thing that really nailed it for me. She said, 'Well, you may not always do the show we like, but we'll always be behind you.' I don't think that happens any more. It's really like believing in the artist. She's always been really supportive. For years I didn't sell anything, she wasn't making money on me, but aside from the Pop artists I don't know who she was making money on."

Ileana would occasionally buy something of his for herself. "She just has that passion about art." He heard that when she bought 420 W.Bway, she financed it by selling a Rauschenberg -- which she always regretted.

Konrad Fischer once said: "Ileana is the strongest dealer in the world -- but soon I'll be." She wouldn't let him show with Fischer after he signed with her-- she made it "financially not feasible." Leo had a different technique, with his satellite galleries; Ileana didn't do that. She "sort of established herself as a benchmark of quality."

"How does she do it? It's that spectacular presence -- you just feel it. She never raises her voice."

B. never sold much until the 1980s, just happy to have shows. But she kept paying his stipend. He piled up three quarters of a million dollars at Sonnabend in the 1980s, and didn't even know about it. When he brought it to their attention, Ileana and Antonio said their accountant hadn't told them. (They paid him). It's still difficult to get monthly statements, or to translate them. "They're still in the 19th century. I think they were one of the last to put in a fax machine."

"There have been times when I've been maddened by the bookkeeping, and they're not what I'd call an aggressive gallery. They're not picking up the phone and saying let me send you this transparency -- it's more letting people come to them. That's good in good times, not good in bad times."

After showing at the Paris gallery once, he was invited to the apartment for dinner. Ileana cooked. And after dinner the men talked while she knitted - amazing. "It was this tiny little apartment -- they've always lived in these modest places. But when I went to hang up my coat in the closet, there were all these stacked Jasper Johns and Warhols..."

"She has the capacity to reinvent herself. I think she's due for another reinvention, which may be a little tardy. Maybe she's had enough, I don't know. But she still makes the decisions. Or maybe it's that Antonio is trying to run it as she would. Her taste is so

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unerring, in my mind, I think he's just absorbed a lot of that."

Konrad Fischer pulled out of Sperone-Westwater because he didn't want to deal with the Italian artists, whom they insisted he sell at his gallery in Germany. He thought their prices were too high.

The relationship between Ileana and Michael Sonnabend - "That's the mystery of all time."

"I travelled with them once for a few weeks in Europe. Check into the hotel, wouldn't even go to their rooms, just went out to the local museum. And they would know if a piece had been moved... They're addicts. And I don't come across other dealers with the breadth of knowledge about art, and literature, and music -- it's staggering. I always say they're the last of a breed."

The conceptual artists Leo took on came through Sperone -- Leo wasn't really interested. Ileana hand-picked hers. Was there a common thread? "The only thread was they didn't paint. Other than that I don't think there was anything unified. At that time, there were two camps -- the painters and those other guys. We were the other guys, and that embraced so much, minimal art and conceptual art, film-makers, video, dance...At Max's Kansas City, the painters would get on one side, and the other guys would sit on the other. Like the ranchers and the sheepherders."

"She's very reticent with praise. I'll be putting up a show, and she'll say something like, 'This is very nice,' in a very quiet way, and it'll be the best piece. Time and time again."

"I do sense her support." How? "I don't know. That's a mystery. I guess it's all that she doesn't say. Maybe she's a minimal dealer! Antonio is totally the opposite."

The work she likes has a kind of reticence.

Baldassari was teaching at CalArts in the early 1970s. Invited to lecture and show at a sister school in Nova Scotia, on a skimpy budget, he realized that he thought a lot of conceptual art was pretty boring, so he coined this phrase, "I will not make any more boring art," and told his student to write it on the wall as many times as they wanted. To exorcize demons etc. He thought it would be a conceptual exercise, but they sent him photographs later, and the gallery was covered with it. "I struck some kind of nerve, which I never suspected. That's how that started."

When he saw Ileana recently, she didn't mention the movie we're doing. "Ileana is close-mouthed, as usual."

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Basilico

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STEFANO BASILICO

I worked for Ileana for nine years. It was 85 through 94.

I certainly met her when I was working at Leo's. (He went to school with Jean Christophe and met Leo at a parent's cocktail at the school.) I used to work for Leo Castelli when I was in college at NYU. I worked part time. And I worked there for three years, the time I was in school. And then I liked the art world, decided I wanted to do this full time, and got a job at Mary Boone, across the street, for a year, a month, and a week. I was less fond of working at Mary's. And so I counted the days. So after being there for some time, I wanted to get out and I'd heard that Ileana was looking for someone, because David Nolan, who used to work for her, was leaving the gallery...

My impression of her when I was at Castelli, at the time I was just a young whippersnapper who knew nothing, so it was just...
She was in and out of the gallery fairly often, but I was only there part time, so my experience would have been more limited. But my impression of her at the time was probably much less clear than my impression of Leo...also because Leo's personality has always been more well defined, publicly, anyway, than Ileana's. And at that point, I didn't know enough to know in that sense. As I would say that I really only got to know Ileana having worked with her for some time.

She was someone who I was intrigued by, without a doubt. And I knew enough to know what she had done and the artists that she had shown and I found that all rather fascinating. Esp because there was something very specific about the people she has worked with. For the most part, they're all exceptional artists, but that isn't really what makes them interesting to me or even what makes them interesting as a group of people. There's a rigor about Ileana's vision and the artists that she's chosen, which I find immensely interesting and immensely important. They are vastly different artists in terms of what their interests are, the type of work they do, and their ideas even. But they all approach their ideas and their work with a rigor and a passion, which I think is what probably unites them and motivates Ileana in her interest in their work.

(How was it different from working for Leo or Mary and going to Ileana)
Working for Ileana and Antonio, and I have to say Antonio, because they are one, and they certainly were that way for me. They gave me every opportunity I ever asked for. And it would be unfair to say as opposed to Leo, because when I worked for Leo, it was two days a week and I was at school. But compared to Mary, for Mary it was really about doing a job. And being given very specific parameters and you just had to fill in the blanks. The great thing about Ileana was that she basically let me run free. And I told her that what I was interested in was obviously doing more, but she let me do more. And the more I would do, the more she would allow

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me to do.
(Did you go as the director of the gallery)
Ultimately, yes. Ileana, thankfully, and it's something I share, is rather unbureaucratic in titles, so no one ever had any titles. But in essence, by the end of it, Antonio and I were the directors. Certainly he was the director, but we were working as a threesome. And that exceptionally special, because I know how clear they are about ideas and I know how generous they were with me and allowing me to participate in literally every aspect of the gallery. With the artists, with the sales, with the installations. When Ileana had her collection exhibited in Europe, Antonio stayed in NY for different reasons. One of them very simply had to do with his green card...As a result, Ileana and I were the ones who were always traveling to Europe, meeting with the museum directors, doing the installations, and it was fantastic. Basically, I was given an enormous amount of responsibilty.

(What did you learn from her)
I hope what I'm putting inpractice right now. I learned from her a way of looking at art, essentially, which I find is really unique, which is beyond the surface of the work. Which is more about sort of what motivates the artist and what motivates the work to go forward. I learned from her -- in the way that she was generous with me, she's also been always the same, as generous with her artists. In essence, giving them, I would almost put it the benefit of the doubt. In the sense that when an artist is doing new work, at times it can be so new that even you don't quite get it. And instead of assuming that because it's not clear to you, it must be bad, Ileana taught me to make the opposite assumption. Or in other words, to not make any assumptions. Just to wait and see. Live with it and see what you would come to understand. And I think that's rather rare in the art world. Because I think we all tend to want -- being in a state of suspension or of not knowing is a very difficult state for most humans to be in. And certainly when it involves something so new and therefore so uncharted as comtemporary art, Ileana's great gift is that she listens and that when she talks, you better listen, because she's certainly thought about what she's about to say, as opposed to many people who tend to speak before they've formulated their ideas.

For about two years, we were going to Europe every other month for a couple of weeks, either to install the exhibitions or to preview the spaces in which they were going to be installed in. Work out the ideas. Because the exhibition was not a static one. It changed. Different works were brought out at different venues. At different times, we also tried reorganizing them, which is natural in the sense of Ileana's collection is a rather fluid one. And different comparisons could be made with different periods of artists and of works. So there was a lot of traveling together.

(What about the problems of working with Ileana. We've heard a lot from certain artists who found it very frustrating -- there was never any clarity about what they were getting. Her bookkeeping was cryptic and she lost a lot of artists as a result of that)

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Sure, sure. If you mean the artists of the 80s, she lost a lot of artists for a variety of different reasons. I was there for all of it.
(You were there when Neo Geo came in)
I was there when it came in and I was there when Jeff left, when Peter left, and with Meyer. I wasn't there with Terry and Tip. And I took care of most of the lawsuits. It's a double edged sword. Flexibility can be a good thing and a bad thing. And Ileana is nothing but flexible. And what that could sometimes mean for artists was -- it's hard to say. I could be very specific and I wouldn't mind being specific, but I don't want to be too general about these things...I do think that the 80s at Sonnabend Gallery, as the 80s in many many places, were basically a crazy time. There was an enormous amount of money being made by everybody, which of course means also the artists, and I think probably the only thing that could have helped it was that "no" was never said. Part of this generosity was that Ileana wouldn't say no. And I think at times it's useful to say no. These are just my opinions, but the ideas that stipends kept going up without, at times, really being appropriate for them to go up.

(Were most of the artists on stipends)
All of the artists were stipends.

(What was your impression of how the whole Neo Geo thing happened. I know Mary was trying to get them)
Right. Everyone was sort of. How did I meet Ileana? One of the ways I met Ileana or knew of her was that I would see her in the East Village on Sundays. She was one of the few dealers, of her age and of her stature, forget age, but of her stature, who you would run into on Sunday in the East Village in 84 and 83.
(Did you run into Leo there)
I never saw Leo there. Ileana was there. With Antonio and sometimes without him. She was younger, so she was often...A lot of people were there every week. It was sort of the beauty of the way the East Village worked -- the art world could go there on Sunday because in fact Sunday was the day off. And Ileana was there, and Ileana was sort of looking at all of these people. Looking at everything. Because she has an immense curiosity, which is what's I think kept her vibrant...The Neo Geo sort of came about because at a certain point, a certain group of artists started to get a lot more attention. Estelle Schwartz, who is a private dealer, was also quite involved and had a very close relationship with Ileana and Antonio. And I think that the idea of doing the four person show appealed to all of them. And that was really what was proposed. Let's say, that was the opening card. It was, let's do this exhibition called Neo Geo, that will be Ashley Bickerton, Meyer Vaisman, Jeff Koons, and Peter Halley. For instance, Haim Steinbach wasn't put in that exhibition -- not because he wasn't considered, but because it seemed to be a slightly different body of work.
(Wasn't it because Jeff didn't want it)
Well, there were those...
(Didn't Jeff say specifically that it must not be)

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I never heard that. I mean, it's probably true. But I never heard it, in the sense that I wasn't there when Jeff said you can't do this. And they didn't get along so well. That's also true. But I think there was a kind of logic for Haim not being in it. Haim is an older artist. There was a kind of youth spirit, which drove that exhibition. Or certainly, that was what was being used as the glue for it.

(Did you find that Ileana was fixed on Jeff, out of the group)
Not at the beginning. I think that probably the work that most appealed to Ileana of all those people -- and in a sense, it's also the personalities. This goes hand in hand. It was Ashley and Jeff. I think these are the two artists that are most identified with Ileana and identify themselves with her. Much more so than Peter and Meyer. Nothing against Haim, but I know -- it often has to do with when people meet and where they are in their life. And Ashley was the youngest of these artists. And Jeff is a very special individual. (laugh) So he really formed an attachment with Ileana and she with him.

(What went wrong with Meyer)
Don't necessarily quote me or let me see what quotes are said about this but I think it all went according to plan -- by Meyer's plan, that is. I mean, Meyer and Peter I think were very savvy business. They knew what the label Sonnabend meant and also knew how best to maximize their profits. I do mean to speak in this kind of business terms, because I think it was very much that for them. And they took everything they could out of the situation. And I don't mean to be in any way moralistic, because I don't think that that's why their work has not managed to maintain its position in the 90s. But they were really in it for the money. Which I don't think is really a problem, but it can become a problem. And I think Ashley and Jeff and Haim were not in it for the money. Which is not to say that the money wasn't there. But I think you can sort of see the choices that they've made. And ultimately Jeff left the gallery because he started to feel that Ileana didn't believe in him. Or more importantly, I think that there's a point where Jeff sort of hits a wall, a kind of creative frustration wall, and he's someone who in fact throws himself -- as we used to say at the gallery, Jeff throws himself out the window along with you. Peter just opens the window for you. But Jeff would go right down with you. And always believing that you would actually not hit the ground. Because it wasn't suicidal. He was so convinced that he was right. That he was going out the window with you, and neither of you were going to get hurt. And then I think it was too easy a situation to create for other people, because at a certain point, when Ileana finally had to say no, we can't. We'd spent so much, we can't also spend this, just yet. It was very easy for someone else to come in and say, you see, we'll do it. Then what they wanted to do, of course, was basically take all the let's call it research and development money that Sonnabend had put in. Which was where the enormous expenses were. It was never the specific fabrication for this object. That had a pricetag on it that was easy to figure out what it was. But all the R & D, which was an

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enormous amount, and ultimately was proportionately added to all the pieces, had already been spent.

(This whole Neo Geo moment, was a great period of rejuvenation for Ileana, wasn't it)
Yuh.
(She had lost the German artists and the gallery was sort of not going anywhere. It must have been very exciting for her to go into something so new)
I think it was. I had only been working there a year before, so I didn't experience the German...so I can't compare it to that. I'm not sure of her age, but the point is she was as young and as energetic as anyone. Forget her age. It was just the energy level at the gallery with the young. It was amazing. And I think you're right, it had to do with these young artists. But it really also has to do with her ability to empathize and to forget everything she already knows in a way. To rediscover things again.
(Was Michael around at that time)
He was always around, but he was never really around in the gallery as much. He would come and visit and less so as the years went by. But I never had the impression that Michael was an integral part at that time. I know he had been in the past.
(Did you ever go to the apartment)
Oh yuh. Sure.
(Was there any resentment on the part of older artists in the gallery about taking on the New Geo people)
There was a little bit at a certain point by some of them. There was a little, which I think is also pretty inevitable. No one left over it. And because ultimately I don't think there was -- there was no reason to. It wasn't so bad. It was more that here come these young whippersnappers who are getting all this attention. ...You could even say they had a right to, at a certain point, because there was a lot of energy being expended for these artists at a certain moment, and maybe less -- a gallery like any business has only so many arms.

(Was Peter the first to leave)
Peter was formally the first to leave. And his quote unquote reason for leaving was that the difficulties with Jeff were taking too much energy out of the gallery...
Jeff left, but he's now coming back. I'm told they're going to be doing a one person show together.

(What was Estelle Schwartz' role in the whole Neo Geo coming together. Was she at all influential in bringing them to Ileana)
I don't know. She was involved. Absolutely no doubt. And certainly she would have pulled to get them to come to Sonnabend because she had a very good relationship with Sonnabend Gallery. Which she didn't have with other galleries, and doesn't have with other galleries. And she had been involved with them before. So that would make sense that she would want to do that.

(Certainly Mary Boone was very much involved with trying to get it, and I think Peter Halley had actually signed with Mary Boone)

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Peter had signed with MB. In fact, before the show happened, Peter was quote unquote represented by Mary. And the others during that time were agreed to come and show with Sonnabend. In other words, to the best of my recollection, first of all, there are no contracts, but second of all, let's say the handshake hadn't really happened or was happening as the show was going on. Which is also rather reasonable. In other words, the show, if you want was a way for each party to get to know each other. And if it worked out, then more could be done. And so it was working out and so the people were agreeing to do a one-person show or to start representation and what exactly that would mean for each other. But Peter had already in the summer -- remember this because we were in Venice when we found out about it -- had decided to go to Mary's. But the show was still going to happen, meaning the show of the four, and the paintings were going to be directly from Peter to Sonnabend. But then he changed his mind. I don't know why, other than what I was told. But obviously they didn't get along.

(But then after the dispersal, after the Neo Geo people had gone their separate ways, was there a feel of kind of loss of energy in the gallery. That's what some of them seem to feel. I guess also the gloom was coming to an end and some of them have said they felt that the energy had just...)
I think it was a coincidence, it was a convergence of many different events. The difficulties with Jeff and with Peter certainly took some time. I know, because I spent a lot of my time taking care of that. In essence so that Antonio and Ileana could deal with the other parts of the gallery, but a lot of my energy was going into the details of that. And then finally when it was resolved -- they were resolved at different times and in different satisfaction levels -- I think finally when things were resolved with Jeff, shortly afterwards it was forgotten in the sense of the emotional feelings were put aside and put away. With Peter, Peter's behavior was really more calculated, less a question of artistic differences. And therefore I think there was a little bit of resentment, not forgiveness on Ileana's side. And rightly so.

(Ileana holds grudges with Elan...)
Ileana doesn't like to be betrayed. And she felt betrayed by them.

(Because they (Elan and Pincus) went to Gagosian)
No. From my understanding, the Elan story is a bit more complicated and I'm not fully aware of it. But for Pincus, I think it was more because he stole Peter away from Ileana to go to Gagosian. It wasn't that he was simply working for Gagosian. that wasn't the problem. (Larry said she won't let him buy anything from her -- even out of a show) Ileana doesn't forget in that sense. She remembers what people do to her rather well.

(How is she as selling)
In my lifetime there, Ileana never sold a work. It was always Antonio or myself. Again, I'm sure that's not true of before. But while I was there. She literally didn't need to (sell). I guess what I mean by selling the work is she wouldn't stand in front of

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the object, whatever it might be, with the collector and say you should buy this because....She would certainly talk about the artist's work, and did do that and as far as I know, still does do that. And is clearly very persuasive in that regard, but she never stood in front of an object and said the price for this is x and we'll give you a ten percent or we can't give you a discount on that. That was actually Antonio and I.

She is tough. There are so many examples, I don't know which ones....They don't remain distinct.
I was really very young when I started working there. I was 23, and I had a lot to learn. The benefit for me was that I was actually taught an enormous amount and given the opportunity to make mistakes. But I wasn't encouraged to make mistakes. (laugh)

(How do Antonio and Ileana interact)
My impression of Ileana and Antonio is that they really are two sides of the same person. They're sort of a perfect pair in the sense that I always saw Ileana as the intuitive side, the one who would know that the artist was right or know that the artist was a good artist or someone that was interesting or someone to follow. She wouldn't necessarily know why in the sense that she couldn't necessarily verbalize it to herself. And Antonio's role in a sense was that. He would -- driven by Ileana's eye or driven by his understanding of her -- know that when she made a choice, it was the right choice, and start to deconstruct why that was. So in a sense, he would provide the explanation for why the work was the right work -- not only to himself but also to Ileana in a verbal way. Though the intuition was hers.

(Where do you feel the gallery's reputation is now)
Unfortunately I think that they are -- and I don't know that I want to be quoted -- but I think that they're not as exciting as they used to be.

(Do you think that she can pull it off again)
Unless things have changed, and it's very possible, I think Ileana is more retired than she was. She's not as involved as she used to be. She was already becoming less involved before I left, and I think she's less involved now.

(How did she feel about you leaving)
I don't know. I think you'd almost have to ask them. I can only tell you what I think happened or what I think...
(Why did you leave)
I left because I wanted to try and do this on my own. In a sense, I think I learned a lot from Ileana, and so I guess I wanted to put that to the test. I wanted to see if in a sense I could also make the same kinds of choices, would have the ability to pick people of my generation before it was visible that they would be interesting artists and end up being right at least some of the time. And also because I wanted to do more, and it was coming to a point where I couldn't do more. I couldn't be Ileana and I couldn't also choose who the next artists were going to be for the

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gallery. I think because Antonio wasn't doing it is really the answer. In other words, my impression is that really the gallery is now being run and has been left in Antonio's hands and he has not taken the next step of who do I show next.
(He's got Mathew Weinstein)
That was before. I was there for that. And also Ronald Jones. I was there for that. But since Matthew Weinstein, there hasn't been...No one's come on since. The newest artist that they seem to be showing is this American who lives in Sweden who was in the three person group show this summer, whose name I'm blanking out on right now. I'm not particularly fond of, but anyway...And I think that's going to be the next young artist that they show.

(The move to Chelsea -- do you see her reinventing herself again)
This is where it gets very personal for me and very difficult to speak about because I would love to believe that, but I'm not convinced that that's the case. I only want the best for them, but I just don't see that happening.

(Do you have the feeling -- like the feeling about the Castelli gallery -- that Sonnabend is finished. Has she said all she's got to say)
(Pause) I suspect yes. You see, what I really think is I think she's said all she needs to say. And I would rather phrase it like that. And she's now given the opportunity to someone else to speak, meaning Antonio, and he hasn't spoken yet.

(When you were there, how were decisions actually reached. Was it a consensus, was it a collegial thing, or in the end, was it Ileana making the final decision)
It was pretty much consensus and pretty collegial. Ileana basically ruled with a pretty soft hand in the sense that -- not so much in the beginning, but certainly towards the middle of my stay there and certainly towards the end. As I said, I got more and more involved. It all depends what kind of ...you were talking about, for instance, do we show this next artist. And there were a couple of episodes where Antonio and I were really behind these new artists to take on, and Ileana was less enthusiastic about them, but basically bowed to our interest. And we made a proposal to the artist and they said no. This happened twice. With Cady Noland and what's her name. Two women.

(Antonio said they had been criticized for having too few women)
The other is a Boston artist who lives in Boston, who was David Salle's assistant. Annette Lemieux. We certainly tried to get them, and I remember that both Antonio and I were very enthusiastic about them and Ileana was less so.
As I do this more and more, I realize that the relationship between artists and dealers are immensely complicated on many different levels. But they both said no, and Antonio and I, after this in hindsight, we say, it's funny. In a sense, she was right. Adn they were right also in the sense that you can regret and you do regret sometimes when an artist that you're interested in doesn't show with you, but at times it's the right decision. In the sense

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that it's the right decision for the artist and it certainly becomes the right decision for the gallery that it didn't happen. Because the work was about something else or they required a certain type of handling that's not your style to handle or to do. So in a sense I think these decisions were right. Cady was correct in not coming to the gallery and so was Annette Lemieux. And I think that in some way maybe Ileana always understood this while we didn't understand this.
In a sense, I as the youngest of this trio, was possibly the most sensitive to it (the women issue in the gallery), Ileana as the woman was probably the least sensitive to it.
I think she likes women very much. I don't know what a female misogynist is. She's not that. But she seems to favor men. I think you can only assume that by looking at the record, so to speak. I think that's true. Whatever that may mean. I truly never thought that it was sexism. But people are people, and certainly older people, who grew up in very different ways...

(Has she been to your gallery)
Yuh she comes. She doesn't see every show, but she comes regularly.

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Bochner

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MEL BOCHNER on Ileana

(He tells me about a book called All People Are Famous, and Michael Sonnabend is in it. By a famous Broadway producer, who produced Clifford Odet~~t~~'s plays.) —Harold Clurman - see Xerox in file.

(How he met Ileana)
I had met her in Paris at the gallery. But just hi, how are you, nice to meet you, whatever. And really the first time that we had any kind of a conversation or any kind of dialogue was when my Projects show at the Modern opened, which was I think the Monday after the Saturday of the opening of 420 West Broadway, so I guess it was 1971. She had just opened the gallery. And the first show had been Gilbert and George and had been a really sensational opening. So I was at the museum and Ileana and Antonio walked in. And they looked at the show, which was the piece with the line of masking tape that went all the way around the space with the numbers written on it. IT was called Three Ideas and Seven Proceedures. It was the first Projects show. And Ileana looked and Antonio looked, and they said, oh, it's very nice and thank you. And Ileana said, let's have a cup of tea. So we went out in the garden. Tables were in the garden, and we sat down and we chatted and then she said, oh, it's a shame that we can't do something together. And I said, why can't we do something together? And she said, you must have a dealer in New York. And I said, no, I don't have a dealer in NY. And I'm really getting tired of people saying it's a shame we can't do something together. So she said, well, do you mean we could do a show? And I said, give me a date. She said, Antonio, when is the next date that we have? And this shows how long a time ago it was. That was September, and he said, oh, we have an opening in February. And Antonio said, could you be ready by February? And I said, Yuh, I think so. She said, Oh, good. Then we'll have a show. It was just like that.

I was certainly very pleased and I went home and I was having dinner. And the telephone rang, and it was Antonio. And he said, what are you doing in January? And I said, what do you mean what am I doing in January? He said, we actually have an opening in Paris too. Would you like to have a show in Paris in January? And I said, yuh, I'd like to have a show in Paris in January. He said, oh, great. I said, yuh, that's great. He said, we'll be leaving to spend Christmas in Venice. Would you like to join us? So that's when I really go to know them. I went with them to Venice. We spent Christmas in Venice.

(What she was like on that trip) The funniest thing that happened -- I mean, Ileana in Venice is very domestic. She goes shopping, she cooks. Probably now it's changed, but unlike ~~s~~he was in NY then, when they went out to dinner every night. Anyway, we were sitting around one evening, or might have been in the afternoon, and the telephone rang. It was Judith Richardson calling from NY. She used to be the director of the gallery in NY. and Ileana said, oh no, oh really, oh no. A few things like that. Then she hung

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up. And Antonio said, what's the matter? And she said, well, Vito Acconci has this show in January in NY, and Judith was just telling me that his plan is to build a box on the floor and lie down in that box for the whole month and masterbate. So I said to her, well, what is it that's worrying you about that? Are you worried about the public response? And she said, oh, no. She said, I'm just worried about the poor boy. He might hurt himself. So in Venice she's very relaxed. Just spend your time going around looking at churches, looking at art, just really having fun.

(on her eye) I think she has an extraordinary eye. But it's not just her eye. It's almost like a radar. She senses -- and I think by her own response, when she's baffled by something or troubled by something, then she's attracted to it. Most other people are turned away from something that they don't understand, and she's turned towards it. And I think it's a kind of response that she has and a lack of fear that if she's disturbed by it or troubled or doesn't understand it, then it's challenging her taste. And if something challenges her taste, then there must be something interesting about it. And if her idea is not so much to judge things as to find things that are interesting and to show things that are interesting. I think that's what's kept so many things happening in the gallery over such a long...(end tape)

I asked Michael, when the Sonnabend Collection was first shown at Princeton, which I guess was in the early 80s. I can't remember. I said to Michael, how did you know to buy all the most difficult pieces? And he said, oh, we didn't know anything. These are just the pieces that were left over. Nobody else would buy them. (laugh) So he said, we wound up with them.

I think he was very much involved. And I think he was very much in a sense, a great deal of the intellectual energy was Michael's. Pushing her to go forward, pushing her and Antonio to be riskier. Michael's interpretations of things are just way out. They're just totally way out. They're just not what you expect. For example, I did a series of paintings a few years ago, using a great deal of perspective. One point perspective. and when Michael saw the paintings, he immediately said, oh, perspective. He said, perspective is about death. And I said, what do you mean by that? And he said, think of Van Gogh's last painting. The Crows In the Wheatfield. You have the two roads that are leading to the vanishing point. But instead of the vanishing point being in the back of the painting, the vanishing point is in the front of the painting. He said, so the perspective to the vanishing point is reversed, and that reversal is the roads leading to this point where van Gogh kills himself. So perspective in his mind is always associated with death. With the vanishing. With infinity. And that's a very different interpretation.

I think she's someone who is very coquetish. I think one of the things people don't see about her is that she's very shy, and that there's a certain shyness and reserve which is part of her upbringing and her class background. But she's also more than

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capable of using that to her advantage. (laugh) The story about the time I was in the backroom with her and there was a gigantic Oldenburg sculpture in the middle of the room, and a dealer came in and said to her, this is a really beautiful piece. I'd be really interested in it. How much is it? And she just sat there and smiled. And he said, no, I'm serious. How much would it be? I'm really interested in it. I'd like to buy it. She just sat there and smiled. Never said a word. And he got more and more nervous, and finally he said, no, I'm really serious. Now, tell me. How much do you want for this piece? I'm really interested in it. I really want to buy it. It's an amazing piece. And Ileana said, tempt me. (laugh) And that's the coquetish part. When he left, I said to her, why did you say that? And she said, I don't really know what the price of this is, and I thought he might tell me. (laugh)

(Did he give a price?)
No.

I don't think anybody has seen (her entire) the collection. It's in storage, but it's so deep. The great collection of painting and sculpture, we know a lot about. There's the art deco, which is remarkable, and then she has a huge photography collection and a huge drawing collection. The drawings would be all contemporary, proabably starting with Jasper and Bob. And at the Lichtenstein drawing show at the Modern a number of years ago, you went into the first room and they were all hers. And a lot of early Warhols and things like that. But the thing to understand about the collection is that over the years, she sold things. Not because she wanted to sell them. Because she needed the money to support the gallery. And not to support her lifestyle. But to support the artists in the gallery.

She is very generous. She certainly has been generous with me. I can't speak about anyone else. But the generosity isn't always a financial generosity, the generosity is giving you a space to show your work, work that in its time was not easily accepted. And that everybody wasn't clamoring after, because there was no object for sale. And when you think about the first three or four shows that she had at 420 West Broadway -- Gilbert & George to do a singing sculpture, live performance, nothing for sale. Vito Acconci's masterbating under the floor. Not much for sale. Mel Bochner's Counting Stones. Not much for sale. So what's paying for this? Well, what's paying for it is the sale of a Warhol or the sale of a Rauschenberg.
She was completely independent. It was her belief that what she was doing was interesting. And she always used to say that the business of the gallery was not selling things, but creating information. And creating information was a way of changing the culture. And when the culture changed, then people would realize these things are important. And whatever it was...finally there's almost nothing an artist can do, there isn't anything an artist can do that isn't in some way usable by the culture. That's the way it is. It can just be used in some way. So what's far out and avant

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garde at one point is no longer far out and avant garde at another point. Her job as she saw it was to make this information available. She said, I saw this, this is interesting, I want other people to see it. So that was creating information.

(Risks she took) They (Leo & Ileana) were together when Leo did that (took on Bob and Jasper and Frank Stella), and she receives very little credit for having been there, which I think is unfortunate, because the story is always told of Leo Castelli at their loft. And it was Leo and Ileana at their loft. And it was Ileana who was very much part of that. She bought paintings for herself, and she owned things that she didn't own jointly with Leo. So at that point, she's as much part of that history as Leo. And then when she leaves, you don't really find Leo discovering any new artists after that. So by that point (61 or 62 when she opens in Paris), he's already got all of the pop artists -- Chamberlain, Stella, everything is in place. Everything that comes to Castelli after that, comes from other dealers, from Bellamy, etc.

(She was first to show Mel, and Acconci) She certainly began the situation of bringing European artists to America. Up until the opening of 420 West Broadway, with the exception of the kind of English formalist sculpture that inundated us in the 60s, the Caroesque stuff, you didn't see very much European art. Adn the American artists of the generation right ahead of mine, like Stella and Judd, were really anti-European. Everything was like against European. It was like destroy European values, etc, etc, etc. They had to establish America, and they did. But then Ileana began bringing these artists -- not because they were European -- but because she thought they were really interesting. Like Gilbert and George, like Kounellis, like Mario Merz, who I think she showed here first. Boltanski she showed first. (Quite a few of the people Marian Goodman shows) She had shown them in Paris. She knew what the European scene was. (She wasn't just an outpost of what Leo was doing here) No. I think in the beginning, when she showed Bob and Jasper and Andy, she was taking shows from NY, but then very quickly, she became totally independent, and she had I think gone to Rome for a while and lived in Rome and she had met a lot of the Italian arte povera people at that point. And that's how she got to know what the scene was there, and then she got very involved with that group of people. But you'd have to look through the catalog but there are a lot of European artists that she brought over.
(other Americans) She was the first to show Terry Winters. I think Tip Dunham had shown at a couple of other small galleries, but it was his first major gallery. I think she was the first with BAldessari in America.

(Ileana as dealer) Ileana is not really -- I mean she doesn't come out and say Oh, I love this and I love that. She doesn't gush about things. She comes to the studio and she looks at things for a very very long time. And in my case, she didn't choose. More or less, I had the freedom to say this is what I want to do. I want to show this or I want to show that. And that was fine. But I do

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know for example, Antonio told me years and years later, that she came to my studio when I first started doing the drawings of the the shapes, and she looked and she looked and looked. She didn't say anything. She just said, oh, yuh, okay. And I said I'd like to show these drawings in the fall. And she said, okay. That seemed perfectly fine to me. And then according to Antonio, they got out the front door and she looked at Antonio and said, I think he's gone completely crazy. (laugh) But we'll show them anyway. So there was never any sense of -- again in may case. I don't know about anybody else's case. There was never anything like, oh, make something that we can sell. Or change your work in any way. She did say one time to me, that, oh, you should have shown this piece in Europe. The American audience isn't ready for it. It was actually the piece that the Museum of Modern Art, The Axium of Indifference, with the pennies and the masking tape on the floor. She said, I think this is too difficult for American audience. (This was 73) But she never said don't do it. (The Modern just bought it from the gallery.)

(Did anything sell out of your first show)
Nothing sold out of the first show. But out of the second show, got a telephone call that it was really exciting news -- something had been stolen. Judith called. "It's really exciting. Something's just been stolen." (laugh) So we got the insurance money. I got $75, and they had a big champagne party, because something had left the gallery finally. (laugh)

I guess around 74, 75, drawings started to sell. But installations, they never sold. Even the really great collectors, the collectors like Victor Ganz, who was really intersted in my work and who bought a lot of drawings, they couldn't see their way to clear at that point to buy an installation. Whereas you could sell installations in Europe to museums and to private collectors, it had to do very much with the way in which in the states, people see their relationship to the place they live. They don't see themselves necessarily staying in that place for their whole life, or their children taking that place. Whereas in Europe, the stock of available places to live is smaller, and people stay in the same place for generation after generation after generation. So it's not a problem to put something on somebody's wall. And they've seen it for hundreds and hundreds of years. It's not foreign to their tradition or mentality, but in America it is. And in America the idea of an art work is that the first sale is never where any money changes hands. It's the second sale. So if you're making something which intentionally, like an installation, there's no possibility of a second sale, then the person buying it has to buy it only for its aesthetic value. They can't buy it for it's resale value. And there aren't that many kinds of collectors.

(Now) It's not the same issue in my shows now. I'm not doing installations in the same way that I was doing them then. Now it is a painting, after all. It may not be the way paintings looked before or one expects them to look, but it's still a painting... (Never any pressure about the fact that his work doesn't really

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sell) I don't think Ileana's decisions are based on that. And that's why it's a very unique and special gallery. There is a great deal of freedom. And I think that's why the gallery had such a long run of significance. It was significant for a very long time, because when you went there, you didn't know what you were going to see. And it wasn't oh, that's a gallery that does this or that's a gallery that does that. It could be an object, it could be a painting, it could be an installation. Ileana was very early in having dancers...(His phone was Barnett Newman's)

(Social time with Ileana, outside of Venice) Their social life is very circumscribed by their interests. In other words, Ileana and Antonio aren't involved that much with making the scene. What they like to do is go to the opera or go to her Pollini. They go together and they invite people to join them. And when we see them, that's the way we tend to see them. Of late, she doesn't go out that much anymore. She's a great fan of Pollini.

It's an old world notion of a total idea of culture, and an idea of avant garde culture. She and Leo started in Paris showing the Surrealists in the 30s and through the Abstract Expression, it's the Pop artists, the Minimalists, the Post Minimalists, the conceptualists. Neo Geo...It did come prepared (to her), but the fact that those artists had organized and come to her meant that -- and I think they could have probably shown anywhere, they wanted the association with the history of Sonnabend, Because they felt, and I think rightly so, that being in Sonnabend gave a certain context to their work.

(her culture) I think that she's somebody for whom culture has meaning. She reads. At one point she was reading a lot of Chinese literature. One day, Lizbeth and I -- it was a Saturday afternoon -- we were going to the Metropolitan Museum to see some show. It was very crowded. And the show was in the back of the museum so you had to walk by the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium to get back to that back elevator, and there was a very long line waiting to buy tickets. We were walking along, and someone says Mel, Lizbeth. And we look around and there's Ileana, standing in line, all alone. This is just a couple of years ago. Because there was a concert that she wanted to see, and she had come up to wait in line to buy tickets for it. It was a Saturday. Antonio was at the gallery, and she had come up to buy tickets and there she was waiting in line. So it's something that's really important to her.

(She's a mystery) She's not out there publicly, and I think that's part of her shyness and her lack of interest in that. I think she's fascinated by people. In a sense, the art world comes to her. She holds court at the gallery. She's at the gallery, people come to her. People from all over the world. So in a way, she doesn't have to go out. The thing that she once told me that I think was the key is she said there were two things that motivated her. She said they were curiosity and greed. It makes perfect sense because her curiosity is in her interest in anything that's new and different and that she doesn't understand. And then once

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she's come to grips with that, she wants to have it. And by getting there as she has, time after time, so early, she's able to get the things before the rest of the culture has valued them or priced them to another point...

She's a major collector. See, I don't think that -- it's only power when it's exercised. In other words, if you get something for it. IF you use it in some way. But at this point I don't see that. I think the power is the power of a certain kind of intelligence that has mapped the terrain of contemporary culture. That's the power. The power isn't really the possessing of those things. You can think of collectors that have amazing collections, but the kind of interest one would have in them is not in their intelligence but in their financial ability to buy these things that are so expensive. Just because somebody has something, you don't think that they're smart. (a lot of the great museums would like to have some of her pieces. How many dealers are in the position where the museums are clamoring) I think she definitely on another level. But if she were out to use the power of that collection, she wouldn't have sold off so many important pieces to help the gallery, to keep the gallery going. And it wasn't an investment, like okay, if I sell this, then there will be so many more things generated and there will be more money. There wasn't. There's no question that there wasn't. That it didn't pay off in that sense.

(About greed) I think any collector, an interesting collector is somebody who is motivated by desire -- desire to possess. You don't amass that kind of collection without that kind of desire.

(Is that more Ileana than Michael) Yuh. The collection is Ileana.

(The deco) I think those things were available in Paris in the 60s. And she was there. And she knew what they were from her childhood because she grew up in that period, so she knew who Ruhlmann was. So if there's a Ruhlmann piece in a junk store, she knows that it's something that is interesting.

I think that she's probably of all the dealers I've ever known the least bourgeois. (At Ileana's place) It's very simple and very homey. If you didn't know that the furniture was probably some important art deco piece, you'd just think it was some rundown piece of furniture at your inlaws, at your grandmothers. They've never been reupholstered. Of course they would have the original upholstery.

(Her looks) She always wears the same dress. The same style, she has the same dressmaker in Venice. She has the one style of dress. It's always been the same. In a sense, somebody once said -- I guess it was Abby Hoffman said, either a costume or a uniform. And she made a costume out of a uniform, which was clever.

The artists in the gallery talk about her all the time. Ileana is a tough business woman. Artists are interested in -- that's what

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artists in -- they talk about their work, oh, I like your new work, or I don't think that's as good, but they say, how's your work doing and what's happening at the gallery. She's a very very strong willed tough business woman. And she had to be. And as well she might be. And I think that one of the things to recognize is there are a great many successful women dealers now. There were not a great many successful women dealers in 1961, esp in Europe. It was a very daring thing that she did.
(Another woman) Denise REne. (Here we had Betty Parsons)

(I've heard rumors artists left the gallery because of finances) I don't think anyone's ever completely happy, but I think there are tradeoffs. The freedom to me to do what I want to do is very important.

(The original artists left with the gallery) BAldesari, Levy, Gilbert & George, the Bechers, Robert Morris. She did a Rauschenberg show just last year. There are others.

(Who's has left -- Koons, Halley...)

(What's made Ileana so good at being a dealer) Her curiosity, her willingness to take chances on things, and the fact that it wasn't motivated by this need to always be selling things to pay the bills. She could show things that she didn't have to sell because she had things to sell out of the backroom. And that's an enormous strength. I don't think that it's the kind of gallery culture that maybe is going to last forever. I think it has a terminus. Because right now, gallery culture has become corporate culture. And Sonnabend is anti-corporate culture. It's not the kind of art that decorates lobbies. It's not the kind of art that gets huge public commissions. It's a different idea about how culture advances. And I think it's a more interesting idea. (The idea is) that it's essentially intellectual. It's not about providing luxury, decorative accoutrements for a certain kind of lifestyle. ...I think Castelli was part of that general sensibility...I think that a lot of the things that she did, particularly when she came to the states required an enormous amount of courage to do. Like the Gilbert and George show, the Acconci show, my show, the first Levy shows. There was very little context for it. Now, it's true that these things had been seen in Europe. I had shows in Europe long before I had shows here. Not with Ileana. But to do that, was to make a certain kind of statement. Adn I think you have to also see the gallery is Ileana's work. It's her statement. It's her expression -- the mix of the artists, the relationships that you can and can't see. This artist with that artist? How can that be? But it can only be because it comes together in her idea of the world. I can't always figure it out. There are artists I have no idea what attracts her to them, but obviously something does or she wouldn't show them. ...My only desire was to be in a gallery that was doing interesting things, where the context was supportive of the way I saw art. And I liked the oddness of the juxtapositions in the gallery. I wouldn't say it was a disappointment, but I was never terribly enthusiastic about the

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German Neo Expressionists when she showed them in the early 80s. I didn't care for that work. I still don't care for it. She showed Baselitz and Penk...Before anyone. She was the first, the first here. Michale Werner represented them in Europe, but she brought them to the states. But the first time I saw that stuff was in the backroom of her gallery. (So again, she was) at that edge. I don't know if that particulary edge exists (today). One of the things I think of taking the position which she took, that the job of the gallery is to create information, like to bring the news, this is what's happening, not necessarily always to judge it, is that after a while it succeeds, and then that information exists. (end tape)

Ezra Pound said, art is news that stays news. It's hard to stay news. It's an unfair burden to put on an artwork, because art is also so much more than that. You're talking about a gallery. What does a gallery do? What can a gallery do? A gallery is a business. It has a job to do. There are a lot of people who work in the backroom of a gallery. There are certain services that artists need. They need photographs, they need frames on their work. There's a lot of support. Ileana invented a lot of those things. Like giving away photographs. They gave away photographs like they were candy. Why? WEll, because then the work circulates...it's about getting the work into the world.

If there's one thing she's not, she's not a salesperson. (How things sell) It's through a kind of osmosis almost. In a sense that, I think she's right, I think that if something is interesting, if it does have something to say that hasn't been said before or said in a different way, if it does speak about the world or experience in a fresh way, then there are people that want to have it. So when Sonnabend was operating at its best, it was about ideas. Talking about ideas. And when people became involved with those ideas, when collectors or critics or curators became involved with those ideas, they wanted to be part of the world of those ideas. And that's what it's about. Because if you're involved with the ideas of an artist's work as opposed to the resale value and all of those secondary things, the collector becomes in a sense someone who's supporting the continuity of that. Because you buy the work in order to help the artist make their next work. The one that you buy is already done. But the next one -- somebody needs to pay for the light...and that's how it happens. I think what they created was a kind of enthusiasm for these ideas, for this moment in cultural history, which after all was a very exciting moment. Now, it's not only Sonnabend. I'm not trying to say that she did all of this. There were lots of other important, as they say in Europe, gallerists. They don't say dealers. They say gallerists. And I think that's what she was. She was a gallerist. Somebody whose work was to have a gallery. And so that's somethng that is attractive in itself. One didn't feel that when they were going there, they were going there to be sold something. They were going there to find out about somethng. And if that somethng seemed so amazing -- this is so amazing, I would like to have this -- then people would say, as I told you that person said, how much is it?

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I want to have this.
It was crucial to artists like myself to have that public platform, to know that every 16 or 18 months you could present something. There were years when I had two shows in one year.

They did a video tape business together for a while, called Castelli Sonnabend video tapes, in the 70s.

There was and remains a certain mystique around it. When it's over, nothing's going to replace it. There's nothing else like it.

I do know of one or two artists who left the gallery in the 70s and then wanted to rejoin the gallery. Let's just say, maybe she wasn't as interested in their work at that point. (Was Acconci one of them?) I can't say.

What will replace it (Ileana & Leo) when it goes? I don't know. What replaced the Titanic? There's still boats that go across the ocean, after all. A lot of energy came out of that situation and a lot of energy was put into it. And a lot of contemporary culture centers around the nexus of those two people.

(That day at the Modern with Ileana) It wasn't as if I didn't know a lot of other dealers, but who else invited you out in the garden for tea? It already had another kind of aura to it. "Let's go out and have a cup of tea." (Nothing's direct) No. She wouldn't say, would you like to join the gallery? She said, It's too bad that we can't do something together. It's not even saying like to have a show, it's "do something together."

(Having lunch with her) That is the main way that she sees people, is lunch. Now it's Mezzojiorno. It's been different restaurants over the years. Silvano used to be the place. And then before that there was the Spring Street Bar. And then for a long time it was Omen. Over the years the venu changes.

Ileana is very funny. She has a really great sense of humor. It's very very dry and she talks so softly now that you can barely hear what she's saying, but boy, she can be devastating. (laugh) She is not at all sentimental. She once said to me that the thing she most hated in art was sentimentality. That that was one of the guiding principles of her choices, was nothing sentimental. I think it's really true. There is nothing sentimental.

(on adopting Antonio) Because she likes him.
(Her grandchildren) Margarit, who is studying art history at Columbia is very smart. And Nina is really a fantastic person.

I ran into Michael Sonnabend at the bookstore. I said, how are you feeling. And he said, I feel great. Every day I live my whole life. He said, I get up in the morning at 4 am. I feel like I'm 30 years old, having a great time. He said, at about 6, I stop for breakfast. I feel like I'm about 45. As the morning progresses, he said, I'm at 50, 60. He said, I have lunch, I'm up to 70. He

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said, 3 o'clock in the afternoon I take a nap. I'm 80. He said, I wake up, I'm 90. But with great joy...There he is, how he goes on...
(Does Antonio live with them) I don't know what the arrangements are. I think it's a couple of apartments that are joined together. The Fifth Avenue Hotel.
Michael used to spend time at the gallery all the time. He always stayed in the background. And she's in the background. Antonio is the foreground.

Antonio started in Paris. I think they met in the mid-60s. It's a very funny story. I don't really remember it. He was an engineering student. Wasn't very happy. Wanted to get a job. Wanted to try working at the gallery, and Ileana said, no. I'm not going to give you a job until you decide to commit completely and give up your studies and just do this. And it took him a while before he was ready to do that. And once he did it, that was it. It's very much his sensibility. At a cerain point, I think their sensibilities blend together.

(on greed and curiosity) That's the level of her consciousness of herself. Her awareness, to be able to sum it up into that little phrase, to be able to paint a self-portrait of yourself like that. To know yourself, that's a really high level of consciousness. Adn very unsentimental, but in a way, it short-circuits criticism. There's nothing that you can say (laugh). That's it. Like, she summed it up.

(Would these be your words to describe her) No. I think the curiosity certainly would be. And I think the sense of risk is the way I would sum it up. Curiosity and risk.

She dosn't have the grudge gene. (end interview)

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Boone

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MARY BOONE
(on Ileana)

She, like Leo, was a venerable presence in the art world, so I'd have to say that I was aware of her from when I first came here in 1970. I think we didn't formally meet until I moved into 420 in 1977, and I think that we really got to know one another when I started working with Leo in 1981.

She's extremely smart and strong and funny.

I'll never forget that when we were doing the David Salle exhibition together (with Leo) after we had done the Schnabel exhibition together, and of course, in respect to Leo, Leo had of course first choice of all of David's paintings of what he wanted in his show. So Leo of course chose the most glamourous paintings, because there are two sides to David's work. Much more than two sides, but there are paintings that tend to be much more difficult and conceptual and there are paintings that tend to be much more painterly and beautiful. And of course Leo chose the painterly, glamourous paintings and I had the dryer exhibition, but an exhibition I was very happy with. And Ileana is talking to Leo, and I overhear her. And she said, "How come she got all the good paintings?" So it was certainly before then, but that always kind of stuck in my mind as this one has a great eye. And I've always admired the way that she's been able to be fresh and keep her eyes clear and keep showing really good new artists.

(Do you think she's still fresh)
Absolutely.

(What about her move to Chelsea)
I think it's just indicative of her youthful perspective.

(Have you ever seen her be tough, have you ever run across that)
I'm sure she is.

(But you haven't seen it)
No.

(Back in 86, when she was looking at the Neo Geo artists, is it true that you were also trying to get them)
Oh, yuh.

(Were you in competition with her)
Probably.

(Did you know it)
Oh, no. It's not uncommon that when artists are new in the world that it's not just one person that sees them. Generally they're being pursued by several galleries. In the case with those artists, I think that they kind of decided very consciously to stay together.

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(So there were no hard feelings over that)
No. The thing is that it was always a double win with Leo and Ileana. Whenever an artist came to me, I was happy. Whenever an artist went to them, I was happy. They really represent something -- I mean, I think they bring out the best in the art world.

We (Ileana and she) share the same birthday. She's the only person I've ever met that has the same birthday as me. I found this out when I first started working with Leo. At one of the initial lunches with Julian, he asked me my birthday. And he said, well, my, sandwiched between two women with the same birthdays.

His birthday is the same as my son's. Or my son's is the same as his birthday.

(Her birthday is October 29th) Don't write this in, but it's the day the stock market crashed.

She had a tougher eye (than Leo). But I don't want to say that.

(Did you ever feel in competition with her? Did you ever feel that she felt in competition with you?)
No. I think we have a very healthy, mutually respected relationship, and certainly I respect both of them enormously.

(You began showing a lot of the German artists)
In that same time, 81, 82. And she was very elegant about it.

(Because she wanted a lot of those artists)
Well, she showed them. And then of course when Michael and I got married, it just seemed much more practical that we would work together with them. I think she was very understanding.

I think the way in which Leo and Ileana always have acted in the world is what brings out the best in everybody.

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Brach/Shapiro

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Paul Brach and Miriam Shapiro - 8/21/98

Met Leo thru The Club, became friendly. Leo was "minister without portfolio in the art world" then. A go-between. Disappointed when Hansi (Harriet) Janis resisted Leo's becoming a partner with Sidney -- she wanted the gallery for her two sons.

Paul and Mimi spent the summer in Leo and Iliana's house in 1963(?). The Albers had been there two years earlier, Bill de Kooning and Elaine the summer before. Big rambling shingle house on Jericho Lane. The guest list was phenomenal. Michael Sonnabend lived in the attic. MS: "We used to have dinner together, sometimes with Ileana's mother, Marianne, and John Graham. Michael wouldn't eat with us -- he said he ate baby food. That was part of the household." Leo Steinberg came to dinner and met Graham, said later "Well, I've finally met the enemy and I find him charming." (Steinberg's father had been Lenin's minister of justice, a socialist revolutionary who was eventually purged; Graham had been in Czar Nicholas's imperial guard.)

PB: In that household,"Ileana was genteel, decorous, didn't seem terribly interested in art and artists. Leo was very dreamy. He was working on a history of the 13th or 14th century -- he and I would discuss Guelphs and Ghibbelines. Ileana seemed very much in the background, but she had what I always called a whim of iron. I remember her telling Miriam about the nature of marriage. I was sort of shocked. She said, you know when you're young you fall in love and it's very intense and physical, but all of that goes away and you reach an accomodation of some sort."

MS: "I don't think she's a very nice woman...She represented a kind of woman that existed then, a really great, with-it person inside, who never came out because of the society. She was the wife. That was the role...One story I remember -- she was talking about the problems with her daughter, Nina, and I said, you know, you've got her on a really tight rein. Why don't you loosen up and let her live her life? She was totally involved with herself, but with herself as a really wealthy, aristocratic person who'd always been waited on. When we'd sit down to dinner she'd make a call to her diet doctor first, to ask him what she should eat...Everybody had to kind of kowtow to her. We were friendly, but not intimate.

MS: "Leo wanted Nina to marry Bob Rauschenberg.

PB: "The fact that Bob was gay --- [didn't matter].

MS: "One of the reasons she was so imperious was that, as everybody knew, she had the money. Leo didn't. And she was sick a great deal. But the kind of sickness that brings you attention. Neurasthenia.

Ileana ran the household. No servants. She would cook. There were always weekend guests: Kiesler, Luc Sander, Esteban Vicente, Pollock (who would drop in and make trouble and then drop out; once, driving out, he knocked over a sculpture that Larry Rivers

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had given Leo, in the driveway -- PB: "That's one way of dealing n with the next generation.") PB: "The household was very Chechkovian. Leo hadn't started the overt womanizing yet, that came a year or two later. I don't think Ileana really cared who he was seeing..." She held the power then. It wasn't until Alfred Barr and Dorothy Miller walked in and bought half of Jasper's first show that the balance of power shifted - Leo was then free.

PB: An example of Leo's generosity -- telling Janis he should have a show of younger American artists (in 1955), and saying that Paul Brach should be in it. When Leo started his gallery, Paul was one of the first artists he chose.

At Easthampton, Ileana would never go to the beach -- too fat. Her low voice. "But underneath was this incredible urge to power."

PB: In the art world of the 50s, "It's not by accident the de Kooning means king in Dutch. Bill was king, a very reluctant king in terms of -- his agents ruled. Harold and Tom and Elaine and so on. But he was available in a way Jackson wasn't, and Mark wasn't, and Barney...This was the downtown life. The pecking order was made by an easy consensus. When Leo had that show, Collectors' Choice, that opened things up, made it clear that we no longer controlled the game. For me, Ileana was a shadowy figure who was absorbing all this. The one thing Leo had was an incredible radar for the social aspects of the art world -- how opinion is turned into reputation amd reputation is turned into dollars. Leo always acted as tho money was kind of dirty...As Leo Castelli's wife, she had a front-row participating seat in the drama of a very small art world. She sensed the hierarchies that were evolving -- she sensed them in her own home. They entertained much more in Easthampton than they did in the city.

MS: "Ileana was too narcissistic to be a mother." But when Paul and Mimi's son was born, a month after Marianne died, Ileana's gift was to pay for a baby nurse for a month. This was 1955, right after the summer they spent together.

Brach left the gallery after two years because he felt the direction was shifting (toward Bob and Jasper) -- big mistake.

PB: Ileana was a presence in the background -- often you felt that she was displeased. "Michael was her mascot. We all called him Michel then. He had theories about Dante, and I was teaching art history at Parsons then, and I invited him to lecture -- I was at Giotto then. He came, but he never really got to Dante. He didn't make a bit of sense, he just went spinning off. He would spin these airy apercus...I found him a charming lightweight. Intellectual posturing that had very little substance. The idea that this would be Ileana's future husband..." Nobody thought there was anything going on sexually between Ileana and Michael. Leo was always perfectly accepting of Michael, who seemed asexual. Michael,altho he was in nobody's mind gay, was this diminutive person who didn't do anything but talk in airy circles and mystifying poetic prose,

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was Ileana's special friend. Period. How's that?"

On weekends in Easthampton, they would all (except Ileana) go to the Coast Guard Beach. It was like an outdoor cafe, with John Graham in his cache-sexe doing headstands, and the artists spreading their blankets contiguously.

MS: "Ileana is a power. She's a player."

PB: "What she was at first, was an international farm team for the Castelli enterprises."

PB: "Leo put up with fifteen years of Conceptual art that he hated, in order to be the midwife of the new. He hated Larry Wiener. Hated Joseph Kosuth. But his radar knew that it was going to be important."

PB: Morty Feldman once quoted Nietszche: "He who evokes posterity, plays before an audience of maggots."

MS: Long story about what happens to these people who dip into culture: "It's the money." PB disagrees about Leo, says he needed money to do what he did, but would like to act as tho it came by itself. "Leo was interested in the art and its power in culture. And he was interested in his power as shepherding the art into culture. I think Ileana reflected -- these [rich] people who lived in Europe before the war, looked to Germany and France. It was hard for them when they came to this country to find a world. But Leo thru the gallery found his knowledge...until he started the gallery he didn't have any real power."

Marianne (Ileana's mother) was truly elegant. Very tranquil.

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Castillis

Dine

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Leo and Barbara Castelli - 9/18/98

What was Ileana's input in early days at 77th street? "Not so much in choosing the artists. But we talked about everything." There has never been a break in that, even during the divorce.

Re Frank Stella painting - Ileana told Barbara that Frank asked for the painting back so he could work on it (repairs?), then wouldn't return it. Tricked. Leo doesn't remember. But Barbara says Ileana hadn't paid for it in any case. A gift from Leo, she said.

What about the two Jasper Johns she just sold? Barbara suggests they too were gifts from Leo, one of which she had given to Michael. The understanding with Leo was that they would never be sold, acc.to Barbara.

Ileana was mad at Leo for giving Bed to MOMA. She assumed it was done under Barbara Jakobson's influence.

Leo paid for the two floors at 420 West Broadway. He wanted Ileana there, so he gave her the space. She never paid (?)

When Leo was under pressure to marry Toiny (pregnant), he flew to Paris to consult Ileana. (Ask Ileana about this. When was the marriage?) Leo says he didn't much like the idea of remarrying.

Leo says he and Ileana were "both pretty bad." She was living with Michael when he got back from the army. They hadn't really been together for several years.

Ileana is a very strong personality who makes you think she needs to be protected.

Dine

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Jim Dine - August 1998

Ileana got in touch with Jim when he was with Martha Jackson, in 1960 or 1961. He doesn't think she knew about his earlier work with Judson Gallery or Reuben Gallery. She had officially moved in with Michael, whom she'd just married. "Her main quest at the time was that she was going to take American art to Europe. And I don't think anyone ever did it better. That's exactly what she did. She went to Rome, and found Rome too sleepy, and then she went to Paris...It was the right time for her, and Michael was fabulous as whatever he was, her majordomo, his entree into French life -- he was a great explainer. And to her credit she was never threatened by that. She just allowed him to ramble on, he's say all kinds of things -- he had no governor between his thoughts and his mouth. He could be insulting...They were a great couple.

"She always was her self. As someone once said about her, she has a whim of iron. It was just that with Leo, she was Leo's wife; she wasn't Michael's wife. She was the boss, but Michael was his own boss. I went to see them in Michael's apartment, on 73rd Street and WestEnd Avenue -- now it's condos; Michael lived in a huge room that was just chock-a-bloc with stuff, art and files and cardboard boxes. She's very non-domestic. I once was in Venice at Easter -- I think they went out and got some cans of stuff and boiled spaghetti."

"She didn't approach me to leave Martha Jackson. She dangled Europe. I'd never been to Europe. She said listen, this is what can happen. You can not just be an American artist, you can be a worldwide artist. And that's what I became, and it's all because of her. Without a doubt. Everything that's ever happened to me afterwards -- the work was done by Ileana first. Any recognition I have now, if there is a dealer responsible it's her. And she's not a saint..."

Jim didn't go to Europe until 1965, because he ws afraid to fly, and didn't go to Paris (on a boat) until 1968. After 1968 he became very much involved with his life in her gallery. His first show there was tool paintings, in 1961.

"Here's the deal. I think she was paid in cash at all times. Her purse was like a cambio -- every possible currency, if you wanted money she pulled out this wad of bills, she paid you, I put it in my shoes and went back to England. I never saw a statement, but I did see work of mine -- tritychs and diptychs -- in people's houses and things like that. The reason I left the gallery was I had kids growing up, I had to have some money, and she wasn't paying me." No stipend, ever. "I didn't know any better, I was just so happy that she paid me in cash. When we moved back from England she moved back from Paris I think my accountant -- she would send money my accountant. But in 1975 when I went to Pace I could no longer fight with her, while Acconci and Bochner were not selling but they were getting money, and I was selling my work and I wasn't getting money. I didn't want to fight with her. I loved her. I still love

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her. It didn't make me mad because I had other options, and eventually I got some money. But I just couldn't stay there."

He had left Martha Jackson to go with Sidney Janis. Janis hated Ileana - she and Leo had been runners for him, and he didn't like what they were doing. When he left Janis -- because Janis claimed Dine owed him a great deal of money -- he moved to Europe, and gave all his business to Ileana. Moved back in 1971, and showed with Ileana until 1975.

Did she have a real feeling for his work? "Without a doubt. I've never known anyone who had more feeling for my work...She always made me think about my art in another way, she made me feel there were more possibilities for it. And you know, she was difficult. She's got a lot of opinions, she's opinionated. She wouldn't pay me! That's how she's diffcult. I always felt I had her confidence. I loved the people who worked for her -- Sarkis and Cornell. She made a family for herself! She and Michael, and Sarkis, an Armenian man from Istanbul who is a conceptual artist. My age or younger. He was a boxer. He was kind of her bodyguard, and he installed the shows, and knew a lot of French artists. His wife was a very charming Turkish woman; they both broadcast for Turkish radio to immigrant workers, they had a great social conscience. Ileana didn't like that. Ileana doesn't like fuckin around with politics. She's her own deal. She's one of those refugee figures -- you've got your money in a sock, you're not going to want to screw around with the government. Cornell was a Greek homosexual wh'd been a housepainter, and he lived with a housepainter who was his longtime lover. He was heavyset, almost jaundiced looking, and always called me 'my dear.' He treated you like a woman. He was an extremely funny guy. And then Eva was a German lesbian who was the secretary. They were all together. Michael would come in late every day. Oh, and of course Antonio. Antonio lived in one room near the gallery. I wasn't aware that there was a relationship until they came to see me in Vermont. It was just terribly obvious. I just know this, and I will deny it in print. That when they came to see me in Vermont, it was a snowy night. They flew up.I took 'em down after dinner, back to the motel, and my truck got stuck in the parking lot. So, spinning my wheels, they thought I was gone, and they both opened their two doors and she went like this and ran into his room. It was so charming! The mind boggles. But in Paris, Antonio didn't seem to be in higher echelon than anybody else. This was group of people, like a family, very Checkovian. They had lunch together every day."

Ileana treated Nina badly - Jim overheard a phone conversation in the Stanhope...

Jim went from Ileana to Pace. No hard feelings -- she sold her archives on him to Pace for $1000, and wished him well. He still sees her a lot. The big difference was that Pace was a business, and he got paid. "I would rather have stayed with Ileana, it was much more fun."

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He couldn't have gone to Castelli, because Leo didn't like the rel~~lot of his early~~ ationship Ileana had with him.

"She always wanted the wave of the future, whatever it was. Acconci biting himself and masturbating really turned her on, in a revolutionary way, not a sensual way."

How do you find her as a woman? "Coquettish and sexy. She's not my type, but I can understand it completely."

She has a lot of his early work, which he's going over now for a show at the Guggenheim. "She sold a lot in the 80s, but she's kept a lot, and it's not very well cared for, which is typical of her."

She used to ask Dine to bid for her at auction in London, on art deco pieces. She never seemed to care much, though, she was just amassing the stuff.

Artists leaving her gallery - "She's used to that."

"I didn't think, after she moved back here, that I got the attention I'd had in Europe.

Dine told her about Gilbert and George, who showed at a gallery across the street from him in London. (Nigel Greenwood).

Ileana a real force for Bob Rauschenberg. "I don't think he would have gotten the prize at the Venice Biennale without Ileana's politicking. Alan Solomon alienated everybody. She was there on the case with her people...it was done really well, and Michael had a lot to do with it. She had been working towards this for years. She loved Bob, and Bob loved her. A really strong attraction."

Ileana and Leo -- " I was sitting next to her at the dinner for Lichtenstein at the Guggenheim two years ago (ck). Leo came over and said, 'You know, today is our sixtieth wedding anniversary.' She went [giggles] and went right on talking. She didn't want to hear about that!"

Rosenquist and others who showed with Leo didn;t really work with Ileana in Europe -- Leo sent the work, and sometimes they didn't even come for the openings. But Jim and George Segal and Claes Oldenburg did, because Janis could't stand her.

Ileana could really close a deal. She was very good with the tax structure in Europe, where there was a tax on visible signs of wealth. She kept no records, etc. A real refugee mentality.

(418ff) - inaudible, Ileana saying something about "short hair"?

"She made no judgements [on moral grounds]. For her, I'm sure a snuff crime would be OK if somebody signed it. I don't mean that she's decadent, but she does like a thrill."

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"Being with Pace is like being with a corporation. I'm a small manufacturer. Chamberlain does one thing, I do another little piece...Sonnabend -- you don't know it's nice until you leave."

"Michael and Ileana together had a plan -- the plan was to take Europe. I think it was her idea, but he was so supportive. He always sang for his supper. I think he passively sold a lot of work."

"She's not a nurturing person. But I didn't need nurturing. She has a good time." Her main achievement was opening the European market, making the work available. "I had shows all over Europe because of her. Today, in Europe, people know about my work because of her.

"Americans in Paris spoke against her. The Americans around the Paris Review would say she's not very cooperative, not very forthcoming. But she only cared about her own scene."