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	TOMKINS	IV.C.16

Ileana thought Bob's work at the Stable was a joke. Not serious.

On first visit to Bob's studio, Ileana bought "Number One" from Jasper. "I couldn't leave that studio without buying something." Kept it until very recently. (Ileana thinks this was not a dinner party, but it seems she has it mixed up with a later dinner for the Javitses, after Bob and Jasper had shown with Leo).

Hess heard about Johns from RR. Soon afterward, a winter snowstorm in NY held up the shipment of an Art News cover from Europe. Hess had to get something else right away. He'd seen the Green Target (?). So he went to Leo's and borrowed it on the spot, wrapped up in a sheet of plastic. Took it in a taxi straight to the engravers, then returned it. There was a brief note on the cover inside the issue, and a very brief review of the Johns show at Castelli by Fairfield Porter (who later coined the term 'neo-dada'). It was a bombshell. "But the show was the real bombshell."

does not feel this was planned. "I would swear that in my recollection is all came about quite casually."

the game of partying pictures (a la Thaw et al).

"I'd come home at night laughing - it was as tho they were trying to lose money. I really thought for a while they were rich people playing a game they loved. I don't think they ever thought they were in business. They had that marvelous naivite of people who thought they could just lead their lives and make it work."

Ileana's long-haired dachshund, Pitschina, would bark at everyone who came to the door (it was still her home), and, if she liked them, roll over and then pee. "Imagine the hours spent running after Pitschina."

They used to rush out for sandwiches and eat them in the gallery. Finally Ileana felt it was time they had plates.

Direction? "Leo never to this day expresses ideas as to where he's going. He and Ileana know the shows they wanted to do."

They opened shows on Monday then, spent Sunday hanging. The part time job quickly became seven days a week. Leo and Ileana insisted on absolute shining cleanliness of the gallery, waxed floors, etc; they hung paintings from the moulding on two wires, and the continual stretching of the wires made for an unevenness that Leo couldn't bear.

"Ileana was very strong. I felt somehow that she had willed it to happen." Also, the atmosphere was extremely European - can't be stressed enough.

By temperament Leo is much more classical - he preferred Leger over Picasso. Ileana was much warmer, and people felt that warmth in the gallery.

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Johns (Hess)

Alfred Barr had been expecting for years a new art movement that would be realistic, thoughtful, expert technically, and with a philsophical basis that was essentially religious. He never really liked ab-ex at all, thought abstract art was over with before the war. Johns probably looked to him like what he'd been expecting. (Barr didn't like David Smith either — thought his work derivative of Spanish Gonzalez.

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Leo Castelli - dinner 1/6/78

Ask Morton Feldman about Bob. Important figure in early days. There was a Feldman concert at Egan's during Bob's show -- gold chairs with red velvet seats.

Seeing Jasper's green target painting changed everything for Leo. "I saw it as a green painting, not even as a target. What I saw was its structure, which really explains my preference for Jasper over Bob. In Bob's work I really didn't see structure at the time. My favorite painter was Pollock, but he too was structural. Newman, Rothko seemed too simple for me. I loved Mondfian as much as I loved Jasper Johns, but for somereason I didn't feel the same about Newman. Then, later, I felt the same enthusiasm for Frank Stella's stripe paintings.

I didn't have the same passion for Bob's work. That evening when we went to dinner, Bob showed us ~~Rebus~~ the Bed, Rebus, and many other great works. Incidentally the quilt on Bed had belonged to Dorothy Rockburne. Ileana was more sensitive to Bob's work than to Jasper's, but I was not completely convinced. That evening we looked at Bob's paintings, and somehow Jasper's name came up. I said, 'Is that the man who painted the painting in the Jewish Museum show?' Bob said yes, and I said I must go and see him. Bob said he would appear anyway, 'I told him to come and see you.' So he did. And immediately I wasked could we go down and see what he was doing.' Leo does not feel this was planned. "I would swear that in my recollection is all came about quite casually."

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Connie Trimble (Mrs. ~~Lester~~ Lester T.)

Trained as a painter at Carnegie Tech, in same class with Philip Pearlstein and Andy Warhol. Got married to Lester Trimble, a composer, moved to Paris, came back to NY and worked for several years in publishing (magazine). One day in 1957 she put an ad in the Times employment pages, and got several calls including one from Ileana, whose voice she liked. The job was to be part-time. Connie was dressing for a party at the moment, and Ileana said why not come over right away, so she did - in her party dress.

She started work there Dec. 17, 1957 and stayed five years. Her first day there was an opening party for group show. The fourth floor gallery was smaller than the present one, and the atmosphere was even more private. "There was a feeling of private elegance, excitement, and energy. Leo was very private and quiet, Ileana was even quieter, except that she has this terrific will and brain. You had the impression of two very bright people presenting something very important. The atmosphere was really alive." Her second show was JJohns.

Connie set about ordering stationery, labels, etc. First thing she did was to catalog the collection. Photographs, insurance, clipping file, keeping documents that might be pertinent -- even then Leo was setting up a stunning little library, "which was kind of a luxury for a staff of one." The stationery had Leo's name very small. They were obviously presenting artists, not playing the game of parlaying pictures (a la Thaw et al).

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The gallery had no sign or name on the street, so anybody who came there had to know about it. "Very soon we started getting Europeans, museum people, artists, so the place had a sort of international feel to it. It was a place where people would stop off and exchange information of all kinds. The word had gone out."

First Rauschenberg show - only one painting sold, to a lady artist from out of town. The Castellis were selling their great European pictures to keep the gallery going. Articles about Leo never seem to account for the love they had for American art.

Life mag called one day, to ask how many sell-out shows they'd had that season. The question seemed so offensive that they didn't call back. But Life called again and insisted, and six months later there was an article on sell-out shows, and the article helped to bring in collectors from the middle west and elsewhere. Publicity went like that.

It was understood that Leo would always take back a painting if the buyer decided he didn't like it. He was very good to young collectors, and interested in bringing them along. Leo and Connie figured that you had to be making $50,000 to $60,000 to be able to collect (now would be double that).

Leo was never a sharp businessman - but he turned out to be better than all the rest. "His generosities sort of multiplied. Once he got mad at me because I asked why he'd gone and given away eighty photos to a stranger who said he was going to write an article. Leo was always giving away photos. I felt the man would never write anything, and I was right, he didn't. But he must have shown the pictures to other people, because articles did appear.

"Sometimes we'd have $150,000 in bills and nothing in the bank - then we'd have to start calling people, asking them to pay us. We celebrated when Bob Rauschenberg would move from his cold studio into a heated one. There just wasn't that much money."

"It was really my and Ivan's idea that the artists had to have stipends. Originally the arangement had been to give the artist his share as soon as we were paid, but they'd always need advances, and it was embarrassing to all of us." Different system from European stipend?

People would come in every Saturday and ask to see Rauschenbergs and Connie would carry them back and forth, and nobody evef bought one.

There was a lot of indignation about Johns. MOMA had not really taken up the abstract expressionists, and when they bypassed them to take up Johns a lot of people were irate.

All sorts of people had lived at 4 East 77 before - Chas. Laughton, TK and Tk.

"I tried to yrabslate Leo to the artists and them to Leo. We really tried to keep them abreast of everything. For example, when Bob had his first show in Europe, at Daniel Cordier, Leo waived his entire commission and paid for the shipping. That put us in the red, but Leo thought it was important for Bob's work to be seen there. Many other dealers could have had shows for their artists in Europe on that basis, which was to lose money, but they didn't. I let the other artists know about this, so they'd understand how we operated.

(over)

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"If was a sort of brain trust. It was not only the most elegant and the most excitin gallery around, but also the most intelligent. That was to me the excitement."

Duchamp came in to see the Lichtensteins, etc.

"A good gallery is also a clearing house, an idea exchange."

Leo victimized by artists? Never. Leo has always liked a dare. As a kid he used to skip school to go to the racetrack. "He and Ileana were sports."

Prices: At one point, a collector offered another collector $3000 more than he had paid for Jasper's Map. When they'd both left, Leo said, "Don't they realize that they drive the prices up?" It's the collectors who do that, who set prices.

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Kay Bearman - 2/10/76

Worked for Henry G. from 1960-1965. Came to Leo spring 1965 and stayed until 1969. Was there with David Whitney, David White.

Leo's total focus on the gallery is somehow impersonal - it's hard to get beyond that and into contact with the man.

Leo didn't want to look at Serra's work. Serra kept calling, and Leo kept putting him off. Once he said he couldn't come when scheduled because of tThanksgiving weekend -- when it wasn't Thanksgiving. He would say he was coming on Thirsday and then not go -- leaving staff to handle explanations.

Once he sold a Twombley to two different people. His attitude in these cases is that it will all work out, and somehow it does.

Leo would get angry with her over something she had nit been informed about. "Leo, I can't know what you're thinking," she'd say. "But that's what I want you to do," he'd reply.

Leo was never comfortable with the roughneck artists -- Serra, Poons, Chamberlain. Ivan would handle this kind.

Leo was always giving away things -- photos, documents -- which the staff would have trouble replacing.

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Note: Check all direct quotes with Janis.

Sidney Janis - 2/9/76

Introduced to Leo by Henri-Pierre Roche, Janis's old friend, about 1941. Sidney impressed, and they struck up an immediate friendship. Leo had just arrived and was in the sweater business, but not much so; far more interested in art and artists. Janis learned later he was sort of an American agent for Mme Kandinsky, and he used many of Leo's Kandinsky's in his own Kandinsky show the first year the gallery opened.(1948).

Janis was involved mainly then in writing books and articles on art. He opened gallery in 1948, and two years later he and Leo decided to make a show that would bring together the leading younger artists of America with those of Paris. Leo selected the Americans, Janis went to Paris to select the French. No commercial angle for Leo - just interested in doing it. The American part of the show was later invited to appear at the Galerie de France in Paris, where it was totally ignored. "Young Painters In the U.S. and France," October 1950, paired fifteen American and fifteen Paris artists: Cavallon/Coulon; DeKooning/Dubuffet; Ferren/Gorbel; Jimmy Ernst/Singier; Gatch/Pallert; Gorky/Matta; Graves/Manessier; Kline/Soulages; Pollock/Lanskoy; Reinhardt/Nejed; Rothko/de Stael; Sterne/da Silva; Tobey/Bazaine; Tomlin/Ubec. Clem Greenberg: "The Americans steal the show."

Janis says that curiously enough the chauvinism is now reversed - Americans won't look at European painting.

9th Street show was really an exhibition of abstract expressionists - no purists.

Leo was around the gallery and lot, and he and Janis went together to many shows and studios. It wasn't such a big job to see all the shows then -- there were a dozen leading galleries and a few minor ones, most of them in 57th Street area, could do it all on a Saturday afternoon.

Now and then Leo and Janis did some peripheral business together, such as buying a picture jointly and dividing the profits(French masters, Kandinsky etc). It only happendd a couple of times. No consideration given to Leo joining the gallery, altho Janis says he would have liked to do so. Janis wanted his sons to come into the biz, didn't want to share responsibility. But Leo was there a lot, would sometimes help with hanging shows, etc.

Leo took Janis to Guston's studio on West 9th Street, but that was the only artist he could think of. DeKooning came to Janis after becoming dissatisfied with Egah. Kline came a year or so later for same reasons. Rothko had been with Parsons across the hall, came in 19 .

"I think Leo always showed a certain lack of confidence - it's an aspect of his character, That's why I'm often surprised when I see him quoted today -- some of the things he says sound so out of character.

"I always thought Leo had a great eye, and wanted to be some kind of an art entrepreneur."

Stipends : Janis has been doing this for years, against future sales; there's an accounting every six months, and sums owed artists are paid. "There was a time when Pollock and Rothko and the others were not selling, and we were lending them money rather than buying paintings from them outright." Janis opposes buying outright because it puts gallery into competition with artist --

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- would be inclined to sell its pictures before the artist's newer ones. With Janis, if an artist's debt to the gallery becomes too great, "we might let the artist go, and hope eventually to be repaid." Has done so.

Janis disputes claim that Leo opened European market. Says he has a dozen shows running out of NY at any time, that he showed Albers abroad many times, etc. Leo only one factor among many others.

Discounts to collectors: "It's a wrong pratice... In certain cases we give discounts, never more than 10%. But the art world is a very small place. If I sell a painting at one price to Collector X, and a similar painting to Collector Y at a different price, it's going to get back."

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Castelli - visit to Front Street - first RR + JJ shows

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Frank Stella - 2/6/76

(Mentioned to Leo by Rosenblum and maybe Seitz also)
How he and Leo got together: Frank had seen him around a lot but Leo didn't know who he was. However, Nina (Sundell) reviewed a painting of Frank's that had been in the spring group show at John E. Myers' in the spring of 1959, so Leo probably saw it there too. Dorothy Miller also saw it, liked it, and arranged for Frank (or helped arrange) to be in a show at Oberlin. Frank was living then at 266 West Broadway, now Soho. Leo came down one day with Dorothy Miller, but neither one of them made any definite offer. Leo came a second time, with Ileana, which was when he asked Frank to be in the gallery. At the same time Leo asked whether Frank wanted to be in a Modern Museum show or to show first at the gallery, and Frank said the gallery --"but in fairness I'd have to say that I didn't know what kind of a show Dorothy Miller was doing. She hadn't said anything to me directly, and I sort of assumed it would be one of those New Talent things up on the sixth floor member's lounge, which is sort of lousy space."

Frank had been thinking of going with Myers then, but Myers had never asked him directly. Myers had a good space, over Peck and Peck, and Frank would have gone if asked. Later, when he went with Leo, Myers said why had he done that? etc. But he was glad to go with Leo, which already seemed the slickest and best gallery around. Bob and Jasper monopolized the art world in those days, as to publicity and interest, "and I liked almost everybody Leo showed." Most important, Leo offered him $75 a week, so he could quit working -- odd jobs, mostly house painting in Astoria and ~~Queens~~ Bronx.

At the end of the following year (1960), French and Co. closed the contemporary gallery run by Greenberg. Leo could have had Noland and Louis, but didn't. However Frank says it's not really true that he felt isolated in the gallery. "Ivan set so much of the social tone there, and I felt sort of out of that. But Leo was terribly supportive and warm to me. I think the best thing Leo did with all his artists, for a while anyway, was to force himself to give each person's work equal weight. He was very outgoing about that. He wasted just as much money on me and Norman Bluhm as he did on Bob and Jasper."

"We had some arguments, but Leo would always give in." When Frank did the Copper paintings, he'd just gotten married and needed money. Ivan didn't like the pictures, and they looked like they would be hard to sell (which they were). Leo said why didn't he put some of his small models in the show, Frank said no, Leo got mad, Frank said OK, he'd take his paintings and Leo could take ~~the~~ his gallery. "It was pretty aggressive on my part."

Ileana's influence: "Everybody said that if Ileana was against something it would be very hard for Leo to be for it. She had terribly strong opinions that always seemed wrong to me. She was incredibly forceful about a lot of things but she didn't know anything. ~~It~~ But it was always Ileana going to see what Leo liked; I don't think she found things on her own.

"Leo lives or dies by the success of a thing, not the money. Let's face it, I'm quite satisfied and Leo doesn't even have a pot to piss in. He doesn't even have a very good collection. Most dealers would like to own something worth half a million -- Leo just wants to sell something worth half a million."

"I think Jasper probably had the most to say in the gallery. If Jasper didn't like an artist, Leo wouldn't take him."

Leo's e ye: "Leo liked the severity and clarity of what I did. I've gotta admit

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Barbara Rose - 2/5/76 at Algonquin

Leo's has always been the artists's gallery. He has listened better to his artists than any other dealer.

Leo didn't really respond to minimal art until Frank and Barbara worked on him. When the Green Gallery folded, Leo wanted Poons, period. Barbara and Frank talked him into taking Judd and Morris (Rosenquist had come before).

Frank always resented Leo a little because he wouldn't buy his paintings outright. Felt this showed a want of confidence -- even tho, as Barbara pointed out, he was getting more in monthly stipends (now Leo does buy his work). Frank's resentment increased over what he considered Leo's embracing of anti-art and non-art -- the conceptualists and video people.

First it was Jasper and Bob's gallery. Then it was Frank and Barbara's. Now the dominant ones are Serra and Nauman.

Barbara worked there for a while, part-time, when she was still in college, and going with Frank. When Ivan had a lecture date she would fill in.

Frank and several others were "bad kids" - they always took advantage of Leo, and he always bailed them out when they needed money or got into scrapes -- like the time Frank and Barbara were arrested in Central Park for looking too hippie, and Leo got a lawyer to bail them out. Everyone would turn to Uncle Leo when in trouble, making him play the paternal role that he really didn't want to play. Leo wanted to be a bd kid too. Frank also crammed things down his throat, such as his showing in "16 Americans" before his first show at Leo. When Frank showed his Copper series, Leo hung in the hall a group of small sketches for them - Leo had been begging Frank to do some small pictures because the big ones were hard to sell; when Frank saw them he told Leo to take them down; Leo said, Frank, this is my gallery; Frank said But those are my pictures, and if you don't take them down, I will. Leo backed down, of course. Leo never wins and argument with an artist.

Leo knew that Judd and Morris were expensive, worked big etc. Also that Judd spent money fast. He was very reluctant to take them on.

Leo could have had Morris Louis and Noland at the beginning. They would have loved to be there, as would just about any other artist in New York. But Leo didn't go for Louis ("grand decorateur"), and found Noland's target's too close to Jasper. Leo was never really influenced by Greenberg -- one of the few who wasn't. Frank would have been much happier if Noland and Louis had been there -- he felt pretty isolated for some time.

The gallery was a real hangout for younger artists -- along with the Green and the Cedar Bar, the place where you could be sure of meeting your friends. Some people thought it very exclusive at first, because of it's being in a private house, with a door that had to be buzzed to open. There was definitely the feeling of a family among the artists, at least among the inner circle that stopped after Warhol.

Ileana is very devious, manipulatative, kinky, weird, untrustworthy -- all the things Leo is accused of being in many articles. She did things like getting

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a girl whom Jasper liked to go and live with Jasper and Bob, to make trouble between them. She's a trouble-maker.

Leo's patriotism -- he loves America, and part of his sense of mission was to make Europeans aware of American art. Leo is ambitious for fame, glory, not money.

His salesmanship -- what he sold was a sense of art history. He talked about the paintings as tho they were already in history, along with Cezanne, and the collectors, who are mostly idiots, were very impressed. Leo didn't talk aesthetics so much, and he didn't "sell," but he made you feel you were in on something very important.

Barbara and Jim Rosenquist used to talk about his doing a huge painting à la Meissonnier's Napoleon at Friedland, showing Leo setting out to conquer Europe.

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that Leo is obviously more excited by the obvious. He likes the showpieces that you can also understand. If he likes abstract art it has to be very near and clear. But I always thought it wasn't Leo's business to like what I did, it was his business to sell it. And certainly he's promoted me fantastically."

Financially, their relations came to a crisis about 1966-67, and Frank says it was not really Leo's fault. "I acquired needs that just wouldn't work with what I was making from Leo, so I made other arrangements -- I virtually went with Larry Rubin." Frank and Barbara liked to travel, they needed an apartment and studio space, there were children to educate, etc. What he did was to keep his same arrangement with Leo and add to it another one with Larry, who bought outright for him, providing the cash he needed. With Leo, there was always an agreed-on sum for the year, but Frank would have spent it in the first six months. The double arrangement has worked out fine, he says.

Leo's new artists: "Leo wants to stay with what's going on. He shows what's there. It doesn't matter much to me -- it's his gallery and his business. I find the spirit of the gallery a little dispersed now, but then everything is a little dispersed." It was much more exciting up until 1965 or so, with parties at Leo's and elsewhere, and not so much need for or emphasis on money among artists. Part of this was the relationship between Leo and Alan Solomon - "his most fruitful relationship. It was fruitful for them and for everyone else too - that energy was beneficial to everyone. Together they were a lot looser and funnier than either of them was separately. And there was a sort of third party there too, because Alan had something going with Dick Bellamy. Alan sort of combined Bellamy's and Leo's artists with the Greenberg people such as Louis and Noland, and for a while it was a very bubbly mixture.

Leo used to talk to Frank's father, who worried about Frank being so disorganized -- could usually calm him down with his European savoir-faire.

"Whatever money Leo made went right back into the gallery."

Only real source of tension concerned Leo's shuffling money around to help out poorer artists. Once a collector wanted to buy a Kline and a Johns, but didn't want to pay what Leo was asking for the Kline, so Leo added the difference to the Johns; Jasper was furious. Stella sometimes felt irked that his money was being used to help Scarpitta, for example. But Frank never felt there was any danger of the gallery going under for this or any other reason. "It was totally unreal to think that the gallery could ever have gone out of business. If Leo went under, so did the art world because that's where the energy was. Leo would never have let it happen, he would have found solutions somehow. I just never took that threat seriously." (one used to hear the gallery was going under in the sixties).

"Leo always had the ability to catch the limelight and to keep things snapping."

Downtown: "I always thought that was a terrible idea. And I can't imagine why in that whole building Leo got the worst possible space. It's everything the uptown gallery is not - no proportions, no style. But I guess it works."

Leo as salesman: "Leo behaves in a certain way, he has the absolutely convincing image of a European, cultural art dealer that really comes across, probably because it's his natural style.

(over)

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"I never felt any pressure from Leo."

There would be times in the gallery when you needed money and Leo wouldn't have it, and this bothered him a lot -- he was very self-conscious about not having it because he wanted to project the image of success.

The network of galleries has helped everybody but Leo, really. Of course it's helped him indirectly, making him the kingpin, giving a semblance of power etc. But Leo has kept the stuff moving. His real genius is promotion - he's the best there. "The trouble is you can be over-promoted; suddenly your paintings are everywhere, and it's a drag, and nobody wants to see you any more."

Leo's discounts: "I can't conceive of anybody's even being interested. It's a way of life. The point of being a dealer is that you make deals!"

Leo does have a strong feeling of there being a right place for each work to go. "I think he has a right to expect that, but I suppose it can sometimes look phony or irritating. But the idea that Leo doesn't treat the poor the way he treats the rich is not true. Before I even joined the gallery I went in there and bought a Rauschenberg drawing for $75. The price was $125, but all I could pay was $75 and Leo said OK -- and I didn't look too nice, either."

Artists used to make fun of Leo sometimes, call him Mighty Mouse, but it was impossible to hate him. "He's not an enemy, he's just doing his job."

Ivan, on the other hand, and in the end, comes out schlock. "I like Ivan, I enjoy being around him, but he just never does anything worth while."

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Dorothy Miller - 2/17/78 lunch

The dinner at Bob's attended by Barr (and not by Dorothy) was for Javits, who had drafted the bill to change ruling on import of works of art (assemblage as art). It was after Dorothy's 16 Americans show in 1959. What Dorothy remembers vividly about the ~~Front~~ Street loft was the telephone being passed between floors on a long cord.

She and Alfred used to go round for half a day every Saturday looking at the new shows - could cover all the galleries in half a day then. "I'd always know when he was interested because he'd say, 'Which one do you like?'" They both liked Rothko when he was still Marcus Rothkowitz, and showing in a big American Federation of Arts exhibition at the Riverside Museum in the thirties: pre-abstract, pictures of spectral figures walking in subway stations. Later, when they asked if he still had those, he said no.

They saw Bob's dirt paintings at the Stable, also a combine with a white hen which Dorothy would have liked to buy for herself. Bob's work was always very new and dranatic, but not as new or as dramatic as Jasper's first show.

She and Alfred saw their first Johns in a group show at Castelli, a small flag painting. They were both struck by it. Dorothy went away with a mental image of the artist as an elderly man who was fascinated by the flag. They went to Jasper's first Castelli show on a very rainy Saturday, so rainy they had the gallery to themselves. Stayed for a couple of hours, trying to decide which to buy -- no question that they would buy.

Not true that MOMA neglected abstract expresssionists. Bought from Peggy Guggenheim -- Pollock, Still, Rothko. Show of Recent Acquisitions in 1947 had many of them. In 1955, the French government invited MOMA to put on a show from its collection at Musee de l'art moderne, filling entire house; strong ab-ex representation there. Then the New American Painting in 1958, which was made for European tour and not shown at home.

Dorothy and Holger met Still very early, and saw a lot of him. Had him for dinner often on 8th Street - he was living Cooper Square. But Still was very difficult personally. She thinks it was Still who probably initiated the quarrels with fellow artists. They all got to hating one another.

Note: Person who knows most about museum's earlier history is Betsey Jones, who's now associate director of Smith College Museum of Art.