

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**INTERVIEW WITH:** BARBARA JAKOBSON (BJ)  
**INTERVIEWER:** SHARON ZANE (SZ)  
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### BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 1

SZ: Barbara, tell me when and where you were born, and something about your background.

BJ: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1933, and I grew up on what Joan Rivers and I call the Champs Elysée of Brooklyn, Eastern Parkway. I'm a firm believer in all kinds of accidents and fate and serendipity, because the reason you see me here now, talking about The Museum of Modern Art, is because by an accident of fate I lived directly across the street from a great museum and a great library. My parents. . . my mother's name was Rose Parnes and my father's name was Joseph Petchesky, and both of them were born in the United States. They came from very solid Brooklyn families. My father was one of nine children. He became a lawyer; I think he was the only one of his siblings who went into a profession. His mother was apparently. . . I never knew her, but she was a phenomenal woman who had a business in what was. . . . Then there were these great markets where all the food was purveyed for the city. There was a place in Brooklyn called the Wallabout market, and she had a stall in this market where she wholesaled, she was in the wholesale fruit and vegetable business. She went to work at four in the morning every day, worked till nine, went home, and managed a household of nine children, because her husband had died when my father was only three. I would see trucks driving around Brooklyn with her name on them when I was little, even long after she was dead. The rest of the family was in that business.

My mother was one of five children. I'm really not even sure where my ancestors came

from; they were all very vague. They were the kind of people who, when they got to America, only wanted to be Americans; they buried the past effectively, to such an extent that even I have no idea what part of Europe they came from. I know it was Russia, probably somewhere near the Polish-Russian border. I have no inkling, frankly. But my mother's father, my grandfather, was a pioneer in the ladies' garment industry. He was one of the first people who manufactured clothing for women in an era when it was all converted from being handmade. He and his four sons all were in this business, and it was a very clannish, incredibly close family. I grew up being very much aware of style and fashion, because they made expensive clothes for women. It was called Paul Parnes; that was the name of the label. I would go as a child with my mother to 498 Seventh Avenue. I would just see these clothes change every season. I met all these interesting people who were in this industry. They were a group of phenomenal people, the pioneers in this industry. They were so vivid - incredibly charming people. So I grew up in an apartment, a very pretty apartment, filled with really good English furniture. My mother, who I used to later call the "Regency Kid," had extremely good taste. It was very quiet taste, and we had Chippendale furniture, a Sheraton dining room, and over the sofa in the living room was a portrait by Sir Peter Lely of the Dutchess of Marlborough. I remember just saying to my mother, "What is she doing there? Why do we have the Dutchess of Marlborough in our house?" And my mother said, "Because it goes with this period of furniture" [laughter]. After she died, it's interesting, I found all the bills for the furniture, from Stair & Company. It was all. . . You know what? The Peter Lely turned out to be a fake. It was very tragic. So I grew up during the war—well, at the end of the Depression, and then, when I was in grammar school, the war broke out. It was a very interesting time to grow up, because I never went anywhere. I lived totally in my head because you didn't travel — gasoline was rationed, we didn't even have an automobile, actually — I escaped from this rather suffocating eighteenth-century apartment into the library and the museum, The Brooklyn Museum and I would stand there in front of everything - Egyptian works of art, American pictures, and particularly these rooms, they had great rooms full of Colonial furniture or Victorian furniture, and I would simply fantasize. I lived in my imagination, and I found that a museum was a

place where I simply wanted to be, all the time. It was a place, for me, where my own kind of imagination grew. So I felt very at home in museums.

As I grew up, I became aware, of course, of Manhattan, which we used to call "The City" — we'd go into The City. I went to the usual—ice skating in Rockefeller Center, dancing lessons, ballet lessons on Saturday — and when I was quite young, I guess about twelve, an aunt of mine gave me a membership to The Museum of Modern Art, and in those days, children over twelve could go unaccompanied by an adult. I don't know how she knew to do this. It was quite clever of her. So I discovered the Museum, and then, once I found this place. . . It's a very famous story, and I'm sure you've heard this story over and over, that the epiphany of finding the Modern [The Museum of Modern Art] transformed people's lives in one way or another. It certainly made me understand that one of the things I wanted to do all the time was look at art, or be in places like this. I had an all-girls education. I went to public school for the first eight grades, in Brooklyn, and then I went to a school called Packer Collegiate Institute, which at that time was an all-girls school. I went to an all-girls summer camp, Red Wing, and I went to an all-women's college, Smith [College], and I'm a firm believer in. . . I don't know why with my own daughters I somehow just didn't stick to my guns, and I wish I had. I think I made a dreadful mistake in that I sent them to coeducational schools. Again, I think that I was the kind of child who never would have flourished if I'd had to be competing against boys. They terrified me. I just don't feel I would have gotten heard if I'd been in a coed school. Again, I'll never know. I made this choice, I begged my mother, who had gone to Erasmus Hall High School in the glory days, when it was a great school. I begged her to please send me to this girls school, and I don't know how I found out about it. I found out about it all by myself, and that is where, luckily, I went. So these kinds of things very much influenced what happened to me growing up. For instance, I remember the first research paper I ever wrote — you had to learn how to write footnotes in high school — was on the history of chairs. Do not ask me why I chose to write on the history of chairs, but I was in love with chairs. To me, chairs were like these essential objects, and from the time I went to The Brooklyn

Museum and I saw African stools and Egyptian stools and Chippendale chairs and Victorian chairs and whatever, and then somewhere along the way we subscribed . . . I did not live in a literary house. There were books, but it wasn't rich with books to explore. We subscribed to the *National Geographic* and *Life Magazine*, and *Life Magazine* was another enormous influence on my visual education, because through *Life* I became . . . The photography was so great, the images were so great, that I kind of became aware of modernism, I think, partly through *Life*, so I became aware of things that were streamlined and things that were of modern design. I remember that as soon as I knew there was somebody named Raymond Loewy, who designed china for Rosenthal, I begged my mother, "Get rid of this Minton china. We must get modern, you have to get everything modern." And of course she didn't, but she laughed. In the end, modernism became my form of rebellion; everybody has to find one. I was quite lucky, actually, because, on the one hand, I wanted to conform; on the other hand, I wanted to be very daring and rebellious, and I did it through design. I did it through clothes and design. When I got the chance to choose the color to paint my own room, I painted it poison green. There was part of me that used modernism as a way of defining myself.

SZ: Did that extend to music?

BJ: I had a very pathetic musical education. It was the one part of my education that was very inadequate. I don't play an instrument, we never had one in our house. I love music, and I could sing very well and I liked popular music and I'd spend all my allowance on records, which were mostly Frank Sinatra, jazz — I love jazz, love jazz. I liked modern music very much, actually. In fact, I know a great deal more about modern music than I do about classical music, although I like it. Let's say I could not identify every piece of classical music I ever heard. But another incredibly serendipitous thing was that I had first cousins named Donald and Harriet Peters who escaped from Brooklyn. My family all stayed in Brooklyn. We were devoted to Ebbets Field and Brooklyn. They loved it. In retrospect, it was a fabulous place to grow up. I couldn't wait to get out of there, but when I grew up there, it was like being in a province, a great

province, and because Brooklyn is so vast, I had my own little world. I lived on roller skates. I had great independence. The streets were safe, I went everywhere by myself, from the time I was seven, I think, I was in the subway by myself. I'd skate to Prospect Park, I'd skate everywhere. With my skate-key around my neck I'd go out in the street and play ball after dinner in the middle of the street. So it was a kind of an urban yet suburban childhood, which I only appreciated much later on. But my cousins, they escaped, and they moved to Manhattan and they began collecting modern art in the '50s.

SZ: They were contemporary cousins, your age?

BJ: They were older than me, and they were mentors. Another thing is, in life it all comes down to who teaches you. Who are your teachers, who takes you under their wing, who develops what's there. I just was so lucky, because these cousins had one child, and she was a very troubled child, and they kind of pseudo-adopted me. I was so easy and I was so happy to be with them, so they took me everywhere and I'd stay overnight with them when I came into the city, and suddenly I'd see these paintings coming into their house — [Robert] Motherwell, [Hans] Hoffman, [William] Bazotes. They never had a Jackson Pollock, but they had a lot of the French Abstract Expressionists, like [Georges] Mathieu, [Pierre] Soulages. I was astounded. They gave me license to really become involved with contemporary art while I was just growing up, and when I went to college, I had no doubt that I would major in art history. From the beginning I studied the history of art and architecture.

I wasn't really aware how great the art history department was. In those days you were encouraged to know what you wanted to do. You wanted to go to a good liberal arts school, and you were being given this time to think it through. It didn't matter that you didn't have a strong interest. Unless you were strongly scientific, I think it was always the math and science wizards who knew, they are the ones who made it early, because in those fields, if you don't get on with it really young, you don't get there. If you are

involved in literature or the humanities, it's not so crucial that you know right away. I wasn't sure. I knew I wanted to major in art history, but I also was interested in religion, I was interested in English, I was interested in government. I simply wasn't interested in science.

SZ: You graduated from high school in 1950?

BJ: I began college in 1950, so I was truly a child of the '50s.

SZ: What does that mean?

BJ: In the sense that, one, it was the Eisenhower years and you knew that you'd go to college for four years, you'd get a degree, you'd have a job, and you'd get married, and then, when you had your first child, you'd probably stop working. At least that was the conventional thing to do. You'd be a career girl, in quotes, for a couple of years after school; you might share an apartment with another girl. There's a movie that I recently looked at again. Rona Jaffe wrote a novel called *The Best of Everything*, and it's so great. You should see it, if only for the architecture. You see the Seagram Building was just finished, and that's where they worked, supposedly. You'd see them going in and out, and they all wore white gloves and little hats or little headbands with veils. It was astounding. The summer before I began college I went to visit my brother at camp with my parents. That was the summer I was supposed to be learning to type; that was what you did. But then again, I was warned, "Never become a good typist, because then you'll end up as a secretary."

SZ: Who warned you?

BJ: That was the kind of buzz, that was the given. That was received wisdom. [Telephone interruption]

SZ: You were saying that the perceived wisdom was "Don't learn to type because. . . "

BJ: You'll end up as a secretary. I really believed that, so I learned to type in the most pathetic way. When I went to visit my brother, as we were arriving at his camp, a young man sort of hove into view — tall, lanky, glasses, horn-rimmed glasses — and my father looked at him and said, "Are you Louis Jakobson's son?" And he said yes. To make a very long story short, my father's law partner at one time had been a man named Louis Jakobson, who died tragically, many, many moons ago, and his son [John] looked so much like him that my father recognized him. My father introduced us, and it was [claps her hands]. That was it. So, at the age of seventeen, it was practically the first date I'd ever had, I met this young man. He was a junior at Wesleyan, so I went off to Smith with a boyfriend in tow, which actually made life very secure. It was great, because Wesleyan and Smith were not that far apart, and of course the rules then were very strict. You had Saturday classes, you had three overnights a semester. John was a very good typist; with two fingers he could type faster than anybody, so he typed all my papers for me. We had that very typical '50s thing, where you got pinned by the end of your freshman year, you were engaged by the end of your sophomore year. I got married the end of my junior year, when John was then at Harvard Business School. In those days so many young women married at the end of their junior year that the Seven Sisters colleges made an arrangement where you could take your senior year at one of them and come back for your degree. So my senior year I went to Wellesley. This was so lucky, because I got two great art departments. It was art history heaven. I was reading about [S.] Lane Faison at Williams, and I realized. . . . When I was at Smith, [Henry-] Russell Hitchcock was head of the art department, director of the museum [Smith College Museum of Art], and again, you had a great teaching museum, with incredible things. So [Henry-] Russell Hitchcock for architecture, everyone — the Kennedys, there was incredibly good professor of northern art named Eleanor Barton who then went to Sweetbrier afterward, Phyllis Lehman — you name it. It was astounding. [Erwin] Panofsky came to do a seminar at one point. And at Wellesley, I had Sidney Freedberg, John McAndrew, who at one time worked at the Modern — he

taught modern architecture. I took everything again; I doubled. I took the same courses again because I wanted to take these teachers. There was a medievalist named Teresa Frisch, at Wellesley, who was incredible. So I went through the whole art history thing, all the while keeping in touch with my cousins in New York, who were collecting continually. And suddenly, in the mid '50s I walked into their house one day and I see this little number four, a white number, and I said, "What is that?" And it was a [Jasper] Johns. By the way, they owned at one time *Tennyson*, they owned [Robert] Rauschenberg's Coca-Cola bottles — they owned astounding pictures.

SZ: Was that all their own taste? Did they have help doing it?

BJ: They had great eyes. They went into partnership with Sam Kootz. They bought a lot of [Maurice de] Vlamincks. They were very active collectors, and in those days there weren't so many advanced collectors. I graduated and of course came to New York. We came back to New York, and John got exempted from the Korean War. We celebrated furiously. By that time, he had become a trader on the stock exchange floor; he went down to the stock exchange, and I went to work at Lord & Taylor, which again was like graduate school, it was like another women's school. Dorothy Shaver and the whole hierarchy of Lord & Taylor, were incredible gay women. They were fantastic, and to me, you see, since a lot of the great teachers in my life — Mary Ellen Chase, Elizabeth Drew — all these women were so astounding, I was incredibly drawn to this kind of milieu. I loved it.

SZ: You mean the strength of it?

BJ: Yes. I loved these smart women who just ran things, and who were so learned. Dorothy Shaver ran Lord & Taylor, and she could have run the military-industrial complex. The woman was a genius. I had a lot of fun for a couple of years, sort of working my way around this store. I loved retailing.



SZ: Just talk a little bit about what Lord & Taylor was known for in those days.

BJ: It was known as the most, let's say, it was. . . I'm trying to find a comparison. It was like The Museum of Modern Art of clothing, because it encouraged the most advanced designers. It had incredibly good furniture and decorative arts; it had a marvelous restaurant. The atmosphere in Lord & Taylor was like the atmosphere in The Museum of Modern Art. It was very plain, austere and yet beautiful, and you felt like you were working in some kind of temple of style. I didn't go to graduate school; I made a choice not to go to graduate school because I was by that time totally involved in contemporary art and I didn't think that graduate school was going to be of any use to me, because I didn't want to teach or be an academic. I just wanted to be in it. I thought of applying for a job at The Museum of Modern Art, and they said, "Look, you'll just be able to sell postcards. You don't have a masters and you can't type" — although we know that a lot of people at the Museum got their start as the secretaries of the great curators, so I should have been maybe a little more courageous, but I got scared. I was intimidated, because I didn't think I had the credentials to go to work in a museum, in any capacity except the most menial. So I went to Lord & Taylor, where I really could get ahead and I could be involved and wield decisions. I started out, of course, selling, which I loved.

SZ: What department were you in?

BJ: Junior negligees, and the buyer in that department, she was an amazing person. I learned a great deal from her; she was hateful, but she was very, very smart. I got switched around to other departments, and then I got pregnant; after a couple of years of being married, I got pregnant. I think I was having trouble with my job, and in those days it didn't occur to me that I should just quit this job and get another job, and I think I let myself get pregnant. It wasn't a planned thing, but it was a relief, because it took me off the hook of having to continue working. And then, also we must remember, I was brought up in the age when volunteerism was the highest order of service, that everyone — my mother was incredibly active in the fight to save kindergartens in New

York City, where they were threatening to abolish kindergarten, and they formed something called the Kindergarten Mothers Association, which lobbied, finally successfully, to, with the help of Eleanor Roosevelt, naturally, and Mayor LaGuardia. I remember being taken to city hall to perform for Mayor LaGuardia as a child. But I had this example of women who rolled bandages for the Red Cross during the war, who did tons of war work. I had a cousin who ferried bombers across the sea during the war and who volunteered for the ambulance corps. Everyone I knew worked for nothing, and I thought that they did very noble things. I was not a bit embarrassed; in fact, I was actually thrilled that I wasn't out there having to be at work at nine o'clock in the morning. But I always was busy. I never stopped kind of looking around. So, I had my first child in 1956, and that year my cousin said to me, "I want you to meet somebody, Barbara. You must meet this man who's opening a gallery, called Leo Castelli." My cousin introduced me to Leo Castelli, and that began this friendship, which has lasted for forty-one years. Again, if you asked me what was your graduate school in art history, it was Sidney Janis, Rose Fried, Leo, Sam Kootz — it was all the dealers. In those days, the art world was much more like a little village, and all the galleries were more-or-less concentrated from Fifty-seventh Street up to Madison Avenue, and I used to take my baby in her baby carriage and wheel her around and go to art galleries all the time. I went to see every show, and we bought, when Leo opened his gallery, did his first [Jasper] Johns show. We had virtually no money. We were living on John's capital, which was like twelve hundred dollars. He would go down to the floor, trade away his capital; sometimes he'd come home and he'd say, "Well, we're negative." His father had committed suicide because of business reverses, and I was a very obedient girl, I wasn't going to go out and get into debt and do these things, so we bought a Johns from his first show on an installment plan.

SZ: That was the first thing you bought?

BJ: The first thing I bought was a painting from Rose Fried that was by a German artist named Adolph Fleischman, and my favorite artist was always [Piet] Mondrian. But of

course since we couldn't afford Mondrian, I just found the closest thing to a Mondrian that I could. I also have a Fritz Glarner. I love Mondrian. Mondrian remains an artist who I never, ever, ever exhaust or tire of. So all these things made for a very lively life. Leo, being there when all of this was happening, being very much a part of it. Sidney Janis, who had infinite patience with me; he'd sit there, I'd go there and he would take out. . . He knew I wasn't going to buy anything much. We did buy things from Sidney, but he would spend hours just explaining, taking out pictures, showing them to me. This went on and at one point, in about 1961, Arthur Emil, who was our lawyer and very good friend, said, "Barbara, you should be on the Junior Council of the Museum." So that is how my relationship with the Museum began. . . .

The Junior Council was formed in 1949. There are various stories of why it came into being, and one was that [Director] Alfred [H.] Barr, [Jr.] wanted a way of getting all these Young Turks sort of contained and out of his hair and not meddling around in what he was doing; on the other hand, he knew that some would be trustees, so he made a structure for them to participate in the life of the Museum and yet have a set of rules around them. By the time I joined the Junior Council, it had changed significantly, because it wasn't so tiny anymore, although it was still pretty small. But you went through a sort of rigorous interview with the then-chairman, who was a woman named Ann Jones.

SZ: So first you had to have your introduction.

BJ: You had to be introduced by a member, and then you had to go through a couple of interviews. It was by no means guaranteed that you would be asked to join. Then you did an apprenticeship, always in the Art Lending Service. I'm very bad on dates, but I have a chronology. Actually, the Art Lending Service, to me, was heaven, because it was like Lord & Taylor with real art. I loved it. First of all, I knew how to run a store. I knew exactly how to keep stock, I knew how to sell things, I knew exactly how to go about this. By that time, I had my second child, we were economically much better off,

and I was able to afford full-time help, and again, it's lucky, you find these things in life. I hired a nanny to take care of my second child who I hired for six weeks, and when she came, I sort of looked at her and somehow my instincts said, "Don't ever let her leave." Seventeen years later, she retired, and she's eighty-four now and we still take care of her. She's Cuban, and she wasn't a proper starched nanny. She was like the earth mother that I wanted for myself and that I wanted for my children. I laugh at my own children, who now have their own daughters — my daughters have daughters — and when I tell them stories of the way it was in the '50s, I feel like Margaret Mead visiting the Samoan Islands when I go to see them, and they think that I am some total Martian. It is very amusing. But I did get this wonderful person whom I could trust, and it allowed me the freedom to volunteer. But you see, there was never a demarcation for me between "real work" that you got paid for, and "work". And in those days, on the Junior Council it was like that. Everyone who was very active in it could have been doing any number of other jobs, paying jobs, but they didn't. In those days, we really functioned as the education department. There was no education department at the Modern, aside from Victor d'Amico's school [called the People's Art Center, 1948-1969], which was a different kettle of fish altogether. If there was a lecture series at the Museum, it was the Junior Council who did it. If you look at the history of it, there were some incredibly distinguished programs. Then, the Art Lending Service. The Publications Department was very rarefied under Monroe Wheeler; it was extraordinary what a character he was. But we were the ones who started publishing Christmas cards and objects, and the Junior Council published the calendar. We had committees that would meet, and seriously research the collection, and also think of outside artists who could be commissioned to do cards. The famous instance is Robert Indiana: *Love* was done as a Christmas card for The Museum of Modern Art. We functioned in committees; there were committee chairmen, and there was always curatorial oversight of everything we did.

SZ: Do you remember who some of the curators were?

BJ: Oh yes. The Art Lending Service, when I started . . . Bill [William] Seitz and Peter Selz — S&S — they would come and vet things. Alfred himself would sometimes pass an eye over what we selected. Also, when I came to the Museum, Bill [William S.] Liebermann was the staff advisor to the Council, and I went to work for him in his department cataloguing; that was an experience. You see, it was so great because I would say that when I worked at the Museum, which then became a full-time job as I went along, I became, first, committee chairman and then chairman of the Council itself, I swear to you I knew every single person in the Museum, including everybody in the boiler room. You knew everyone. There was an incredible man named Allen Porter, who was the secretary of the Museum, and his office was right next to the Junior Council, and he was the resident historian. If you could have talked to Allen Porter, he was the most delicious man that ever lived — ever. Great raconteur.

I am a perennial student. I will still go to study, I will take a course, if there is somebody interesting lecturing I'll go. I always feel that this, to me, is the most exciting thing to do. So when I came to the Museum, all I wanted to do was sort of find out who were the bearers of the tradition, who knew, and listen to them. People loved to be listened to; they love to tell their stories.

SZ: So Allen Porter was one you enjoyed talking to.

BJ: Allen Porter was great, wonderful. Arthur Drexler — I became very good friends with Arthur — and of course, I became very good friends with Philip [Johnson]. I had a parallel interest in architecture the entire time that I was exploring contemporary art. It's very interesting. I guess I consider what I do in the way of collecting as my autobiography. I don't write. I write, but I don't keep a journal. But I see art, everything I acquire, somehow relates to a memory of my own life. If I get it, if I buy it, if it becomes a part of my life, it's because somehow it's tipped off some unconscious sensation, and I know that a lot of people who relate deeply to art have this sensation. It's not unique to me, it's described by others.

**END TAPE 1, SIDE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2**

SZ: That's interesting, because it really tells you there's a story in everything.

BJ: But at the same time, I learned how to use objective criteria. This is another problem I find with collectors in relationship, let's say, to acquisitions committees at a museum. It's not enough to be a collector and to have even great art in your collection. If you're going to be of any value to a museum, you have to be able to suspend your private judgment, and you've got to know more about the broader picture to make decisions that influence the acquisition of a work of art at a museum. This has astounded me. That's why I love people like Alfred or Kirk [Varnedoe]. Bill Rubin was much more of a possessor. He had a slightly more personal view of art. But you look at these people: they put their eye in the service of an institution almost totally. They don't collect art. If they own things, they have over the years — you know, Alfred had things, gifts from people; some things he gave to Smith [College], he and Marga [Margaret Scolari Barr] — but, in other words, acquisition was not what drove them, but it was acquisition for the institution that drove them, and you learn from people like this. You cannot just look at art in terms of what you buy for yourself, and I sometimes sit in an acquisitions meeting and I hear people say, well, they are collectors who just only relate to whatever the curator is proposing if they like it, if they don't like it, if they would want it for themselves or if they wouldn't, which is, I think, not good enough.

SZ: You mean because it doesn't say that this might be something that the institution should have?

BJ: I don't have to like it to acknowledge its interest in terms of the art of this period or of this moment. I don't have to particularly want it, but I have to see where it fits in or why it

should be here.

SZ: You were saying that you had this interest in architecture at the same time.

BJ: Yes, it was a very parallel interest, and so, of course Arthur — and I found Arthur to be an incredibly interesting person, and I think that there's always an ambivalent relationship between the professional staff of an institution and people like the trustees, the volunteers, et cetera. I think the Modern has done far better than many other institutions in absolutely trying as much as possible to respect the autonomy of the professional staff. I think they've tried to do what the leaders that they chose wanted to do. Now obviously, in some of the histories I've read that the '60s, the period after René [d'Harnoncourt] died, was just this upheaval. I think while Alfred and René were there functioning in their glory days, there probably wasn't a better confluence of personalities and vision and intellect that was broad. Also, I think that what really is marvelous is when you're not just mired in art, when you have a much broader view of the culture. These are the best people. It's one of the reasons that I was so enthusiastic about Glenn [Lowry] becoming Director, because I felt that it didn't matter one iota to me that he wasn't steeped in twentieth-century art. The fact that he was an Islamicist made him, to me, far better, far more interesting, because it meant that his knowledge of a kind of total culture, where politics and art were one and the same thing, made him far better qualified to be a director than just a curator of twentieth-century art, which would have gotten in the way. Because René was like that. René was an anthropologist, a person whose interest in primitive art, whose field of knowledge was really more in the field of pre-Columbian art. So what I think I learned from being there — I was there sort of for the end of that period. . .

SZ: From '61 to '68.

BJ: Yes, and of course I'm still in awe of Alfred Barr. We still, all of us, if we ever want a reason to justify something that you know is right, you just invoke Alfred. It works, it

works all the time. I think it could work forever, but we'll see.

SZ: His presence, how would you describe it? I know it was sort of coming to the end of his [tenure].

BJ: Yes. One the one hand, he was a little awesome, but he was spectral, because he was so avian - he looked like a bird, had this birdlike demeanor. Although I got to know him — not well, but I went to his house. I knew Marga quite well, too, and he was very kind to me, he was charming to me, he liked me and he would engage me in conversation - I was always a little terrified of Alfred. I felt I had to be at my best. It was like a professor that you always wanted to be smart for. I always wanted to be smart for Alfred. I never wanted to appear to be foolish. I remember when he began to be ill, and of course in those days one did not know anything about Alzheimer's; it didn't have a name. You didn't know. We all used the stairs — we would always use the stairs, and we'd encounter one another on the stairs, and he'd stand there and embrace me and speak to me, and I didn't know what he was saying. You couldn't figure out what he was saying, but I'd always think up some answer, I'd always answer him as if I knew what he was saying.

But you see, again, Smith was a very powerful force in helping me at The Museum of Modern Art, because of Jim [James Thrall] Soby. . . I stayed involved with Smith [College]. I loved that museum and I gave it things all along, and Dorothy Miller and Jim [James Thrall] Soby pushed me to go on the Visiting Committee to the Smith museum, which I did. So that's how I met Jere Abbott. I met all these people who were part of the early history of the Museum, and Jim Soby was the one who absolutely insisted that I get put on [the] Painting and Sculpture [Committee]. So, very early on I was a member of the Painting and Sculpture Committee. Again, you see, it's who your mentor is. I think that when you learn from people like this you want to pass it on. I always love doing it for other people. I think that the greatest pleasure is when you can put people together with a function that they can enhance, and the Museum is very, very good at this; all



along, they've managed to do this.

SZ: Let's go back to the Art Lending Service and some of the other things in the early days of the Junior Council. How did that work, the choices of artists and art?

BJ: As I remember, there was always a professional staff, there was always somebody hired to work there all the time. There was a committee, the Art Lending Service Committee. We would divide up the galleries — don't forget that in those days there were not that many galleries; the curatorial staff would vet the gallery list — and we would go in pairs to revisit these galleries. We had size limitations and price limitations, and they would pull out pictures that would fit in our shelves, and we would then choose these pictures. We'd make up a list, we'd go back with our list to the curator who was supposed to approve it all, and then they were supposed to go and vet these things and say, "Is this worthy or not?" Half the time they didn't go, they just let us send it all in. And then, of course, there were people on the Art Lending Service Committee who didn't know much of anything about art, and there were people who were really good. Then we used that little penthouse space to do exhibitions, and the great thing is, we once did a show of things that had come from the Art Lending Service. It was unbelievable — [Willem] de Kooning, there was a little [Jackson] Pollock. This is from the early days. And then, when Arthur Bulowa became a member of the Council, he encouraged photography to be added. I got all my Diane Arbus photographs from the Art Lending Service. I met David Whitney when he walked into the Lending Service to rent something. In those days, it was really a great thing to do. It was a real service. The idea, of course, was to encourage people to collect, but to encourage them to have time to make up their minds whether they wanted to keep something or not, and it was a way of getting younger people into the Museum and having them then become a part of it. If you bought something from the Art Lending Service, suddenly you had a real connection to the institution, and in those days, the restaurant, you see, was in the penthouse, so you'd come for lunch, it was cafeteria style, and I'm sure you've seen the photographs of the way it was then. It was so yummy. Then you'd go wander in to the

little penthouse. Eventually, we started using the restaurant as an exhibition venue. I was very aggressive about enhancing the value, the income, of the Art Lending Service. The Junior Council never had dues in those days — no dues. The only requirement was that you be under thirty-five when you joined — you could stay on until you were a hundred — and you had to be a member of the Museum. But there were no dues, so how do we support ourselves, how do we pay the staff? So partly we needed to make money, and our arrangements with the Museum financially changed over the years, but essentially we did a lot of things that were income-producing, and then once in a while we'd have a benefit. But we would get a percentage of the income from the Christmas cards, from the calendar, the Lending Service.

SZ: Were the cards and the calendar being produced when you first came?

BJ: Yes. One of my first committees was the Calendar Committee. I loved it. That was fantastic. That calendar project was great, because every year you'd pick a subject, then you'd have to go into the collection to research it, so that got me into every department. That's how I learned about the archives and what was there and where the film stills were, and you got to meet all the curators that way, and some of them were very affectionate and great and some of them you got the feeling. . . . It's like having an intern: sometimes they're more of a pain in the foot than they're worth; you're never sure. But for the most part, I think that very close friendships were formed between Council members and the staff, if you wanted to. If you wanted to give, if you really wanted to get to know that Museum, you could do it. I think it's still the same way, even though things are much, much bigger — if you want to, if you feel it gives you what I feel it gave me. It created an incredible context for looking at the entire rest of the world. The other thing is, when you're in a place every day, just going to the galleries became. . . you know, it's there, it becomes your own university.

SZ: So you were saying that these things were really looked at after a while as a way of increasing revenue, and that that became an important. . .

BJ: Yes, and then we had to. And then, of course, the bad times came, with the '60s and the endowment took a dive, and everything changed. That's when we started the corporate Art Advisory Service as a way of tying corporations to the Museum. There was quite a bit of controversy about that. [Note: the Art Advisory Service began under the auspices of the Junior Council in 1964 and closed in 1996.] Some people didn't think it was a good idea. Bill Rubin didn't think it was such a good idea, but I knew it was a good idea at the time. It was before there were any corporate art advisors, and we did some great projects. At the time, the curatorial advisor to the Junior Council was Pierre Apraxine, who was an extraordinary curator, a young man who came on a Fulbright [grant] from Belgium, and he has a great eye, a great eye, and I think he probably would have had a distinguished career at the Museum, but. . . It's a famous story, but during the strike, Pierre, who was of White Russian nobility, the Count Apraxine, whose family, of course, was exiled during the Revolution. He's a Russian in temperament, and also, he hadn't had an American upbringing, and somehow the idea of the union, he got very carried away by identifying with this noble cause. That strike lasted a very long time and it was very hard on everybody, it was very emotional to go across a picket line with curators that were your friends and colleagues. I was very, very close to Pierre, and you know how somebody's trying to tell you something, [like] when a child is going to tell you that they're going to misbehave and you don't hear until they have, like, thrown the water bottle out the window. I was on the board. It was one of my earliest times on the Board — I went on the Board in 1972 — and we were at a Board meeting and word came up to this Board meeting that someone, it was the Ellsworth Kelly show [*Ellsworth Kelly*, September 12-November 4, 1973, MoMA Exh.#1042], that Eugene Goosens was curating, and a scab labor truck was delivering lumber to the Museum and someone threw a stanchion through the window of this truck as it was approaching. Luckily, the truck driver saw what was happening and backed away. No one was injured; the window was broken. It was Pierre who did this, and it was apparent that he'd have to resign. He did resign, and of course it took a very long time for this wound to heal. He's been forgiven long since, but he went on to be the curator

of the Gilman Collection. He worked for Gilman Paper Company and has put together what is probably the greatest collection of photographs in the world, without a doubt; outside of The Museum of Modern Art, there isn't one that's better. He is still an extraordinary person, and he's been very generous to the Museum; he's given us things along the way, and of course he has very good relationships with everyone now. It took years, it took a while for this wound to go away, and it was a tragic thing in his life, as you can imagine; it was a terrible mistake. But those years were very troubled We all remember the night that Bates [Lowry] got fired. We were having a benefit.

SZ: "We" being the Junior Council?

BJ: The Junior Council. I always wanted to do outrageous things. There was a group of us who always wanted to shake things up a bit. We had the use of an empty gallery, and Les Levine decorated this gallery with a certain kind of light that, when you entered the room, you just sort of turned green, with pink flowers, black. It made everybody look incredibly ghoulish. In the midst of this event with the light, where people would go into this light and then recoil in horror, I found Mrs. Lowry crying in the ladies room. That's when it happened. He'd been informed. So the Bates and John Hightower moments were very, very hard on everybody.

SZ: It was a rocky couple of years.

BJ: Yes. It was really rocky.

SZ: There was one thing I was going to ask you. You described a little bit what you felt was Barr's attitude towards the Junior Council, but then you had this period when you were sort of juggling directors and whatever, and then Dick [Richard E. Oldenburg], and how that affected what the Junior Council did.

BJ: I think the Junior Council was a kind of constant. We just went on. Actually, I think that it

was very stable. The Junior Council has always had tremendous stability, because it always had incredibly good leadership. That was another thing: my mentors inside the Museum were Joanne Stern, Lily Auchincloss, Beth Straus. The Junior Council hierarchy was always a very sensible one. You put in your apprenticeship, you then chose what you wanted to do, and it became very clear that those who. . . The talent always rose quickly, and the good thing was that you were able to reward people rather fast for their devotion and their good work and their leadership. Like with any volunteer group, you always had a very small core of people who did all the work and the rest who were there. We didn't worry so much about whether they showed up for meetings, whether they took on much responsibility because frankly, it's always easier to run things when you don't have too many people to cope with, and all you wanted was their enthusiasm. We'd have meetings, big meetings, once a year. There were some people who never wanted to do anything but come to social events, and there were some people who just got on there for one reason or another that was the wrong reason, and they just didn't know what to do with themselves, they just sort of faded away. But it was actually a very stable group, and it still is. It transformed itself and it's changed radically, but I think that what happened. . . I'm sure you realize this from the history of the Museum, [that] the value of the amateur — I mean amateur in the true sense, has diminished in the world-at-large. I think it's had a great deal to do with the changes, the goals of women, because those of us who are incredibly well-educated and trained and who could have gone on and done other things poured all of ourselves into these volunteer situations, and we ran them, we had the time to do them, properly, and we didn't depend so much on the professional staff; we worked with them, always we collaborated. You didn't walk in and give a bunch of orders and leave: you just stayed there, you wrote the letters, you did the correspondence, you depended on each other. Also, the relationship of the staff to the Council - there was less distance. They trusted, with some exceptions, but there was a degree of trust. I think that what happened along the way, first of all, we started to make a lot of money. We had a very good treasurer when I was chairman. Suddenly, we had this incredible young woman named Judy Winslow, who turned out to be a financial wizard. So, she took this little money we had

and started investing in CDs and rolling the money over, and suddenly we had \$150,000 in the bank, which was a staggering sum of money. Suddenly the Museum looks at this and says, "What are they doing with all this money?" There was a feeling that we were kind of empire-building, perhaps.

SZ: As soon as you have your own bank account?

BJ: Also, for instance, in 1974, when architects were all starving to death and no one had any work, I got the idea to curate an exhibition of architectural drawings [*Architectural Studies and Projects*, March 13–May 11, 1975, MoMA Exh.#1091b] in the penthouse that would be for sale, because everything there was always for sale, and I went to Emilio Ambasz, the boy-genius curator, who was also another great mentor in that I learned an enormous amount from [him], and I asked him for a list of architects from around the world who he thought should be in this show. He gave me a list, [and] we wrote to these people. It was a totally self-curated show. We just said send two drawings, put a price on them. They sent the drawings, and this exhibition was astounding, because, again, through him I learned who all of these young architects were. It was everybody. It was Peter Eisenman, Raimond Abraham, [Friedrich] St. Florian, Ettore Sottsass. If you look at the list of "Who's Who" today in architecture. . . it had everybody on it, and this exhibition got incredible press coverage. And Arthur didn't like it, because people are saying, "Why is the Museum doing this in the penthouse?" So naturally, if you were too successful curatorially, or if you were too successful on some levels, there was a bit of resentment. You weren't supposed to really usurp the roles of the curators, and I understand that. I agreed with that. We did not do this meaning to do that, we didn't do this to show off; we did it because we realized that there was a need for this. Sometimes, curators need people from the outside world to put them in touch with what really is happening. Arthur knew everything but he was very hermetic. He was brilliant, and I adored him and admired him, but he wasn't out there. So, something like this, which was very fresh and very contemporary, I think flummoxed more than it annoyed him. But it was a great show, and a lot of architects still remember

it, because they sold their entries — we sold quite a few drawings. Anyway, a lot had to do with the pool of available Council members, younger women, younger people, primarily women. The men were always there, but they always had jobs, so it was the women who ran it on a day-to-day basis, even though there were men who were chairmen of the Council from time to time, and they always enjoyed it. The Studio Museum in Harlem. . .

SZ: I thought we'd talk about that next time.

BJ: All right, we'll do that next time. So, what happened was — this is my interpretation — as women, really first-rate, intelligent women, began to have careers, they were less available to run this kind of operation, yet they wanted to be a part of it, and they just let the more professional aspects of it slip away and be taken over it by the staff. . .

SZ: Like the calendar.

BJ: Also the Publications Department wanted it that way. This all happened after my time. Whether they just felt it wasn't working any longer. . . . First of all, I really believe that formulas wear out and institutions die. At one point, one was never sure that the Junior Council would survive in any form, and it had to adapt. That's what I think is so good about it, that it did adapt, and it's still a very good breeding ground for potential trustees, it's a place where you can really identify who is going to emerge from the large pool of people who care about the Museum but who's going to really be someone who cares more. It's still very good, and they do great things. Now they pay dues and they support exhibitions, but they have a very lively program, and I think that the thrust of the Council's activity is much more about keeping the members educated about what's going on inside and outside the Museum in a more directly didactic manner, more than by self-discovery. The Museum is too big now to turn three people loose in the archives. What I did, what we all did, [where] you come on board and you immediately get to be a cataloguer for the director of the Department of Drawings and Prints, that's

not possible so much any longer. And now, it's spawned this other group, the Junior Associates, who are phenomenal. There are hundreds of them. So I think that, in retrospect, one of the most intelligent things Alfred Barr ever did was to make the Junior Council. Thank you, Alfred.

**END TAPE 1, SIDE 2**



## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**INTERVIEW WITH:** BARBARA JAKOBSON (BJ)

**INTERVIEWER:** SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION:** THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

**DATE:** NOVEMBER 6, 1997

### BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1

SZ: One thing I wanted to pick up from last time: the whole founding of the Studio Art Museum.

BJ: Right. As I explained, the Museum did not have a real Education Department and the Junior Council played, I think, a very important role, as the department or arm of the Museum that reached out to various parts of the constituency that were not members, who came only to look at the collection. So they did lecture series, we tried to engage students, we did student evenings, we started poetry readings, we even had music. Steve Reich's "Drumming" was premiered at the Museum. We did a great deal of connecting the visual arts to the other arts. And there was a committee which we started called the Community Committee and we started this Committee at a time in the late '60s when there were huge demands put upon the Museum to become more engaged with minorities, and it was, as you know, as we all know, a very loaded political moment. And I guess that the idea for doing something took form as a project of the Community Committee because it seemed to us that the Museum was not a place that people outside its purview in New York knew how to use properly. And we were also very dubious about the fact that doing things at the Museum to get the community, as it was then constituted in Harlem, to come to the Museum, would work, and a group of us, Michael Zimmer, Carter Burden, Jeff Byers, me and Campell Wyllly who was at that time the advisor – he was the curatorial

person assigned to the Junior Council. . . and without him I don't think we could have done this properly - we really organized ourselves to make an effort, to do something in Harlem. And our idea was that we would use our energy, our contacts and our organizational skills to show this community that they could have a museum of their own, that was their own, that served their own interests. Once we got it started, the idea was that we wouldn't just be a board of white downtown New Yorkers, we would start it, we would try to get it going and we would leave. And we went around for a year, we did ground work, we went to visit social clubs in Harlem, we made contacts. The interesting thing was that there were many, many black artists that we got to know. We sought them out and we got to know them and they were extraordinarily helpful and, of course, they were all most enthusiastic about the idea. I don't think that we met with any criticism because we wanted to be very careful because we just didn't want this project to seem as though it were. . . it was going to superimpose a white organization on a black community. And Campbell Wyllly really helped us to give form to the notion that it would be a studio museum, that it would not necessarily be a collecting museum but it would be a museum that was a kunsthalle, an exhibition space for the work of black artists or - and also - a possible working place where young people and other people could come and participate in educational programs. And it started out, you know, very small storefront kind of quarters, and it was one of those things that actually happened the way it was supposed to happen. Within, I would think, a few years, those of us who were on the original board resigned, and oh, by the way, through Carter Burden actually we did meet Eleanor Holmes Norton, who was then a rising political star in New York, you know, she's now in Washington, D.C. - she's an incredibly powerful and amazing force in the political scene. She, although not trained in art history herself, understood exactly what this project was about; she supported it wholeheartedly and she helped us immensely. There was another early trustee named Richard Clark who was a very successful advertising person. What this did, this Museum, was, it allowed business people and successful people in the black community to have an institution of their own that they could identify with. The budget for it wasn't so staggering that it

couldn't be envisioned. And they just took it, and now, of course, as we all know, it's this incredibly entrenched part of the art world in New York.

And another thing that happened out of the Community Committee was the transference of the Children's Art Carnival which was a Victor d'Amico school and his methods of teaching, which were so splendid. I think it was a big loss to the Museum when we had to close that operation on site. But Betty Blayton Taylor, another black artist, whom we all got to know, took that whole concept, and with the help of Blanchette Rockefeller, transferred that school to Harlem. Children were released from public school to go there and it was really a precursor of "Studio In A School" and it was an amazing structure. It worked very well. And during that time the Community Committee also started a program in the Tombs for prisoners. [Note: During the fiscal year 1970-71, the Junior Council implemented a program to donate art supplies to prisoners in the Tombs, a Men's House of Detention run by the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition. The Department of Correction, artists and volunteer organizations joined the project; it expanded to include exhibitions of prisoners' work and circulating shows. Direct involvement of the Junior Council ended in 1973]. It was the days of such overcrowding; the Tombs was like the most unbelievable nightmare, and yet there were black artists like Benny Andrews, Al Loving, Betty Taylor and several others, who were really willing to go into the Tombs and teach art classes. This program did not survive. I think we ran it for a few years, but it was very difficult to do. It was hugely popular, hugely popular. We got Lenny Beaucour to give us paint. We collected materials, but they would paint on the bed-sheets, they used anything to make art. And we did an exhibition at one point of the work. It was a little worrying, because, you know one of the problems is if you have artistic talent and suddenly you're released from prison, the idea that suddenly you can make it as artist, well we know how hard it is to make it as an artist without any handicaps, so I was very conflicted with the hopes this project engendered. On the other hand, it was great therapy and it was incredibly calming for the population. They enjoyed it - the ones who came really enjoyed it. And we, all of a sudden. . . . Music, they started

music, I think music probably survives more easily than this.

SZ: Did you go there [the Tombs]?

BJ: I went to the Tombs.

SZ: You did?

BJ: I did. I went many times. I had for the only time in my life the experience of hearing a barred door close behind me with the knowledge that I could not get out unless someone came and opened that door. I can tell you it was incredibly sobering. I think that over the years the Council itself has been an incredibly adaptable organism. It did all that it did in its early days and then when the Museum needed it to be something else, it adapted and became something else. And I personally was quite dubious that it could survive and be vital once it started charging dues, once it got bigger, once it had less real - what we would call "real" work, or real things to do that gave one the feeling that you were really a Museum professional while you were working on the Junior Council. I wasn't certain how it would survive, but it has survived precisely because the young people who are part of it now probably all have careers. The women as well as the men all have work they do outside; they use their skill and their talents but they're not as resentful that they don't have a connection to the Museum that is quasi-curatorial. So it has survived and the interesting thing is that not only has it survived but it's thriving and then the offshoot of the Contemporary Arts Council, the Junior Associates is rank with success, people are clamoring to join it and you can become a member for a few hundred dollars a year and it's a way of kind of moving into this Museum family. I guess we always like to talk about the Museum family [laughing]. The family which started out to be a small contentious little group of people has now grown into this. . . It's almost like a population explosion, like China. But that, I think, is the very interesting thing about the way the Museum functions that no other Museum that I know of does. I don't

know of another Museum that has brought along, in a parallel way to its own growth, a core of people who are just connected to it by many, many umbilical cords, and who stay that way. Even though museums, many museums, have volunteer programs, docent programs, it isn't quite the same. I've done a study in this. A lot of museums have come to us and have wanted to use the model of the Council but I don't think, to the credit of the curators, they themselves have put much time and effort into guiding the development of these organisms. Whether it was beginning with Monroe Wheeler, Bill Lieberman, Wilder Green, Riva Castleman. . . All along there have been curators who really adopted these projects and put in a lot of time and I think really enjoy it. But now, you know, they take trips, they go all over the place. There was a time I think when there was a lot of twitchiness about whether the Contemporary [Arts] Council was duplicating the International Council's program by organizing trips and doing that sort of thing, but actually it's really worked out fine because everyone cannot be part of the International Council. These trips I think have done very well.

SZ: One last question about this. It was a time of great political upheaval, and here was a . . . clearly not as staid an institution as the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] but an institution nonetheless, really making its attempts to respond in some way to the social upheavals of the time. Do you have a feeling about that kind of political activism within the context of an art museum?

BJ: It was an extremely difficult thing to do. For those of us who were politically liberal, I think that we wanted to try to see how some of these terrible complaints and agonies could be redressed. But then on the other hand, if you were dealing with the Art Worker's Coalition on a daily basis, as I was at one time, you realized that political activity is often the refuge of many failed artists. The artists who were successful were mostly anarchists, they barely probably ever go and vote and they could care less about politics, they just want to be left alone to work. And you find a lot of political activists in the art world were actually very second and third-rate artists who

were using these issues to sort of galvanize their careers. They made it a career and they were very irksome. Yet you have an artist like Robert Rauschenberg who always was politically engaged and who definitely pushed the conventions of, "Leave me alone" and, "I don't want to be involved." But he did it through his work and that's the difference.

And I would say in terms of our involvement with the black community, this was something we sought out more than they. I did not feel pressure upon the Museum, during those years, from the black community. It was much more something we felt we wanted to do, and again it wasn't altogether successful in terms of what the black artists really wanted, which was to be in the collection. On the other hand, for a time, we had an acquisitions policy. I remember from being on the Committee on Painting and Sculpture that we made a concerted effort to buy the work of black artists. We even talked for a time about appropriating - it's sort of like affirmative action - we were going to appropriate a certain amount of our budget to buy art by black artists and we did acquire several works of art in those years which are not really, they're never on view that I know of. I remember the names of some of the artists - Malcolm Bailey, William Williams. We did get, finally, a Mel Edwards sculpture. Mel was one of the few artists who color-transcended - there were a few of them who moved out of the ghetto-ization of black artists, Benny Andrews certainly. And these artists are marvelous people. I must say that I feel totally enriched from getting to know all of them. They were incredibly smart and they wanted to give back to their community.

Another Junior Council project was young Larry [Laurance] Rockefeller was trying to do some block association work up in El Barrio and there were all these terrible courtyards where people used to throw garbage into the courtyard. We took a block one summer and we got artists to paint the walls and we had such a good time. I don't know if it stopped them throwing garbage into the courtyard but it stopped for awhile, anyway. The city just swallows up these efforts. But wall painting is a great tradition certainly up in El Barrio. The kinds of wall paintings that our artists did were

primarily abstract, and not related to the community. It was only later on that all this great political art developed. It came out of more community activism, where the community themselves took it all over.

Occasionally the Museum has a party that invites artists in the collection to meet the new director; when Glenn [D. Lowry] came and I went to this party, an artist's party, I just was thrilled. First of all a lot of these artists came; it was like old home week, it was like a big class reunion. So my feeling is that it means a lot to them to be included in the collection. And I think that things have changed so radically. No longer is it so difficult for an artist of color, or a minority, to enter into the system. The system has other ways now of letting them in. I feel that these efforts on the part of the Museum, on our part were worthy; they were feeble in some way but they were O.K. They weren't harmful and they weren't patronizing, they were sincere and they really were intelligent. But it was too big a yawning chasm to kind of fix in our little projects.

SZ: I guess the question I'd like to ask is where in this larger context did John Hightower fit?

BJ: Oh gosh, he arrived at a moment when. . . You're a victim of your own time, you're part of the zeitgeist. John certainly became part of the zeitgeist. Frankly, he didn't have the background to be the Director of The Museum of Modern Art. He was a talented man, just not up to directing the Museum. I think that he was caught up in this desire to respond to the pressure being put upon him by these forces in the art community and he simply blew it. Because no matter what you say, you have to be firm about the idea that a museum is not going to be a shelter for homeless people and it's not going to be a vehicle for political change. Art, if art does change people's perceptions, it has to be the art itself. It's far better to do an exhibition of John Hartfield's work than to try to have antifascist meetings in the auditorium.

This is what drives me and what keeps me interested in art, the art of my own time. The twentieth-century to me is encompassed in my own particular relationship to art and the artists. I look to the artists to let me know what we will be thinking because the artist always is there first, they're always these cassandras, whatever it is, whether it's a new way of painting, that's why it's interesting for me to look at the work of new artists. I don't necessarily like it all but I want to know what they are doing. But I don't see a museum as a place to make history in the way that John Hightower got trapped into making history. He got trapped into trying to effect social change in a manner which was simply inappropriate. We couldn't – the Board of Trustees, the constitution of the Museum, the curatorial staff, there was no way the Museum itself could support the trap he found himself in. It was sad because everyone liked him. But I think everyone was really relieved when it was over. I'm sure other people have commented to you on this particular. . .

SZ: Well, that takes care of a piece of it. Last time we talked a little bit about this period, also in terms of Bates Lowry to the three-man committee to Hightower and then on to Dick [Oldenburg].

BJ: To Dick. Right. Dick and I came to the Museum the same year. I believe he started in 1962. [Note: Richard E. Oldenburg joined the Museum in 1969 as head of the Department of Publications; he served as Acting Director for six months before he assumed the Directorship in June 1972]. I joined the Junior Council in 1962. I know John Szarkowski came in 1962, Dick may have come in 1963 or 1964. Of course, it was one of those odd moments when a person appeared to fill in, to assume the role of Acting Director at a time when everyone wanted just calm, everyone was just sick of chaos, turmoil. After Bates and John Hightower. . .

SZ: The strike.

BJ: The strike. . . . Well, the strike took place later, when Dick was. . .



SZ: There were two. There was a strike during Hightower's time as well.

BJ: Oh God, I forgot that one. Oh yes, you are right, there was a strike, but it wasn't a long strike.

SZ: No.

BJ: So Dick appeared and somehow his temperament, his manner of taking control, suited everybody. He was the son of a diplomat, I think very well-trained to wait. Dick was a successful Director because he directed by not directing. He was quite brilliant at calibrating the moods of everybody, not taking a strong position himself and then trying to kind of juggle the various factions so that they could come to consensus. And my own feeling was that he was a terrible procrastinator, he never made a decision. You'd want a decision from him and you'd wait until the cows came home. Of course, the chief curators loved him, adored him, because he just let them do. . . They controlled him in many ways. Bill Rubin just got whatever he wanted. That certainly is apparent in the building, as it was constituted the last time around. And Dick, he was incredibly obsessed with detail. He was great with detail, he wrote great letters, he was a great grammarian. He was also someone who didn't surrender control of these minutiae easily. He was Director for twenty years, and great things happened to the Museum during his directorship, really great things. His talent as a director was that he allowed them, he kind of. . . I don't think he envisioned it but he's smart, he's smart enough to know how to play it. Again, all directors are political animals. On balance, he did well. I do feel that there are certain things he could have. . . He just wasn't strong. I'll give you an example of something for which I kind of resent Dick. During the search for the architect for the last go-round, the power structure of the Museum at that time was very different. It was Bill Paley, Blanche Rockefeller, David [Rockefeller], and I was, although my knowledge of architecture, as a lay person, was probably as thorough as that of

anyone on the Board, I was not involved in any way with the choice of the architect. Of course, Philip wanted it and expected to get it but then it was made somehow clear to him that he was not going to be considered. That did not stop him from wanting this job and he was very unhappy, he was very disgruntled at the Museum and for a time he even took it out of his will. He was really about to disinherit us. I was very close to Philip; Philip and I have been close for years. We see each other regularly, we have lunch at the Four Seasons, we gossip, we talk, we check in with each other all the time. One day Philip said to me, "I got a call from [William S.] Paley, he wants to see me. What do you think it means?" And I said, "I don't know." Because I knew nothing, nothing about what was going on.

SZ: You weren't on this committee?

BJ: I wasn't on any committee and nobody even told me, Dick never told me, no-one told me. Arthur [Drexler] never told me. So I said, "I don't know what it means." He said, "Do you think it means that I'm going to get the job?" I said, "I don't know, I really don't. I have no idea." He was beside himself he was so excited and hopeful. One of my great mentors at the Museum was Walter Thayer. Jeff Byers and Walter Thayer were the two people who really supported my rise to the Board. I was very close to Walter Thayer. He was wonderful to me and I was deeply fond of him. Walter Thayer, as you probably know from other people, was the power behind the throne; he was Jock Whitney's right hand. He was very close to Bill Paley. He's a very, very smart man, one of the smartest, most incisive minds. He didn't really have a deep knowledge of art but he loved it, he loved it. Through the Corporate Art Advisory Service we helped him buy some things for his office. I did it personally. I helped buy things for Whitcom. I would see Walter frequently, so I was up at his office on Museum business the day before Philip's [scheduled] visit. I said to Walter, "Look, I don't know what this means, Philip told me that he was called by Bill Paley for an interview and he is totally excited. I know that everyone thinks he's reconciled to not getting this job but I am telling you that he is not reconciled at all and I think you

should know this." So Walter Thayer says - I'm sitting in his office - he said to me, "I think you ought to tell Paley." He dials Bill Paley's phone number, the phone rings, Bill Paley gets on the phone and I said, "Bill, it's Barbara Jakobson, I am with Walter and he told me to call you. I just thought you ought to know . . . I know you're seeing Philip, and Philip is very hopeful and I think you ought to know that he really feels you may be seeing him to reinstate his chances." It didn't take me. . . The words were barely out of my mouth. . . The screaming on the other end of the phone. I had to hold the phone out to here, he screamed at me, "It's not my fault that Philip Johnson is not going to be the architect and I don't want this rap. . .", and he hung up. I thought, "Oh, my God, what have I done, I mean what have I done?" Well, the repercussions of my phone call were staggering. So, the first thing is. . . All I was doing was trying to help. I wasn't trying to get involved. I was doing something that Walter Thayer told me to do. I never would call Bill Paley, I mean, I was quite terrified to call Bill Paley. I got called on the carpet by Blanchette and Dick Oldenburg didn't raise a finger to defend me. I told him the whole situation. He didn't do anything, he just hung me out to dry. He had no guts. And Philip, poor Philip, he knew that I meant well but he was never going to be the architect. It was because everything was being done by this little cabal and I don't know why Philip, to this day I don't [how or why]. . . You know, no Philip. Probably someone said, "If you hire Philip, I'm not giving you a lot of money." There was probably a lot of money involved.

But ultimately, after this whole incident after what I did, they appointed a committee of all the architects on the Board, Gordon Bunshaft, Ed Barnes, and Philip, to choose the architect. So that was how they got around it. They announced that they weren't going to give the job to a trustee. Of course, it was very feeble and everyone could see right through it, but it did help Philip to not lose face. Dick Oldenburg then, later on, said to me, "Well, Barbara, if it hadn't been for you calling Bill Paley, they never would have come up with this solution." I said, "Thanks a lot." In the meantime I had to be. . . With Blanchette I always felt like a bad little girl at boarding school who had to be taken on the

carpet and given a good spanking. She was always a bit daunting. I respected her and I admired her, but I never really was close to her.

But Dick was so close to her, she adored him. Believe me, the only reason Dick lasted as long as he did [laughing] was because Blanche protected him. It's hard to say whether it would have been better for the Museum to make a change in director earlier on or not. I don't really know. You don't know. . . Nothing disastrous happened, the Museum prospered, it came through a lot of bad times. I'm fond of Dick, I really am, we're friends, but there's some part of me that has never trusted him to not go whichever way the wind that he thought would protect him was blowing. And that is not a good quality in anyone, but certainly not in a director. You have to establish loyalties, you've got to defend your curators, you've got to defend the trustees against one another and against situations like these. I felt that he always took the temperature of everybody and he went wherever he thought was expedient. I don't think that's a great quality. I'm happy that he's landed on his feet. I think it's really good because, on balance, he did a very good job with very difficult people. Let's remember who he had to deal with, this group of tough guys. It's probably pretty scary confronting these moguls daily. So, I have great empathy for him. It isn't that I underestimate the difficulty of a situation like this.

SZ: Since we've been talking about him, you did say before that some great things happened at the Museum during his tenure.

BJ: Look at the exhibitions. Maybe giving Bill Rubin his head wasn't such a bad idea after all. Because during his [tenure], let's say, certain departments flourished more than others. The exhibition program was very weighted during those years. . .

SZ: Towards?

BJ: Towards the big blockbuster, painting and sculpture, etc. . . I don't think there was as great a balance as now the curators are managing to create through this new, kind of, synergy.

SZ: Those blockbusters served in a way to build up a loyal clientele. . .

BJ: Exactly. The other thing is that Dick's tenure as Director was concurrent - again it's a zeitgeist baby over and over - it was concurrent with enormous changes in the role of the museum in American life. If you look at the attendance figures of the early '60s and then you look at what has happened, and you look at the way a museum is used in contemporary society, you know that Dick Oldenburg, his directorship, was just part of a time. That's why I just think you have to always calibrate every single person with the time in which he serves, particularly at an institution like the Modern, which is really after all, a private institution. Because it wasn't beholden to city money. . . it sets its closing hours, it sets its admission fees, it sets its programs. . . . It's pretty free to invent itself. And that is the most exciting thing about it. I think some great things happened in photography exhibitions during that time. Again, it's: do we have curators who are able to respond to the best, both historically and in contemporary terms, to create a program that is really thrilling? There were such people in the Film Department. I'm really fond of the Film Department, it's kind of the [laughing] left wing of the Museum, but that was a department that went through tortures. There were always great moments. Did anyone ever talk about the time [laughing] that Helen Franc put her desk in the elevator?

SZ: [Laughing] No. Let me turn the tape over so I don't miss any of it. [Laughter].

**END TAPE 2, SIDE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2**

BJ: [Laughing] I'm very weak on all the details. But I always liked the mavericks. The Museum was always full of these characters, these mavericks, and Helen Franc being the most amazing one. But you know she wouldn't go, she just wasn't going to go. Frankly, I think she should still be there. . .

SZ: She is [laughing].

BJ: Oh, she's still there actually, she's still around. Someone told me that at one point she moved her desk into the elevator. And then there was a moment when the Film Department couldn't stand Ted Perry, who was then their director. Because after Willard van Dyke retired, there was another trauma. . . . You see, these departments get so attached to certain people. The Museum has quite fierce loyalties and affections and attachments. These departments don't really adjust easily. So after Willard, they hired this guy Ted Perry, and within a very short time the entire department was in a state of revolt, I mean revolt. I think they barred him from going into his office and the poor guy really had no choice, no choice [laughing] – they did not give him a chance. And, of course, during the strike the Film Department was incredibly. . . . I mean, Charles Silver. . . . It was the equivalent of the blacklisted Hollywood screenwriters, they were all very, very liberal politically. It was the only department in the Museum where you got the feeling it was political at all. But the nature of film is very polemic. You can't be involved in the history of film and not have a strong point of view, certainly of that freedom of expression. So, a lot of those Film Department people were leaders of the strike, they were very strong. And they were marvelous people. I'm deeply devoted to all of them. It's such a great department, it still is really.

But then again, Mary Lea [Bandy] was plucked from the Publications Department. The Publications Department seems to me to be a very useful vehicle for transforming writers into leaders. I'm not sure what Mary Lea knew about the history of film when she took the job, but she was a very talented, very organized, incredibly

adept person of considerable charm. And look what she's done with this department, I mean who would have known. . . . Which actually proves that you can make a silk purse out of [laughing] a sow's ear. . . . [Laughing]. Chaos produces great reactions. I think that the history of the Museum is really so much about the history of these people who worked there.

SZ: You said last time that you had developed a really strong friendship with Philip which came about how?

BJ: Well, he knew that I knew [Henry-] Russell Hitchcock. It came about because of my lifelong attachment to architecture and because I always knew, I made it my business [laughing] to know, a great deal about architecture, and I know a lot of architects. I wish I could have been a great client, I wish I could have built something, but that never happened. Philip knew me also through Lily [Auchincloss] because I was so close to Lily. In those days, Philip always wanted to be in touch with the young, with what was happening, and the minute someone young and smart came along. . . . I always said, he's like a vampire; he just has to drink fresh blood everyday, he does. It's amazing. This is why he's ninety-one years old, and this is why he's been able to emerge from his coma and astound everyone with his memory. And, of course, for me, getting to know Philip was a great treat. I think it caused a little resentment - I think Eliza [Parkinson Cobb] didn't like it very much - because he used to play his girlfriends against one another. He did that. And, of course, he used to say, "Eliza's my shiksa girlfriend." He was wicked and very naughty. But, of course, she was his lifelong friend; she was his true friend from the beginning of time. And, of course, I was no threat to Eliza. As a matter of fact, I really admired Eliza; I think Eliza was an incredible person. I was much more drawn to Eliza than I was to Blanchette as a bearer of the history of the Museum. To me, Eliza was in the very fabric of the building whereas Blanchette was grafted on to it through marriage, although she was an amazing person. I liked Eliza better. I always found Eliza to be more interesting and Philip too.

SZ: You mentioned Arthur [Drexler].

BJ: Oh, Arthur, Arthur. I adored Arthur, who was also an incredibly neurotic man. I just found him to be one of the wittiest, smartest, most delightful people. And we used to regularly have lunch at the Dorset [Hotel], that was his lunch [laughing] place. Arthur was the only person who never. . . . I liked the little bar at the Dorset, the food was awful but I didn't care, it was not about food. Also, Arthur was someone who was very isolated as well, he did not want to enter into the game. So, he depended upon someone like me to keep him posted about what Peter Eisenman was doing. He was very twitchy about getting sucked into the politics of the world of architecture during this period of the '70s into the early '80s.

I don't know whether you know it or not, but the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies was originally meant to be a joint venture with The Museum of Modern Art. It was supposed to be part of the Museum's programs. This thing was cooked up by Peter Eisenman and Emilio Ambasz and Arthur, at the moment of truth, pulled back and decided, no, we are not going to sponsor the Institute. That doesn't mean, however, that he wasn't incredibly interested in the Institute. But he was smart, he was smart, because if he had really gotten into bed with Peter Eisenman, it would have been a disaster. It was the best thing the Museum never did. However, that being said, for a period of the time, the Institute was the most vibrant, the most exciting, the most productive, and it really transformed the picture of architecture in the United States. It absolutely expanded the discourse totally, so that all these European architects, whoever had connections here, all these scholars, all the Deconstructivists, all the people like Aldo Rossi. [Pause] The intellectual establishment in European architecture all came here, lectured and got promoted through the Institute. And *Oppositions*, which was a great journal, it really was, it was first-rate. And Peter was a brilliant impresario, he drove everyone really totally crazy. Ever since the Institute failed, Peter has never been able to establish a power base



ever again. He keeps trying but it doesn't happen. He is quite mad. It would be really interesting to have somebody just talk about Peter and his attempts to control the Museum's architectural program.

SZ: Through Arthur? Through Philip?

BJ: Through Philip. Through Armand Bartos. Armand Bartos practically single-handedly kept the Institute alive. He was a huge financial supporter. Peter was incredibly irresponsible about money. He ate up the money. In the end, he's simply one of those visionary types; fiscal responsibility was not his strength. He thought everybody should pay for his toy, and everybody did for quite a while. But you know there are, I firmly believe that there are, certain things that shouldn't last forever. There are the great little magazines that flame up and then fail. There are certain arts institutions that have their day and then they should just shut down and not limp along and try to keep on going. I think there's something very noble about those kinds of failures. There's nothing wrong with them. But Arthur, Arthur was like a survivor. This deeply tormented man who never could figure out how he could resolve his personal life. . . . Let's face it, all these people came along in an era when homosexuality was a very difficult thing to live out. Even though the art would tolerate it, there must have been many difficulties encountered that you just didn't talk about. Of course, Arthur was like a survivor. I always felt that Arthur, if he had been in a concentration camp, would have traded cigarettes with the guards. He would have done anything to survive, he wanted to survive at whatever cost to him. And he did, he did.

SZ: Somebody suggested to me that he wanted to be Director.

BJ: He did. Oh, he absolutely he wanted to be Director, Again, he wanted to be Director after Bates. We'll have to check to see. Rona [Roob] will know [laughing] exactly the year Arthur tried to be Director. And he organized around him this little cabal, Liz

Shaw, and Blanchette, by the way, was very supportive of Arthur. It was a folly, I mean, the idea that Arthur could run the Museum was just insane. Talk about procrastination, talk about paralysis of the will. You would go into his office for a meeting and he would sit there with a yellow pad, and he'd make these totally elaborate doodles, his doodles should have all been put into a book, but he'd doodled and doodled and doodled, and that was it. He was an enormous doodler. And then he wanted his department to be great and he did some great shows himself. But then when someone like Emilio [Ambasz], with ambitions who were larger than large, came along and did these staggering, incredible shows, Arthur was very ambivalent about this. Of course, that's another thing: Emilio was very difficult for the whole Museum to handle [laughing]. And Dick Oldenburg did not like him. In fact, Dick Oldenburg came to loathe him. Emilio was such a control freak, I mean, he took everything into his own hands and everything he did, he did superbly. I think the Museum kind of made a mistake in not acknowledging that they had this staggering brilliant curator who did marvelous things. But in the end he didn't have too much support, either from Arthur or from Dick. Although, Emilio and Arthur had another very, very complex relationship because in the end Emilio. . . Arthur really loved Emilio, he really did. So it was a very father-son kind of ambivalence. You know how it is, the father wants the son to succeed, the son succeeds, and the father gets jealous. . . he succeeds too much. I think that was the case with Emilio and Arthur.

SZ: But Emilio was, what. . . he was hard to handle, or socially, he didn't . . . ?

BJ: Emilio was like a system of one. He's a very mythomaniacal person, a person of vast ambition and vast time and I don't know many people that I could say are geniuses. Emilio is a genius with all the attendant neuroses, and all the attendant ambitions. I do believe that Emilio's ambitions were too big to be contained within an institution. I believe he probably would have run into trouble wherever, with whatever institution because an institution is by nature a collaborative place. And Emilio didn't need anybody else, he could raise all the money for his shows, he could get all the books

produced, he could get all the essays done. He wanted to have his own empire, and all he needed was the freedom to do it. And places like, institutions like the Museum, don't let people operate their own empires. And Emilio doesn't function well under any other system, so I think that conflicts arose. But also he had other ambitions: he wanted to be an architect and a designer. The only thing is that, unlike Philip. . . You see, I think that Emilio thought that his model was Philip, but his model wasn't Philip, couldn't be Philip because Emilio does not know how to give anything away. His self-centeredness doesn't allow him to be generous. I always used to say to him, "If you want to be like Philip, you have to look at what Philip did. Yes, he had a practice, he paid the salary of his whole department, look at the pictures he gave to the Museum. You can't be a patron, you can't rise from being a curator to being a patron of the Museum unless you are a patron. And it can't be contingent on what it's going to do for you." So he never quite understood that. In some ways, I think he was a loss, but I'm not sure it would ever have worked out. I'm not sure that it ever could have been handled properly. But you know, Arthur survived. He survived. And then, after Emilio left, his department really went into really, a decline because he wouldn't let any new blood, or anybody really creative come into the department. There was [J.] Stewart Johnson, who was O.K., but who did what he did, and then [there was] Stuart Wrede, who, by default got. . . . I think that was a mistake to make Stuart Wrede the Director of the Department [of Architecture and Design]. He was an Acting Director and he should have stayed that way until they found the right person.

SZ: Because?

BJ: Because he's simply, he's simply. . . Again, the Museum needed to be galvanized by somebody very creative coming into that job, and Stuart wasn't it. He was just. . . he was the past, plus Arthur was really creative and Arthur wrote very well. One of the great things about Arthur was that he was a marvelous writer, if you read the essays he wrote for his catalogues they were just models of beautiful, beautiful writing. He was a great stylist. Now, Stuart was not in the big league, I mean, neither could he write brilliantly nor

did he have any very original ideas and. . .

SZ: Had he been Arthur's designee in some way?

BJ: Sort of, when Arthur got sick. He had done the Gunnar Asplund show [*The Architecture of Gunnar Asplund*, June 30-October 1, 1978, MoMA Exh.#1218], and also Dick had liked him because he was from Swedish nobility. Dick was a terrible snob, let me tell you. A big snob. So, Stuart was part of some grand family and Dick liked that. Stuart was a nice man, but totally useless as department head. Then, of course, no sooner did it happen, no sooner did Dick make him Director, than he realized that it was a mistake. And Philip, believe me Stuart would have still been there if Philip hadn't really insisted that we do something else. To Dick's credit. . . I was desperate because I was really worried that he wouldn't have. . . because he never fired anybody, he never liked to fire anybody, he just let them stay and stay and stay, until it was all over, which I think was a big mistake. And he also promoted people who shouldn't have been promoted just out of timidity. I had gone to a opening of an exhibition at Columbia [University], an exhibition of the work of Paul Nelson and an architectural historian named Donald Albrecht, whom I knew was involved, and I sat at dinner next to the young man who did the exhibition named Terry [Terence] Riley. By the time I got through dinner I decided that he should be the Director of the department. I called up Philip the next morning and I said, "O.K., found him." I set up a lunch between Philip and Terry and the rest is history. I was so scared that Dick wouldn't have the courage to do this, but he did. And look, look what's happened to this department in the short time that Terry's been there. It's amazing. It's a good department, and there are some very good people in it. But we didn't have a curator of design, there was no one after Emilio, well [J.] Stewart Johnson, but then no one, it was hopeless.

SZ: Last question for today. Maybe I'll have to come back. Last time you said that you became a Trustee in '71, but I found '74. . .

BJ: '71, '72. I told you I was very bad at dates, so maybe it was '74. [Note: Barbara Jakobson was elected Trustee on October 9, 1974].

SZ: That's O.K. I think you described just a little bit about how that happened, that you. . .

BJ: Well, you know, I think that. . .

SZ: You've been associated. . .

BJ: I feel in a way quite proud. I think I'm one of the few people who got to be a Trustee because of this meritocracy, because I did come along and I proved by all the things I did for the Museum that I would be a valuable Trustee. I was made a Trustee knowing that I would contribute however much money I could, but knowing that it wasn't going to be vast sums of money either. But that they knew I would work in whatever way I could. I think it took a while to overcome some of the resistance, probably, again, due to the fact that I had done some fairly radical things while I was running the Junior Council, It's odd because a Trustee who comes from the inside has oddly enough far more to prove than a Trustee who is just plucked from the outside world. Because many times if you're looking for new Trustees, it doesn't always work, but you look for somebody who's a great collector, you look for somebody who's got lots of money, and it doesn't work. It never works because the only good Trustee in any institution [is one] who will not only give to it but care about it. We've had many instances of people who came on the Board who stayed for a few years and left and were a big disappointment, but they were made Trustees in four seconds. I'll give you an example: Ann Cox Chambers, who, if you thought about it, seemed she would make a great Trustee. She's the wealthiest woman alive. She's intelligent, very intelligent. She's not an art collector, she has not much interest in art, but on the other hand, you'd think that she would be a good philanthropist. But she came and she just. . . she couldn't have cared less, so she sort of drifted away. I

do think, since Trustees are elected for terms, it is a way of thanking people. Most of them leave of their own accord if they find they are just not able to do it or not interested. But if you're coming from inside and have been there along time, then you have to come up another way.

SZ: O.K. That's it?

BJ: Sure.

**END TAPE 2, SIDE 2**

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

**INTERVIEW WITH:           BARBARA JAKOBSON (BJ)**

**INTERVIEWER:             SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

**LOCATION:                    THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART**

**DATE:                        NOVEMBER 24, 1997**

**BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1**

SZ:    If we want to keep on chronologically. . . Would you like to do that?

BJ:    Sure.

SZ:    I'm intrigued by what you're going to be doing next week, but in fact we have to sort of get to that point.

BJ:    I forgot where we left off. I guess I told you my Walter Thayer story.

SZ:    Yes, you did. And then it was really at the point where you joined the Board and you talked a little bit about what that meant. And I want to start by talking a bit about your first committee assignments, how they were made and what you were interested in or.

BJ:    I firmly believe in the mentoring theory. I think that hardly anyone ever gets along in life without others, be they friends, relatives, teachers or others who come into your life at crucial moments and really help you or who seize upon what you can do and realize that it can help others. I know I do this all the time myself. I love to do it. I think that one of the great pleasures in life is to see others fulfill their potential. So, at the Museum, certainly, from the very beginning I had strong relationships with both professional staff

and Board members. And as we talk about Walter Thayer, who was one of my great supporters, who was certainly instrumental in helping to get me on the Board. But before I was a Trustee, I was a member of the Painting and Sculpture Committee. I would have to look up exactly year I joined [Note: she joined April 11, 1968], but Jim Soby was another person who was very, very instrumental in pushing me forward in many, many ways. I remain quite active in helping the Smith College Museum [of Art], so along the way I became a member of the Visiting Committee of the Smith Museum and ultimately I became Chairman of that Committee. Jim Soby was a very close friend of Jere Abbott. His wife had gone to Smith, and he was very close to Dorothy Miller. And Dorothy was another person who was extremely important in my early life at the Museum. Jim was a person who really wanted me on the Committee on Painting and Sculpture. You know how it is, for one reason or another, you are pushed forward into these roles.

So there I was on the Committee already. I was one of these people who was very eager to work and when there was a job I was asked to do, I would do it. I believe that the Museum. . . there are all those seemingly more glamorous committees to be one, but then again there are committees like Membership, that I think are extremely important. So, I was I always trying to think of ways to make the Museum a marvelous place for all the people that came to it. And as I mentioned to you early on, because there wasn't a formal Education Department there, there was very little done at the Museum in the way of reaching out to various constituencies, like students - it was up to the Junior Council to do that. So, I got very savvy about how to do these things along the way. I think my training in retailing helped me a lot. I enjoy seeing people buy things. So, I was always involved with the publications and the retail operation. It's another part of the Museum that interests me enormously because it's extremely important. Not only in terms of presenting the ideas of the Museum in consumable form to the public, but also in terms of revenue. Again, I was always trying to help think of ways to increase revenue for the Museum. I guess one's talents. . . you figure out what they are and then you figure out how to use



them. Some people who are able to support the Museum financially without doing too much work will do that. But the one thing about the Modern's Board that I have found is, for the most part, that the people who want to be on this Board want to be on it for far more than just the reason of prestige. They want to be on it because there is this incredible give-back. It's an institution [that] rewards you for your work, it rewards you in the most satisfying kinds of way. Just to be involved in sitting in a Board meeting and listening to a curator explain an upcoming exhibition can be a dazzling moment intellectually. And what happens is that you want to see this work get done, and you will do anything you can to help it get done. And I do think that, with a very few exceptions of people who simply don't feel as attached to this institution, very few exceptions – this Board is a very committed one – I'm sure you've found that in your other explorations with people who are involved with the Museum. I'm a person who wants to be engaged in the intellectual and cultural life of my time in more than simply a superficial way. So, for me being involved with the Museum is a fantastic opportunity to keep on learning. And I find the curators immensely generous with their own brains. This has been a very important part of my experience at the Museum. Along the way I have been on many committees, I am on many committees, Painting and Sculpture, Film, Membership and now Architecture and Design.

SZ: And Publications.

BJ: Publications, when it was a committee. It was a very unsuccessful committee. I think it's in the process, obviously, of being rethought. I don't know how it will be reconstituted. I think that one of the problems is that book publishing and the bookstore are quite a separate issue from retailing. And they always lumped. . .

SZ: You mean retailing being the. . .

BJ: . . . the objects in the store. They always lumped these committees together and I

see them as completely different businesses. I see publishing as a primary function of the Museum, I mean a primary function. I think a great deal more could be done with publishing. Obviously we will try. We are getting a new Director of Publications. I've always felt that in addition to the catalogues that the Museum publishes that are related to exhibitions, that we probably could publish even outside of the areas of just exhibitions. It's hard to find the right books, but the other thing is the bookstore should be the greatest art bookstore in the city. By default we've lost [George] Wittenborn, we've lost Japp Reitmann. We do not have a great art bookstore in this city. It is simply not there. I believe that the Modern could be a great, great art bookstore. I believe that we could even perhaps have an internal department that dealt with rare books. I think we could probably expand our activities in terms of being a bookstore.

SZ: But still concentrating on modern and contemporary. . .

BJ: Right. Exactly. Twentieth-century and beyond. Again, there are the areas of electronic publishing, and the future of publishing is quite astounding when you look at it. I think that that kind of publishing, because the more the technologies of publishing expand, the more important I think it is to separate book publishing from retailing. Now, of course, we've hired this new Director of Retail Operations, this man named Jim [James] Gundell, whom I've met with several times and who I really like. He came from Bloomingdales where he was a very, very high-powered vice-president who had run many departments and who has a really firm knowledge of how to manage a retail store. I can't wait until he gets his feet wet. Frankly, even given the way the store looks today in 1997, which is horrible, and given the array of merchandise, which is dicey - it's good, but not good enough - we do really well. The store does amazingly well. So I keep thinking, if we could make this really good. . .

SZ: Barbara, here's a question for you. Having followed this, I believe, since even before the time when things started to be reproduced, chosen, made, sold. . . Was it a

struggle to have it happen so that retail operations could be accepted as a . . .

BJ: Right. It was a big struggle. It was such a struggle. Now, again, when I came to the Museum, I don't quite remember how the little store operation was. I don't even remember where it was. . . Well, it was in the lobby - it was always in the lobby. We didn't have a separate, across the street, store. The Junior Council was responsible for the calendar - all the research and publication - and we were responsible for all the Christmas cards and the objects. And then there was always this hassle about what was appropriate for the Museum to be doing. It got mired in this battle between the curators and those of us who were more anxious to increase this revenue. We didn't get all that much cooperation, and we had to struggle to get the curators to work with us. There was first a rule that whatever was sold in the bookstore had to be in the collection. Well, I mean it became. . . . It was virtually impossible. However, I, who look back over the history of the Museum, realize that in the early, early years of the Department of Architecture and Design, there was an extraordinary collaboration and collusion between manufacturers and the Museum. We did all these exhibitions, *Good Design Under \$10*, *Good Design* etc. . . , and not only did the manufacturers give us everything, they were listed in the catalogues. [Note: the Museum had a series of exhibitions of "useful" design objects from 1938-1949; the first was titled *Useful Household Objects under \$5.00*, September 28-October 28, 1938, MoMA Exh.# 8.; *Good Design* exhibitions were organized yearly from 1950-1955]. The sources were listed. And what I would like to do, I mean I believe it is totally consistent with the history of the Museum, [is] to completely re-establish a working partnership with industry. I see nothing wrong with this. It's not like any other department because industrial design is all about manufactured objects, things that are commonly available in the world, in the society. We're not like the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art]. The Met can go back fifteen centuries and reproduce everything. If you go to the Met and you look in their store, Celtic jewelry, Byzantine jewelry, this jewelry, that jewelry. I think that we have a different mandate, which is to do original things. We just have to find the very best that the society has to offer in

the way of design that fits into the market of our constituency. And we have to find it and put it forward. I think this is part of our mission. Again, I have this corny belief in the modern movement. I was indoctrinated. . . it was almost like religion, I believe in the redemptive power of architecture and art and design, even though we can be proved wrong over and over. We know that Le Corbusier did not save the world when he built his housing in Marseilles. But when I learned about modernism, it looked to me like these architects wanted to save the world. They wanted to give people light, fresh air, they wanted the workers to be happy. I've gone to see every workers' housing development in the world. Wherever I am, if there's workers' housing, I go look at it. I want to believe that design can help people to live a better life, and so that enables me to advance the mission of the Museum. You know, to have things in the store that we think are good design, whether indeed they're going to help your life or not – they look to me like they do. I always feel good when I see the shop now with the [Achille] Castiglioni things in it. I felt very happy that there was a relationship between what an exhibition [*Achille Castiglioni: Design!*, October 15(16), 1997-Jan. 6, 1998, MoMA Exh.#1787] was saying and what we were telling people who were shopping. Now, I would doubt very much that the bigger objects sold well. But then again, that, to me, is simply part of what we should be doing anyway, whether they sell all that well or not. Every once in a while you're surprised, something comes along that people really need and want and they will get it. I believe, again, that we're in a moment in the Museum's history when the curatorial staff is more than willing. . . . I think there's been a sea change in the attitude toward cooperating with these non-curatorial arms of the Museum. I think that the curators know it's important and it's on them to help us think of ways to make money. I, also, looking forward, will. Supposing the Museum would have to close for a period of time during construction - it will have to close at some point probably - then these kinds of stores become even more important. We had better start right now building up the potential of these auxiliary things. The same thing with film. I remember the Council did once a package of horror film stills. I never saw anything like it - we sold thousands of them. I think we should use the film collection as much as possible in a

very creative way. Now again, there may be rights problems with these films stills that have a reason which prevent us from marketing them. I don't know.

We should use the collection as much as possible in the most creative way, in the most lively way. And often Painting and Sculpture, although it's the core, it doesn't have as much potential perhaps as some of the other departments like Photography. I am personally [an] electronically deprived creature. I have never touched a computer. Now, I know I will have to do it someday. I am very resistant to this. I had my Henry Dreyfuss dial telephone until a few years ago. As much as I am interested in design - and I am totally involved in learning about technology, I think I know every new development in the history of technology. I follow it avidly, but part of me just doesn't want to deal with this. The reasons I give myself are primarily aesthetic. I hate the way computers look. I don't like the way the screen looks. I don't like the colors. I don't like the whole thing. So I resist getting to work on this thing. I don't like the imagery. I don't like the screen-savers. I don't like digital imagery at all. And so I have resolutely avoided this machine. However, I'm not avoiding it in my head, I'm thinking about it all the time. And the interesting thing is that I'm probably a good person to think about it, because someone who doesn't use it all is maybe a much better person to judge it than somebody who is totally immersed in it and who thinks everything that comes out over this Internet is great. I think that the Museum's website is not very interesting. I've looked at it. I don't think it's great at all. I think it could be improved much more. I'm sure it will be and I'm sure some day I'll get one of these things. [Note: on editing the transcript Barbara Jakobson noted that "the website has gotten much better"]. When someone designs one. . .

SZ: [Laughing]. . .that looks nice. . .

BJ: . . .that I want to have on my desk, I'll get it.

SZ: There are a few better ones. . .

BJ: Well, the Powerbooks are very good-looking, but then the screens are too small. Although I might succumb and get one of those and just mess around with it a little bit.

SZ: I'll talk to you after you do that. [Laughter]. Well, that was Publications. I think it was in 1990 that the Committee was disbanded and you say that there's some sort of reconstitution of. . .

BJ: I don't know if it will be. It was a useless committee. First of all, it never met. It met maybe twice a year and on it were, I think, people who didn't do anything for the Museum. The outside people that I remember didn't do a bloody thing. They had some guy who was head of the Book-of-the-Month club, someone from publishing, outside publishers. And they didn't know why they were there, and they didn't really do anything as far as I could see. So I'm glad it was disbanded. It was an odd thing, I think because Dick Oldenburg was head of Publications, that's where he came from. For some reason his relationship to this whole operation was very complicated. On the one hand, I think he didn't want anyone else to be the publisher, I don't think he. . . This never got brought forward. It was like still this little gentleman's game.

SZ: So, Painting and Sculpture we talked about, and, I think Film, you were on the Film Committee.

BJ: Right.

SZ: Almost from the beginning, if not the beginning.

BJ: Right. I wasn't on it from the beginning, although I love film and I'm very involved with the history of film. I didn't study film formally at school because there was no such thing when I was at college. But I avidly learned about film and I think I learned, I learned

about film at The Museum of Modern Art, as did almost anyone who you hear about who grew up in the city. Where you get your film education is sitting in the dark at the Modern. When I was running the Junior Council I organized a symposium called, "Whither Underground". Oh, my God, it was all about underground film. I forgot to look up the year, it was in the '60s. [Note: "Whither Underground" took place on November 11, 1965. It was a Junior Council Independent Film Symposium, sponsored by the Junior Council. Participants include Willard Van Dyke as moderator and the following panelists: Robert Breer, Judith Christ, Susan Sontag, Robert Osborn. *Sound recordings of Museum-Related Events #65.17*]. We did this panel with Susan Sontag and Hollis Frampton. We showed all Stan Brakhage, and all these very complex and difficult films. And it was great fun, it was great fun. It was a succès d'estime, I'm not sure it was the most roundly popular thing because these films are very difficult. The Museum taught me not to avoid the difficult. That is what all these really interesting curators. . . . You learn that you're not to avoid difficult material, that you've just got to deal with it. And film, I think that department, as I said before, was always in a way, my favorite because it was political, it had radicals. It was the radical department. If you could say that there were any political radicals within the Museum, they were there. It always had this very feisty kind of edge to it. Maybe it's because they identified with the blacklisted screenwriters, who knows. I think that film is a medium that is closest to expressing the political tenor of a time. And film material deals with these things and the people who are involved with film are far more out front about their opinions. And I always liked them, I liked them. It was a very odd and eccentric group. The marvelous Eileen Bowser, who was a genius archivist.

What always impressed me was the knowledge, the body of knowledge, of course, of all the curatorial staff, but, again in the film department, you had Adrienne [Mancia], she's like my Italian realist film, she's earthy, our Mangani. And Margareta Akermark who was our Ingrid Bergman. There was the incredible polymath, Willard van Dyke, our aristocrat. And I think the Film Department is still immensely compelling. I love this department. And again, let's face it, film is a medium which everyone relates to.

SZ: . . .to have some relationship to.

BJ: Right.

SZ: Right.

BJ: I'm really impressed with the study center [The Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Center] too, in [Hamlin] Pennsylvania. I think this is a place that people should go. I've said to Mary Lea [Bandy], "I wish we could organize a few trips to get people down there", because then you see the depth of the Museum's holdings and you see what's being done to preserve this art form. It's staggering.

SZ: So that's been a major preoccupation of the Film Department and the Committee over the years, right?

BJ: Right. Our truly major preoccupation is the care and preservation of the collection, and then the transfer of nitrate film onto celluloid, and then the restoration of certain great films. They were showing *The Leopard*, I don't know if they're showing it this week or . . .

SZ: I think it was this week.

BJ: And they showed it when it was first redone. I can not tell you. . . if you've not seen this film. It is so staggering, this restored print. And you don't realize how a film can be lost until you see a lost version of a film and a found and restored version of a film. It's so unbelievable. So that the importance of color, of restoring color film, is totally crucial. Because a lot of the color stock used after Technicolor was very fungible, it just faded away. So yes, the Film Department, I think their major activity is in the care and feeding of this collection and of course, then, acquisition, And this



has not been as easy. I like the fact that film archives all over the world share their material, that they help each other. The idea of finding some lost footage from a film that you never knew about and then adding it to the original version is exciting. It's like detective work, film, film research. I think it's really kind of rewarding. It's a medium you can make, you can find things you think have disappeared forever.

SZ: And the Membership Committee?

BJ: Well, the Membership Committee, when I came to the Museum [laughing], it was like this. . . There was this marvelous creature named Emily Stone, who was head of Membership. She was divine. She was sort of this vestige of. . . incredibly well-bred - I forget what President she was related to, Calvin Coolidge, I believe - and she talked in incredibly plummy tones, she had this marvelous society voice, and she ran [laughing] the Membership Committee as though it were a club. It was much more clubby. But the other thing was that since there weren't as many members, and the membership floor, which was the sixth floor, was so divine. I pray and hope that in the new Museum we have an atmosphere for members that is so much better than the one we have. It was delightful. It was the sixth floor. So you couldn't get up to the sixth floor without your membership card. And when you got there it was a true oasis. It was light, beautiful, the terrace outside with tables. It was a cafeteria, so you stood in line with your tray and you'd sit at the tables. And there was a lounge, a Members' Lounge, you've seen the photographs. And then the Penthouse off to the side with the Art Lending Service. So really, it was isolated from the body of the Museum, and when you went there you felt special. This just does not exist any longer. And I bemoan this. I hope that we can figure out a way to change this.

The Membership Committee was always concerned with, "What do we do for members, how do we make them happy?" It wasn't so much concerned with going out and getting more members. It wasn't so driven, at the time, by revenue. However, it evolved. There was always a Trustee Chairman of the Committee, and

Beth Straus was the Trustee Chairman of this Committee for a very long time - almost as long as I was on this Committee. Beth was truly instrumental in totally revolutionizing the way that the Museum cared about its members. I think particularly after this whole Membership floor evaporated, we had to think of ways all the time to take care of the members and increase membership, and then suddenly we went into this deficit mode. Membership became immensely important, its revenue utterly crucial. So it was, "How to increase members, how do we get more members and what do we give them?" There's always this balance that you must think about, if you have these members you have to really service. . . give them something for their money, beyond just free admission. But I really do believe that we've come a long way in learning how to make the members feel like a part of the institution. I think it's an incredibly important part of the institution to have our core of members and keep those members so that every single year, when that renewal form comes in the mail, you just automatically fill it out. And I think that there are many, many creative ways this is going on. I think it's better than it ever was. And Paul Gottlieb, who is the current Chair of this Committee, has given a lot of time and effort and thought to it, I don't agree with his ideas all the time [laughing], but I think that he's very passionate about this, he's very passionate about the members. And we've learned better how to communicate with members. The Membership Committee functions very well. I think it could be better. I'm always looking for people who could help us on membership. Again, I don't think this Committee is yet what it should be. We keep experimenting with the kinds of people who we think might. . .

SZ: Might work. . .

BJ: Might work, and I still don't think we've got the right bunch of people. Finally, you discover things and you've got to be able to give up, abandon things that don't work. We used to do a lot of these members' tours. They were popular, but they were popular with the same group of lonely people who signed up for these tours because the same people signed up for all them.

SZ: Tours going to places like?

BJ: You know, like the Barnes Collection. What it did, it took up huge amounts of staff time. It's like being a tour organizer. Again, there were people on the staff who loved to do this and that's what they wanted to do. But finally, and I think rightfully. . . I think it was Glenn [Lowry], when Glenn came it was "O.K., no." That's what I love about. . . amongst the things I really like about Glenn is [that] this is a person who makes decisions.

SZ: And in, I think, '91 the A&D [Architecture and Design] Committee, which I'm surprised you weren't on before with your interests.

BJ: Well, that's an interesting story. It's a complicated story, I believe. It was a natural Committee for me to be on. I think that the politics of the Architecture Committee, the dynamics of Arthur, Emilio - I'm never quite certain, because it depended upon whom you talked to - I think that there was a kind of resistance to putting me on that Committee. I think it was stupid myself, because I'm a team player. When I get on a team, I play on the team. I absolutely understand what it means to be part of any Board or any group I've ever been on. That's what I do. I'm not a take-over type. I like to work and if I'm called upon to lead something, I'll try to do it the best way I can. But I also understand the dynamics of a group. Emilio used to tell me that it was because Eliza Parkinson was jealous that she didn't want me on this Committee, because of the closeness of Eliza and Philip. I don't really know. I don't know. But let's say this, I didn't get on the Committee until, in a way, until Terry was Director of the Department, and Lily [Auchincloss] was Chairman. Now, Lily and I were the closest of friends. Lily kind of did what she was asked to do. In other words, I don't think it was a matter of my name coming up for membership on the Committee way before. I don't think she would have fought. She's not that kind of fighter, she just kind of let things happen. Frankly, I never thought about it. I never lobbied to be on it.

I never thought about it. I just went right on to do whatever else I could do. And since I had a totally lively life in the world of architecture outside of that Committee, it never affected my feelings about the Committee one iota. All I wanted to do was help the Museum. When Arthur died and Stuart Wrede was made Director, which never should have happened - he was just not the person to direct anything, it became apparent- we talked about this a little bit. And Dick came to me then and asked for my help. I mean it was Dick who asked me to, "Please", because he said, "You know everybody." Who? And Philip, of course, was putting forward all these insane names, because Peter Eisenman wanted to name the Director of the Architecture Department. Peter wanted to be the kingmaker so he could control whomever it was who ran the department. What I did was, I just went to Dick and I sat him down and I said, "Let me tell you the story of the power structure in the world of architecture now." I just told him who all the players were and who he could not possibly consider. I said, "You're going to get names put forward, Philip is going to propose so-and-so and so-and-so, and you mustn't even think about it because. . .". And I think everybody's main, my primary objective was to keep Peter Eisenman from having any influence over this department because, as brilliant as Peter is, I find him to be dangerous to the health of any institution. He's primarily neurotic, he's power-crazy, he is totally power-crazy. He's power-crazy and he's crazy because he has no power base at the moment. Ever since he lost the Institute, no one. . . He's not been made dean of an architecture school. He's tried for Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. So he teaches at Cooper [Union]. That's the best he can do because John Ejduyk is the only other nutcase who'll put up with him. I felt it was really important to have somebody at the Museum who was not owned by Peter. And it worked.

SZ: So now, also being on that Committee during this time [the selection of the architect for the new Museum building] must be pretty interesting.

BJ: It is. It's really fascinating.

SZ: Does the whole Committee participate in this, now, in this selection process?

BJ: Yes.

SZ: Or . . . there's a different Committee too, though, isn't there?

BJ: The Committee is. . .

SZ: The Building Committee, I guess. . .

BJ: Well, there's the Expansion Committee, which is headed by Sid Bass. And the people on that Committee who will vote to choose the architect are Sid Bass, Aggie [Agnes] Gund, Ronald Lauder, and David Rockefeller. Jerry Speyer and Marshall Cogan are ex-officio members of that Committee. Obviously, Jerry is there, as well he should be, because without Jerry there would be no place to build. Marshall is there by virtue of the fact that he is Chairman of the Committee on Architecture and Design.

### **END TAPE 3, SIDE 1**

### **BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 2**

BJ: And then there are three advisors to the Committee who don't vote: Ed Barnes, Philip Johnson and me. There are also three staff members, three staff participants in this process: Karen Davidson, Glenn's assistant for public policy, Bill Maloney, who is the project manager, and John Elderfield, representing the curatorial staff. I'm astounded at how astute John Elderfield is about architecture. The man is unbelievable. He is so brilliant. He's a treat. I got to know him a lot better during this process and I think he has a rare intelligence, really amazing. So, it's not clear - and of course there's Glenn and Terry - it's not clear to me at this point whether Jerry and

Marshall have a vote. They were not supposed to have a vote when this began. I don't know whether. . . I don't know how this will play out. [Laughing] The next time we meet. . .

SZ: I'll get the story.

BJ: . . .we'll get the real story. But the process has been incredibly intelligent. The process has been, I think, "How you get good architecture without asking for architecture? How do you get a building that will work, a building that finally might work, that we need, without focusing on design or style, or a personal language as the primary thing that is going to give you this building?" And I think that was one of the reasons that we made this decision early on to avoid what I call the "King Kong" syndrome - in other words, stay away from all the big guys, stay away from every architect who is going to give you a predictable solution.

SZ: Because we're really talking about function here, more than. . .

BJ: Yes. I mean, frankly, this is a knitting job. It is a very complicated job. It is not an ideal job at all. It is a very, very hard job. Although I want a building that looks beautiful, primarily I don't think that is what the story is about. I think the story is about finding a core, an inside that allows you to design from the inside out, rather than from the outside in. We want to restore the stair, the old stair. . . . There are certain givens, we want to keep the '39 façade, in fact, we might like to restore it to what it was. We don't know what will be behind it, but we want it there. We want the garden. We would like to keep a feeling of intimacy. Everything we gave these architects, if you read the brief, which you will be able to do shortly, is more. . . . Of course there's square footage. But it's more about people, the communication between people and works of art. The communication between necessary functions. . . all things that don't work, I think, in my knowledge, we never analyzed the last go-round, which I wasn't involved in, except screaming at Board meetings saying,

“Please, God, don’t put an escalator in the middle of the building”. I was so against this project, or a lot of it. I never read the brief last time, but I am positive that there wasn’t the kind of thoughtful discourse that there was this time. So, who knows? Will this work? Will we get what we want? We’ll see.

SZ: This is a good place to stop.

BJ: [Laughing] At least we know we will stop.

**END TAPE 3, SIDE 2**

## THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

**INTERVIEW WITH:** BARBARA JAKOBSON (BJ)

**INTERVIEWER:** SHARON ZANE (SZ)

**LOCATION:** NEW YORK CITY

**DATE:** MARCH, 10, 1998

### BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 1

SZ: I have some odds and ends that I wanted to pick up on. First, though, since it's probably still pretty fresh in your mind, you might just want to talk a little bit about the selection of the architect - the process, the thinking behind it and your own personal feelings about it.

BJ: Well, I think I may have mentioned in my previous talks with you that the difference between this selection process and the last one is like a sea change. It was so unusual. And although. . . Let's say this, instead of being this totally monolithic situation driven from the Board room, it really came about in a much more intellectually rigorous way. And I would say that that's because of a confluence of many, many things. First of all, the Chief Curator of Architecture, Terry Riley, and his relationship to Glenn, as Director, and, in fact, the entire top echelon of curators now and Glenn's desire to have a completely open dialogue amongst his curators. I guess John Elderfield probably had a great deal to do with inventing the way the process happened. So, it began as a kind of examination of the Museum's mission, rather than, let's pick somebody to go out and do this building. By doing that, it slowed down the need to rush to judgment. And oddly enough, although in some ways I think architecture was always on everybody's mind, the idea that we were not supposed to be thinking about architecture was very, very helpful because it made you, as I say, slow down and pull back and then eliminate what I think some of the



pitfalls could have been had you just gone right for the name.

I don't know if we covered this, the whole Pocantico. . . [Note: The Museum of Modern Art held a conference at the Pocantico Conference Center, Tarrytown, NY entitled "*Building the Future: The Museum of Modern Art in the 21st Century*", 10/4/96-10/6/96]. I think I did talk about Pocantico, and the way the thing was structured, inviting people of different disciplines, from philosophy to architecture to Museum directors to just talk about what they saw The Museum of Modern Art's problems, and its mission, to be. I found that to be very helpful. These things never really answer all the questions and in a way that was the good thing. You know very well that architecture never really solves your problems. People go to architects, they think that architecture is going to solve their problems. And everybody knows that it will probably drive you to the poorhouse and break up your marriage. It is exactly the opposite. The tendency is to look for an architect and then have this classical psychiatric case of transference, where you transfer all your problems onto the architect, and the architect is supposed to solve them. If he doesn't solve them, in the end you are furious, bitterly disappointed and out a great deal of money. I think that by doing it the way we did we have a shot at avoiding this problem. I think that being involved in this was probably one of the most enjoyable and stimulating and interesting things I ever did because it just. . . . First of all, the confluence of this and everything that interests me was very intense. Since I like to examine things from all angles and all sides, I found it a very stimulating process.

So, as you know, we had the meeting at Pocantico. And out of that meeting came a kind of agreement that we didn't need to go to just the big names. I think it was probably hard for some of the people involved to give up on the idea of, what I call, the "King Kong Syndrome", the architect who is so famous. Because first of all there was pressure on several of the Trustees from many architects. I know that Richard Meier was calling Sid Bass. I know that Frank Gehry was pushing Aggie [Gund]. There's this kind of neurotic anxiety of the architect that I think is very warranted. I

mean I think that the neurosis of the architect is an extremely understandable thing. Because here all these people are desperate, they want very much to get a job like this and they know that only one person will get it. So they get into this complete state of desire, and it's like how do you get yourself even considered for this. We asked a number of architects to submit portfolios of their work. And that included people like Richard Rogers. Any Trustee who asked to have an architect considered, we said yes. So the way we handled the Charlie Gwathmey, Richard Rogers, Frank Gehry, Richard Meier situation was to ask them to send a book. And they all did. They all did. And so I think for a time that they thought they were all potentially going to be considered. I think you know how the Selection Committee was structured. Sid Bass, being the Chairman of the Expansion Committee, and the voting members of that Committee were Aggie, Ronald Lauder, Sid Bass, David Rockefeller, and there were two ex-officio members of that Committee, Jerry Speyer and Marshall Cogan. Jerry, obviously, because without him there would have been no deal, and because he should have been there; and then Marshall as Chairman of the Committee of Architecture and Design; and then advisors to the Committee, Ed Barnes, Philip Johnson and me; and then Glenn. I think, I think Glenn would have voted if there had been a tie. Glenn had a great deal to do with everything that went on. At the meeting I think he definitely spoke freely. He didn't give away his choice, you know. He didn't need to, I mean it was very apparent [laughing], by the time it got down to the end game, what his choice really was. But, you know, it wasn't apparent from the get-go. We had no idea.

So, the Committee existed, the process at Pocantico happened, and then we made a list. Terry is the person who really had a great deal to do with who we went to look at when we began to consider this. I think that from the very beginning there were those of us who felt that we should just bypass this entire group of "King Kongs", and try to go for the generation underneath so that you had much better chance of getting an architect whose language was somewhat more flexible. My feeling about all of these big-shots is, they get the job and what they give you is a recycled vocabulary of what

they've already done, or what they're doing at the time. I don't think they really look at these problems the way the client needs them to be looked at. I mean I've seen this again and again and again. I think the results are dangerous. And what you might get is another unusable building. The other thing is that this long and arduous process that the staff went through with Alex Cooper went much deeper this time than the last time. [Note: Cooper, Robertson and Partners conducted a space-needs analysis in 1996]. The last time there was a program as well, but I think the program was really driven by Bill Rubin. The last iteration of this Museum [1984]. . . It is so apparent that the only person who really got what he wanted or what he insisted upon, or what he screamed and carried on about was Bill. Everyone else was a second-class citizen – Prints, Drawings, Architecture, Design, Film. So, what you got was this Museum that was so out of balance in comparison to what its historical situation is that it was just doomed, it was doomed. So this time around I think that this process with Alex Cooper was really thorough in the sense that everyone got talked to, the security guards, the people who worked in every aspect of the Museum's function. And still, believe me, I don't think it was perfect. They came up with all these square footage allocations so that each department, this time around, has a much more equitable distribution of gallery space, ratio of gallery space to office space to storage space. It will never be ideal. It will never be ideal. We are desperate already about the storage we have to have. Now we are looking for a big off-site storage warehouse because we will never be able to fit it all into the new building. On the other hand, I can't tell you how thrilling it is that we are on the site that we are on. There are those of us who just were desperate never to go off 53<sup>rd</sup> street. Every time some new building came up on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, we'd be going over to see it, and the curators would be pushing us to get it because they needed more room. Luckily, a couple of deals that we almost made fell through and we were so lucky they fell through. And so what happens is that now we have this huge. . .

SZ: You mean for a satellite?

BJ: Yes, which never works. Satellite museums do not work.

SZ: Barbara, let me just ask you one thing, and then let's remember where we were. Alex Cooper's firm was never. . .

BJ: Never considered. In other words, they were told when they took this aspect of the job that this is it.

SZ: O.K., that's all I wanted to know.

BJ: Believe me, they are going to be involved. . . I think they made a very good decision. Number one, they made a bundle of money. Number two, they never would have gotten the job anyway. And actually when we went to look for the firm that would do that we considered several firms, Skidmore [Skidmore, Owings and Merrill] was one, Cooper Robertson another. Whomever we considered, a Jim Polshek. . . whomever we considered would have had to take themselves out of the running for the job. And I think that every firm that we approached to do that was more than happy to do it because I think they all knew they weren't going to get it anyway. So Alex Cooper, from what I can see, he was a marvelous choice. This time the results were so analytically thorough. If you sit down and you look at the charts and the graphs and the comparisons of the. . . . You know they did these comparisons of the Museum from 1929 all the way up till now. And the odd thing is that each pie graph, each chart [has] the same amount of space for galleries which is about twenty-five percent of the total square footage. It's staggeringly small. And I don't think it'll be that much more now, maybe slightly more. But that's the way it is. So then when it came down to this, the beginning of the selection process, Terry put together a list of buildings in Europe by architects both established and not, and we set off on this flying junket, thanks to the generosity of Ron Lauder, who contributed his plane. We could not otherwise possibly have done what we did in a week. It would have taken three weeks at least to do what we did because it was hectic beyond belief. We got on the

plane . . .

SZ: "We" being?

BJ: Karen Davidson, who, by the way, I would say, is the most sublime, intelligent, extraordinary person in the process of this whole selection story. She has a very, very acute mind, she's able to write well, she's able to synthesize all kinds of information and she's got very good judgment. The team of Glenn and Karen is very effective. So it was Terry Riley, Glenn, Karen Davidson from the staff and then Ronald and Jo Carole Lauder, me and Daniel Shapiro; Aggie [Gund], for one reason or another, couldn't come on this trip. It was seven of us.

BJ: Obviously it was a very exciting adventure. There was this extraordinary stewardess on the plane. She was just great. She was very attractive in an odd way, and very funny. The atmosphere on the plane was very jolly. We left early in the morning so that we wouldn't have to fly overnight on that trip. We started out in Bilbao. Needless to say, wherever we went we were greeted with extraordinary enthusiasm [laughing] because everyone knew why we were there. Now Frank [Gehry] himself wasn't there, which was much better and Bilbao was certainly far enough along so that we could get a very, very good idea of it's presence. My opinion about Bilbao is that it's a stunning piece of urbanism. It does for Bilbao what the Centre Pompidou at Beaubourg did for Paris, this galvanically dramatic use of architecture to transform an urban space. From my point of view, the building is incredibly exciting from the outside, the way it hugs the riverbank, walking through it, in it, around it. The inside, I personally find to be a failure. I don't like it. I find the spaces are, on the one hand, too big, on the other these Piranasian bridges that cross the space. . . . It's a very busy space and although there are several galleries that you could say are more or less traditional, and I gather they look fine, I don't find it the kind of Museum experience that, inside, that is too successful. However, I think this building certainly. . . it doesn't matter. In a sense it doesn't matter. Because number one, the

Guggenheim [Museum] doesn't know what will become of this place over the long-term. It wasn't as if you were designing this museum for a permanent collection. I think that Frank gave the client exactly what that client required. I cannot think of a better solution to what the Guggenheim probably asked for and needed. To me it was this giant testosterone explosion, like Frank and Tom Krens together playing this boy game. It's a brilliant confluence of two gigantic egos, and as such I think it's hugely successful. And it certainly has captured the world's attention. So we had this overnight in Bilbao. But from my point of view, and I think from pretty much everyone else's, this is precisely what The Museum of Modern Art did not need. Because we don't, we just don't. We don't need this signature kind of style to solve our particular problems, even though we too have a site that urbanistically needs a lot of work. We went from Bilbao to Berlin where we looked at this new Hamburger Bahnhof by Josef Kleihues, a horrible thing and the Museum of the Jewish Experience by Daniel Libeskind. We had a very good time in Berlin. Everything is like rush, rush, rush. I'm trying to remember the exact order of the itinerary. Because we jumped around from place to place, I may not give it to you exactly. From Berlin - we stayed overnight in Berlin - then we went to Nîmes to see the Norman Foster's Maison Carré which is a stunning solution to a particular problem, this very elegant, minimal glass box that reflects the Maison Carré. It's raised up on a plinth. It's a very brilliant response, again in a little, tiny urban site, he did a very intelligent job. There were many things inside that Museum that were nice but in no way comparable to the kind of problem that we had, although we learned something from seeing it.

Where did we go after Nîmes? Oh, we went to Lille. We stayed overnight in Lille, and we saw a Rem Koolhaas convention center in Lille, Congrexpo, which was a very low-cost building that made use of incredibly cheap materials and used them in a very kind of dramatic way. It was a very interesting building and gets incredibly heavy use, and it looked to me like it was falling apart. It is falling apart. It will not last. It will have to be re-fixed.

Then we went to see this film cinema center that Bernard Tschumi has done which I think. . . . It's interesting. There's been a great deal of discussion, in the, sort of, architectural world, that Bernard Tschumi was Terry Riley's candidate for this job because he was in his pocket. And this is a load of rubbish, it really is. I think that people don't understand. Yes, Terry worked at Columbia [University] but they were never, never, that close. And I think that Bernard Tschumi should have been on this list because he's a very, very, brilliant guy. And because he is, I think, one of the most interesting architectural minds of our time; his work has improved immeasurably. There was huge resistance to Bernard Tschumi. Ronald Lauder and Aggie hated, hated, hated the idea of Bernard. And yet when you saw the building he had done, you simply had to say, "He deserves to be considered. He deserves to be one of the architects put on this list for the charrette". Because what he did was take an old building, in not dissimilar ways to our problem, take an existing building that had to have certain elements remain and combine it with new construction in a very, very intelligent and very beautiful way.

SZ: What city is this in?

BJ: It's in Tourcoing, right outside of Lille. It's really in Lille. I would say it's about ten minutes or fifteen minutes from the center of town. So we looked at this building on a cold and rainy morning and we all were very impressed with it. Then we went on from there to. . . I think we went to Basel. We stayed overnight in Basel at this marvelous hotel. I remember [laughing] because some places we didn't stay overnight we kept on just popping around. And, of course, in Basel we were to see [Jacques] Herzog and [Pierre] de Meuron. We went directly to their office. Herzog and de Meuron are a marvelous team. "Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside", they're perfectly matched. These guys are amazing. They met in kindergarten, they were best friends in kindergarten, they went all through school together, and they practice together. I think they briefly tried working for other people but that didn't work, and they've been in business together from the beginning. And they have a marvelous kind of

symbiotic partnership in which no one claims authorship of any drawing, anything. It's really a team. The atmosphere in their office is really wonderful. It's in a bunch of old houses in Basel. Of course, Basel is a collection of old buildings, and you could see that there was amazing energy and very creative, very creative. And we went all over Basel looking at their projects with them. But, you know, when we arrived, they were having their tea and coffee break in the middle of the afternoon and they were all eating sausage sandwiches, and we all ate sandwiches and it was really jolly. Then we went and looked at their buildings. I love their work, at least the work that we saw, because they are truly these, sort of, poets of concrete, glass and steel. They take the elements of the construction methods of the modern movement and they really take them somewhere of their very own. They're very original architects. I mean, I don't think that they've done the great, great, great thing yet. . . except maybe the signal tower they did that's all sheathed in copper. But we went out to dinner with them at Donatti, which is the best restaurant in Basel and they were funny and charming.

I've got to tell you something. There's a hysterical. . . . Jacques Herzog is extremely amusing. Pierre is reticent, more French in his demeanor. Jacques is very aggressive. He reminded me a little of Philip, very spare, wiry, you know, you can see he jogs a hundred miles in the morning. He's got this, kind of, shaved head, very outrageous, he'll say anything. So he pulls Ronald Lauder aside and he says to him, "You know", he said, "Herzog is a Jewish name. I'm part Jewish [laughing]". It's like, "O.K., we know you'll do anything to get this job." We were falling apart. And then we kind of made this joke for the rest of the trip. Every architect we saw we would say, "You know, [Rem] Koolhaas is a Jewish name, Ronald". [Laughter]. "You know, Ronald, [Wiel] Arets sounds like a Jewish name [laughing]". It was a scream. We had a very amusing time. And, of course, everybody loved them. They loved them. There was no doubt. You knew the minute you met Jacques and Pierre, and looked at their work, that they would make the cut. Then, in the morning, we got up and we went to Renzo Piano's Beyeler Gallery, the gallery that he's done for Ernst Beyeler, the



dealer. Now, of course, this is one of those Piano sublime conjunctions where you have the private client with an exquisite sensibility with a collection that is beyond sublime, and it's the kind of equivalent to the de Menil situation. And Piano is such a subtle and beautiful designer, and here is this incredible marvelous minimal building clad in kind of red sandstone, glass and wood, next to a nineteenth-century building which will house the bookstore, the restaurant, the bathroom, the whole thing. . . . And, of course, Beyeler was like. . . it was his project. He already knew where every painting was going. It was very expensive to construct. But it looked out over a pasture. You know, you looked across the border to Germany, you saw cows wandering about, and it was incredibly romantic. I would say one thing: if any architect of that generation had been included on this list, it would have been Renzo, probably. On the other hand, Renzo is not someone known for his work in cities, even though he did the master plan for Berlin, this great Potsdammerplatz, which, I think, is not very successful. His buildings in cities are few and not that great, except, of course, Beaubourg, you could say. I still wonder to myself if I have any question about somebody whom we left out, maybe we should have had Renzo, maybe. It wouldn't have bothered me.

So then after Basel, we hopped on the plane and we went to Zurich. In one day, we went to Zurich where we looked at an addition to a museum in Winterthur by a very young team named [Annette] Gigon and [Mike] Guyer. They are still practically in their twenties. It was extraordinarily well done. It was a case where you might have. . . . They were considered. And then we went to Austria, we flew to Austria where we saw a building by an architect named Peter Zumtor, a very minimalist, exquisite glass. . . another incredible glass box. It was great to see, but you know. . . . I'm trying to think. . . ah, then I think we went to Paris, we flew from there to Paris, and we stayed overnight in Paris. In Paris we saw the Cartier Foundation at the end of the day. We ate dinner with Jean Nouvel and Rem Koolhaas, and Dominique Perault. Oh, I think maybe he couldn't come, I'm not sure he was at dinner. And there was this kind of electricity between all these French, you know two French

architects and Rem. Oh, I know what happened - when we arrived in Paris, we went first to see this house that Rem designed. We stayed overnight and in the morning we went to see a house that Rem designed in Neuilly, which was, again, an extraordinary house, very quirky, very unusual, and it was a case where the clients. . . [Tape Interruption]

SZ: So you were saying this house was quirky?

BJ: It was quirky and fascinating. You know I realized something because I'm kind of the same way. There is no sacrifice I will not make for aesthetics. I have a house-full of furniture you can't sit in without wanting to scream. I always say I buy it only because I like the way it looks, I could care less if it's comfortable. So you know, it's like this house is an exercise in a formal formalism, in a small encyclopedia of one man's architectural imagination. As such it is great. If you had to live in it. . . I mean, I think you could die. I look at the couple, this couple is so in love with this house, they sacrificed everything. They stayed in court for three years when their neighbors were screaming and carrying on. So I realized that's why I love architecture, because it has this transforming capability. And if you fall in love with it, you can have a wonderful time, you can lose your shirt, you can be tormented, and you can end up breaking your leg on the stairs, but, nonetheless, if it looks right to you you'll love every time you walk into a house like that, you'll feel good. I'm sure the clients who live in this house adore it. It is the most impossible house, but I don't mind. Personally, I found it terrifying, there were little narrow stairways and a pool with a kind of precipice. You felt, "Oh, my god, you could fall right off the edge of the house". But it was interesting. Then we went through the Bibliothèque Nationale with Dominique Perrault. And Dominique Perrault is this charming teddy bear of a guy, very, very, I thought, very intelligent. And we liked this building. Most people thought we were out of our minds for liking this building. I think it is a very successful place. And I don't think it's just because we were seduced by him and his presentation of it, although he did a brilliant tour. It used amazingly interesting materials, it's a very

unified building. The reading rooms in the library where he designed all the furniture - the stacks, the delivery of books. . . . This is a building that works. Two, three, four thousand people a day use this building. The place for scholars, the offices that looked out on this beautiful forest of trees. . . . It's an incredibly French building. No one but the French can do this kind of architecture, this kind of credibly sleek high-tech building. You know, they did the Eiffel Tower. They are incredibly good at a kind of building. I love Charles de Gaulle Airport. I love this thing about France. Versailles. . . . I mean, they are very good at creating grand, huge processional spaces. I happen to like great anomie in places. I like the mall in Albany. People think I'm nuts. I like Brazilia. I like wide expanses of nothingness and, boy, this place gives it to you. This kind of windswept kind of teak deck that goes across the whole space. So we like this place. We felt that he was an interesting person to consider. So we had our wonderful meal in Paris, our wonderful night in Paris. Then we left with Rem, and we flew to Rotterdam, where we had a very quick tour of this building, a bridge designed by a young architect named Ben van Berkel. And Ben van Berkel is another one of these young Dutch architects. The Dutch are on a roll. There are very good young Dutch architects and industrial designers, and graphic designers. They are, I think, in a very fertile moment. And in Rotterdam, the only thing we saw by Ben van Berkel was a bridge, and we didn't go to see a building of his, which actually, I personally think, was unfair. Because I was personally hoping that Ben van Berkel would make the cut because he's married to an art historian, and they work as a team, and I thought it would be an interesting. I would have liked to see what they would have done. Anyway, we then went to see this Kunsthalle of Rem's in Rotterdam: another, on the cheap, very - how shall I say - jazzy, building.

**END TAPE 4, SIDE 1**

**BEGIN TAPE 4, SIDE 2**

BJ: My own feeling is that on the basis of his built architecture, Rem Koolhaas never

would have, or should have, been on this long list. But on the basis of his ideas, his intelligence and his potential solutions of the problem, it was worth the potential risk to include him, although I think, from my point of view, he was definitely a borderline case, and I think the only reason that Rem Koolhaas really got onto this list was because of Philip [Johnson]. Although at the time that we went on this trip, Philip had, after his ninetieth birthday, undergone heart surgery, and Philip was in what I call his Rip van Winkle period. He was just not capable of participating in this part of the process. On the other hand, Philip goes through his passion periods, and he was incredibly interested and devoted to Rem. I think that a lot of us felt that someone had, Rem had to be on this list because Philip would have been very upset and disappointed had he not been on the list, even though Philip couldn't really react at that point. The only regret I have of keeping Rem on the list is that it kept somebody else off the list who I think might have really contributed more to the dialogue. Rem was excellent at Pocantico. He was very good, he's so smart. He actually shot himself in the foot, he could have done a much better job, but that's the way it goes. So we did do Rotterdam, and then we went on to Maastricht, which is a small Dutch city, where Terry had wanted us to look at the work of a young Dutch architect named Wiel Arets. And Wiel Arets is. . . [Tape Interruption].

BJ: Wiel Arets is a young Dutch architect, still in his thirties, who was trained at the AA [Architectural Association] partly, and who taught at the AA in London and who quickly became head of the Berlage Institute, in Amsterdam, which is one of the most prestigious schools of architecture in Europe, certainly very well known. It's interesting to note, by the way, how the AA, the Architectural Association in London, produced Rem Koolhaas, Bernard Tschumi, Wiel Arets. It's an incredible credit to the position of the school as a place in twentieth-century architecture that it's done such a brilliant job. All of these people teach and really continue to teach. Wiel Arets really is a wonderful modernist. Again, a young architect who manages to get a lot of poetry out of steel and concrete. He hasn't built much yet. But he built, in Maastricht, he designed an art school that was an incredibly intelligent, low-budget and beautiful

solution to a problem. And he did a building for an insurance company, again, that was added on to an old building, so I think that Terry knew that he had also done architecture which had to use and combine the old with the new, and it was hugely successful and very beautiful. And I think that all of us, the minute we saw his work, we all felt very positive about having him. He personally was an incredibly charming and intelligent guy. Then we flew to Helsinki to see the Steven Holl. And that was another thing. . . Steven Holl misled us somewhat. This building, this museum, which he was designing in Helsinki, it was like a skeleton, you could barely see anything. We took this huge detour. I personally was thrilled because I had never been to Helsinki, and even though we were only there overnight, it was an amazing place. Peter Reed was there working on the Aalto show [*Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism*, February 18(19) - May 19, 1998, MoMA Exh.# 1795]. Actually, it was a very good thing for us to be there because we met with all the Aalto people. It was politically a very intelligent thing to do. So we had a marvelous time in Helsinki, we ate at the great Savoy restaurant at night. We stayed overnight. The next day - we were supposed to stay longer but the weather was not good so we left. And of course, it's pitch black, it's so amazing. It's no wonder the Finns drown their sorrows in alcohol. What else do you do in Finland in this endless night? Anyway, we did see some early [Eero] Saarinen buildings, we saw a few Aalto buildings, we crowded an awful lot in and then off we went. We repeated this process a little bit later in the United States in a much shorter period of time. We did it in a couple of days. So we got on the plane and flew out. We did this flying trip across the United States. We went to Omaha, Nebraska to see Norman Foster's addition to the Joslyn Museum, which was very standard. It was good, it was quite good. Norman Foster doesn't do things stupidly, he's too smart. But it wasn't great. We went then to Seattle and we saw the Steven Holl chapel that he had just done for this Catholic school. We saw Charlie Gwathmey's new Henry Gallery which was a huge disappointment. And then we went to San Diego where we saw Billie Tsien and Tod Williams' Health Sciences Institute. We had a lot of fun doing that with this extraordinary scientist. Again, you realize how important the client is to the result of any building. Where you get these

great clients you have a better chance of getting a great building. Then we went to - I'm compressing this because it's getting too long and [laughing] probably a bit boring.

We went to L.A. to look at the Getty [Institute of Art and Architecture]. Actually, I had seen the Getty many times along the way so I stayed in the airport. While everybody was at the Getty I had my daughter who lives in L.A. and my little granddaughter come to the airport [laughing] to visit me. So for the two hours they were at the Getty I stayed on the plane. And then we went to Phoenix where we looked at two wonderful buildings: a library by an architect named Will Bruder, a very good low-budget building, and then another museum designed by Tod and Billie, the Phoenix Art Museum, which was, again, budget constrictions and, I think, a very reasonable job. We flew to Houston to look at the de Menil. . . we saw the de Menil. . . . We stayed overnight in Phoenix at the Arizona Biltmore and then we went on to Houston where we looked at the de Menil museum, the Twombly Pavilion. And it was wonderful because Dominique de Menil, who was by then very frail was there; she greeted us. What an extraordinary person. She had a profound influence upon me when I was growing up in this art world. And I was immensely fond of her. And it was just great to see her because I knew it would probably be the last time and indeed it was because she never left Houston after that. Then we went to Dallas/ Fort Worth, and we went to see a project, another house by Steven Holl for a man named Price, the Price House. No, what's it called? It's got a very pretentious name, the Villa Stretto, or something. I thought it was, I really thought it was ghastly. Some people liked it, some people didn't. I just thought it was a dreadful place. It became apparent though that certain people really wanted Steve Holl to be on this list. I didn't think he should have made it. Again, it's like horse-trading.

SZ: Of course.

BJ: There are people you felt very passionate about. I felt that the list should be bigger

rather than smaller. Some people wanted it to be even smaller to begin with. At least it was ten. So that was the end of the American journey. Oh, then we had dinner with Sid and Mercedes Bass in their house [laughing] in Fort Worth, and we flew back that night and got back at some truly ungodly hour, instead of staying over. I think, again, we were afraid of bad weather. That was the trip. Then, after the trip, everybody kind of weighed in. Then, of course people went to Japan to see the work of [Yoshio] Taniguchi.

SZ: Who went there?

BJ: Well, everybody went separately. And that didn't happen until later in the year. Glenn and Ronald and Terry went, Marshall went, he was going to be there on business. I did not go. I guess I felt somewhat remiss in not going; on the other hand, I felt that I could really make a judgment based upon the photographs of his work. I know that obviously nothing substitutes for the real experience of seeing a building, and yet I felt that certainly he should have been on the list. Let's say there was somebody who embodied the spirit of [I.M.] Pei as an architect, when he was younger, and also who had real experience in museum design, it was Taniguchi. I also thought it was good to have two Asian architects on this list. I felt that it was important to be international. And I knew in my heart of hearts that [Toyo] Ito, although he is very clever and very smart, I didn't think he would come up with a building that we would be able to build. I was right about that. So I'm glad we had Taniguchi because the guy is grown up. He's a grown up. And the other thing I liked about Taniguchi - I loved it that he was totally outside of the politics of Western architecture, which by the way many Japanese architects are not. [Arata] Isozaki, Ito, they are right in there. . . [Tadao] Ando. Ando is somebody whose work I felt was unsuitable for The Museum of Modern Art. I just had no faith that he would do a project that was right for us. He's very poetic, and I know now he's got the job to do the addition to the Fort Worth Museum, which, I think, is probably not a bad idea because Louis Kahn is a huge influence. He's very respectful of the Kimball [Museum], the other building . . . It's all

right. Frankly, he's a very difficult man. I felt he'd be very difficult to work with. When you're in bed with somebody for ten years, you better have some fun with this. The personality of this person makes a huge difference. I think that also you worry. I worry, about language, although you shouldn't penalize someone who doesn't speak your language. And for a Japanese person to be fluent in English is not an easy thing at all. I do think that, just from the point of view of fundraising as we go forward with this, I felt I wanted somebody who could communicate in English. I felt that this was kind of crucial. So there we are, we finished our trip, we did all the horse-trading, and then somehow by consensus the final list of ten got arrived at. And there we are. So it rolled out. And then, of course, there's a great deal more because when it got down to the presentations of the ten, that was exciting. First of all, I think that by doing what we did - I know that I got many phone calls from architects all over the world that I knew, telling us how proud they were of the Museum for doing it this way, even though they personally were not on the list. Because it sent out a signal that an architect who is forty, or even younger, could be considered to do a huge job. I kept saying to everybody, "Don't forget Edward Durell Stone was twenty-six when he designed this." Sure he worked with a Beaux-Arts architect, but it was really his building. The building was great because Alfred [H.] Barr [Jr.] was the client, even though Alfred was disgruntled because he wanted Mies [van der Rohe] to do the building. I think that when all these architects came and they did the charette presentations, that was really, I think, almost more exciting than the finals in an odd way because you had such a range of things. There was a dinner at the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center the first night, and everybody drew their dinner partner by lots - you had to draw it from a bowl. We did this because that then no one would think that whoever sat next to Ronald or Aggie had an unfair advantage. It was a very good idea. All through this process there was this desire to not make it seem as though this was being done by fiat, by a couple of people. I think we really tried. We really tried hard. I think no architects ever, the ones who don't make it, never think that that's the reason, they're all paranoid, unhappy and miserable, and they've spent too much money and too much time. No matter how much money you pay for



these competitions to the architect, they always spend triple. It's one of the tragedies of the way of competitions. Obviously the desire to win this one . . . The only person I felt who really did it . . . it was very smart. Ito gave us this little envelope with a bar [read Barr] code. He did a concept without really spending a great deal of money at all. We limited what they could submit, the boards, and the size and everything had to fit in that box. It's amazing how ingenious architects are, and what they fit in the box and the way they fit it in the box, and the variety of solutions to the same problem. And I think that on that score it was immensely successful. And the same thing with the endgame, that you give three people the very, very same problem, and you can see now if you go to see the models, that the solutions are entirely different. I was conflicted for not having any ultimate responsibility for voting or making the choice but in a certain way I felt that it was fine because you say what you think and people took our opinions very seriously. What I'm glad about was that it was three rather than two, because there was this desire in the end to narrow it to just have two. I felt that would be hopeless.

SZ: Was it your selection?

BJ: In the end? Yes. The three.

SZ: Well, we could start with the three, I'm thinking of Taniguchi.

BJ: We could start with the three. With the three, there was a lot of horse-trading that went on finally. You have to deal with the *réal politique*. While they were all in there meeting you could see that there was going to be some dissent about who the three were going to be. In my mind, I started out with more than three, and when I realized that it was hopeless to support someone who wasn't going to make it because there wasn't enough support for that person, then what I did was redo my whole thinking – well, O.K. if it's not going to be X, X and X, then it should be X, X and X. I came up with exactly the three people we ended up with. I was very, very convinced that that

was the right thing. I still am. Then when it came down to the final choice, it was very interesting. So much in these competitions depends upon the order in which you present. They drew straws to see who would be the first to go. And Aggie was the one who drew the straw, and Bernard . . . . I think, alas, it would have been better if he went last. Better for him. But he went first. His presentation was stunning. It was absolutely great. I was swept away by this. I thought, he did it without an assistant, he went through it logically. Everybody was impressed. Actually, afterward, even people who didn't like him, although I think the people who didn't want him were just as entrenched. When you don't want someone you just don't look carefully, but David [Rockefeller], it seemed to me, was incredibly impressed with him. So was Sid. And Jerry Speyer as well. I think that definitely, Bernard acquitted himself brilliantly. Then we got Taniguchi. Taniguchi's project, which was so lucid and so extraordinary, and so good . . . . This poor man was a nervous wreck. He was beyond nervous, he just couldn't get it together. He made what was an extremely logical, beautiful book, beautiful model, beautiful everything, he made it into a complete disaster. And his young assistant [Brian Aamo], who was there, you could see was sweating bullets but couldn't disrespectfully interrupt. And everybody kept trying to help him. We kept saying, "No, it's on . . . look at page 48". David was having incredible trouble following him because his English was faltering. Anyway, he got through this somehow. You just wanted to die for this man. He got through it and, of course, his assistant said to him as they were walking out of the room, "We blew it". And indeed, if you were voting on the basis of the presentation, he would have blown it. However, that being said, you had to see from the get-go the merit of what he did. Then the next day you have Herzog and de Meuron, who come out with this totally outrageous, and architecturally most daring . . . . Their project was conceptual rather than . . . . It wasn't worked out. They would have had to go back and design a building after that, because they had worked out a sort of basic idea but they never really thought it through. However, they were fairly dazzling. Philip, of course, was extremely taken with them because their work looked a great deal like what he's trying to do now. So he was very moved. Actually, he wept after they . . . . It was

very sweet. We knew it was impractical but we liked it nonetheless. And then when we got into this room and John Elderfield and Philip and Ed Barnes and I . . . . It became very clear that, totally clear to me, that the curators who had been allowed to see these three projects, the chief curators, had already made a decision and that Glenn was totally with them. John Elderfield, as the representative of the staff, refused to take total responsibility for making this decision. John has this incredibly cogent way of absorbing material, he's so intelligent. So it became very clear to me that the curators had already made up their minds. I personally preferred. . . . Well, I was conflicted. I liked Bernard's project a lot. I felt that it was much more urban, very jumpy and it had this sort of syncopation of New York. It had problems. I liked some of his solutions a lot better than I liked Taniguchi's, even though Taniguchi's was much more of an integrated building. Bernard, of course, was the one person who left the old Whitney. He left almost all the old bits of the Museum. But the curators were adamant, adamant, adamant about the separation of the temporary exhibition space and the permanent exhibition space. The one thing that I personally worried about in Taniguchi's scheme was this kind of department store, where you have, "O.K. second floor, contemporary art, going up", everything stacked on top of the other. I was frankly a little worried about it because it made me think that it might just be a little bland and a little boring and somewhat problematic. Exactly the opposite of what all the curators thought. They loved it. They totally loved it. When I thought about it, I had to admit that it was very intelligent. It depends upon one's own position towards architecture. In the end, I tend not to look at the practical so much. I look at other things first and maybe I was wrong initially to kind of . . . . I was a little unenthusiastic about Taniguchi. By the way, so were other people. I think that . . .

SZ: So are you saying that really it was initially the . . .

BJ: I'm initially thinking . . . David and Sid and I... I think, I mean I haven't polled them, but they really liked Bernard's project. It was more like the old Museum. It really was. It had much more soul. Now, again, would this cantilever have worked over the

Whitney Building or would it have been dark and unpleasant under there? I'm not certain. I thought his circulation was great. I thought his museum was really good. I liked his theaters. To me, he solved the restaurants much better. The ground floor . . . . Bernard, he is sophisticated in terms of knowing how people live in the city. I thought he did an excellent job. If you look at his models, they are so good.

So I was conflicted. I never understood what the people who were deeply prejudiced against Bernard . . . I never understood. Why, why do they hate him? Philip doesn't like him. Again, why? Was it because Bernard came to New York and really got very far up the pole without becoming an acolyte of Philip's? I don't know. But I feel that Bernard is extremely sophisticated. I think that the staff would have enjoyed working with him. John Elderfield said that in the beginning going into this, the staff wanted Herzog and de Meuron. They were praying . . . . That was who they wanted to work with. In terms of personality, I mean, let's face it, this is ten years. I frankly I think of these things in human terms as well. I thought, "O.K. who would be the most stimulating and interesting?". I liked Bernard and Herzog and de Meuron both, personally; Taniguchi is more of an unknown. And, of course, he was so clever, this guy. He was so clever because after the charette when they chose the final three, he stuck around for a week and he went and talked to everyone who worked in the building. In a very Japanese way, he got to know what everybody really wanted and he gave it to them. He did certain things better than everybody else. I started to make this list: who made the best circulation, who made the best art movement, who made the best theater, who made the best social space? I was trying to make a score card of who solved what best. And ultimately, if you go with the fact that the curators cannot not have their galleries separated then it had to go to Taniguchi. There was no option. There was no choice. It was very clear cut.

SZ: And that's what happened.

BJ: And that's what happened. And certainly, I think, I've gotten used to it. I've switched

gears. And I really believe that ultimately what we did, instead of being dictated to by one person's irrational desire about who they wanted to work with, or some power broker coming in, or one or another school of architecture being predominant at this time was definitely, oddly enough, incredibly intelligent, politically. It was only afterward when I began to analyze what we did, that I realized that we absolutely did the right thing. We totally neutralized all the Frank Gehry, all the Richard Meier people. The only thing, of course, that could be said is that Taniguchi is older, in terms of age, he had just turned sixty. But, then again, architecture is an art in which you just don't make it, you barely do anything of significance until you're over forty. It's like orchestra conducting; if you live long enough you can have a very distinguished old age as an architect. Look, it's turned out to be a brilliant choice. The way it was greeted. You couldn't have paid . . .

SZ: It's true.

BJ: . . .a public relations firm a gazillion dollars . . .

SZ: . . .to get you that kind of coverage. It's true.

BJ: And the great thing is Philip. Philip is such a genius. Of course, as I said, by the time this all came about, he had woken up from his deep Rip van Winkle period. He didn't want Taniguchi, no way. But the minute Taniguchi was chosen, at the press conference, up he got and in the most lucid prose, of course, made it into the most brilliant choice ever. It was so divine. But it's so great to see Philip awake. It's a miracle.

**END TAPE 4, SIDE 2**

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

**INTERVIEW WITH:               BARBARA JAKOBSON (BJ)**

**INTERVIEWER:                 SHARON ZANE (SZ)**

**LOCATION:                         NEW YORK CITY**

**DATE:                             MARCH 19, 1998**

**BEGIN TAPE 5, SIDE 1**

SZ: The things we've neglected to talk about are, number one, trends and changes you've seen in the Museum and number two, the change in leadership and what your predictions are for the future.

BJ: Oh, the Nostradamus effect. . . [Laughter]. We probably covered the early days, when I first began. I know I talked about René [d'Harnoncourt] and Alfred and the sort of hierarchy of the Museum, then, as I perceived it. Oddly, what I believed is the power of the personalities of the founding visionaries, at least until now, as long as it's almost 75 year history, [is that they] have maintained a very, very consistent internal culture, that is somehow inherited and passed along, has been inherited and passed along, and even though it shifted and changed. There is a kind of dynamic, there is a kind of person who seems attracted to this place. Somehow there's always enough excellent humanity within the Museum to counterbalance what may be missing in one way or another. Somehow, I think, as I've mentioned often, and as many people who talk about the Museum have probably said, that the legacy of Alfred Barr is still so powerful that even though people who may never even have known him well, or who knew him so peripherally, or who didn't know him at all, feel like they are still doing things almost the way he would have done them. As the early group of curators and department heads grew older and left by, either by death or retirement, you almost had the replacement of the entire culture by a new group of

people.

SZ: Are you talking about this latest turn-over?

BJ: Yes. Somebody like Peter Galassi, who was trained by, who was, almost, in certain ways, the product of his years with John Szarkowski, who adopted John's patterns of speech, a kind of body language, but who really is a very different kind of person. His tastes and knowledge and attitudes toward photography, although very, very, in some ways, continuing what John. . . what he absorbed from John, is going off on directions of its own, and also because he's such good scholar. [. . .] I know there was a search committee and it wasn't, by any means, guaranteed that Peter was going to get this job. I don't know the internal workings of how Peter did finally get to be Chief Curator, but he has definitely given a character to that Department, which I think has a great deal to do with its traditions, and also a great deal to do with the traditions of the Museum. So, in Photography you have, to me, a Department which is very continuous. In Painting and Sculpture, I feel exactly the same way. You have this lineage. It's almost as if the Museum has created its own aristocracy within the curatorial ranks, so that people who are really talented or who are hand-picked by their predecessors, like Bill Rubin. . .

SZ: Picking Kirk [Varnedoe].

BJ: . . .picking Kirk. There are these kind of crown-prince anointments that have gone on at the Museum. But that is not always possible. Oddly enough, the Painting and Sculpture Department, again, has its own culture. It seemed to me always to be dominated by very brilliant men and populated by, what I used to call, the vestal virgins of art. These women who essentially toiled away for years and years, for their entire careers, with very little recognition, once in a blue moon getting a chance to curate an exhibition. When I came to the Museum, it was Betsy Jones and Alicia Legg, and there was Judy DiMeo, Bill's secretary, and Carloyn Lanchner, these

“Slaves of Art”. Cora Rosevear. . . I mean all these very intelligent women who never really emerged as personalities in their own way. I know them because I want to know them. But unless one were to make the effort, they are very little known in the world. Now, of course, perhaps this balance is going to be somewhat redressed because Kirk, you know, brought with him Anne Umland, who is brilliant. She is the first woman in the Department of Painting and Sculpture who can perform at a meeting with great assurance, with amazing control and incredible insight, and she’s very, very smart. Now, of course, she is about to give birth to twins. She got her doctorate, she finished and she’s going to have twins. This probably will maybe sidetrack her for a while but I’m sure it won’t sidetrack her forever. I’m thrilled. What’s exciting to me is that it’s a break in the pattern, which I think has a great deal to do with the kind of scholar, the kind of person who’s going into this field. It was always this: usually an extremely educated, well-bred woman, who came from a certain milieu who went into this kind of work. But that’s not exactly fair because, of course, there was Dorothy Miller. I really shouldn’t say that there was never a woman in that Department who wasn’t amazing and who really was an equal, because Dorothy was. Except that it’s rare. And by Bill Lieberman training Riva [Castleman] and creating another kind of hierarchy in the Print Department, the Print Department has an entirely different atmosphere. So what’s great about the Museum is that each Department exists as a world of its own. But what has changed. . . They were these little fiefdoms, although they certainly were aware of one another. There were always staff meetings and along the way various people made an effort to make these curators sit down and plan things together and be aware of what each was doing. I think, in the end, a lot of this might have been a struggle to get on the exhibition schedule. A lot of what they did together was to barter, “O.K. I’ve got this show, you’ve got that show. . .”, to divide up the time.

SZ: Very rarely have there been shows that have been co-curated, is that what you’re saying?



BJ: Rarely. I mean rarely. I do believe that the advent of Glenn [Lowry] is forcing a shift in the entire procedure of the way these Departments relate to one another. I think it's much too soon to say what will come of it. I think that there's the desire to have a more integrated Museum, where each collection plays off the other, where each collection uses the other, where there's much more a kind of interweaving of the story, so that you're not necessarily needing to go off to the Photography Gallery to see a photograph. Perhaps in the new building when this story is again retold, perhaps this will be a much more crucial part of the realignment of these different Departments. I also think that art tells you what you need to do if you're a museum. I don't think you can legislate or plan in terms of contemporary art. You just cannot plan too far ahead. If you're going to respond, you must respond to the zeitgeist. You cannot impose on it a five-year plan, at least in contemporary art, because you are not really certain. And this is where I think museums fall down, most museums. Because if you're dealing with the new, you cannot work too far into the future. This is where I believe we've never been able to do it right. I don't think. I think the *Projects* shows, for the most part, are useless, although I like the fact that we have them. I've never known, frankly, how most of these exhibitions come into being. I think that most of them are quite bad. Really poor. I still think so. Every once in while I find one compelling. I think our acquisitions, for the most part, in the Departments with which I'm really familiar, are not too great. I'm not certain how a very new work gets into the collection. I don't know if curators are the best people to choose very new work, even though now we have a division of labor in that Kirk is so busy he can't track contemporary art altogether so he's given it to Rob [Robert] Storr and maybe some of the younger curators. You cannot have objectivity. Objectivity just doesn't exist if you're dealing with the new. You can be objective retrospectively. I don't believe you can be. Therefore, what do we get? What is it? Is it a consensus of what collectors are looking at, what dealers are showing, what European museums have promoted? Every once in a while an artist comes along, a young artist, who is out of the box, so extraordinary, that you know it. That doesn't mean we buy that artist right away, because then a curator will say, "Too much hype." So, I frankly think

we do a terrible job with contemporary art. Even though I'm absolutely determined that the Museum stay with the present, I don't think we do it well. In terms of questioning the methods we have of looking at and collecting, we have a really long way to go. That would be my feeling. I don't want us to stop. There are those of us who say that at the end of the twentieth-century, we [will] become the Frick Museum of Modern Art. Believe me, even with the new building, we would have more than enough in our collection to show, if we never bought another thing. Of course we're not going to do that. I think the majority of the Trustees, and certainly the curators and the Director absolutely do not espouse this view. So we will continue. Alfred Barr said, "Well, if ten percent of what you buy makes it into history. . ." But the problem is ten percent of what he bought were these small things. Ten percent of what we buy are these humongous, huge installations. And you're dealing with new media, video, etc. . . . I still don't think, to this very day, I don't think there is a major artist working in video, not a one. Bill Viola included. I've seen that show twice, I saw it in LA and New York. That doesn't mean that it shouldn't be a museum exhibition, that doesn't mean that people won't collect it, but I am still waiting to see if it works. But, again, if you go by the ten percent rule, then you've got to keep on trying. And I think we should keep on trying.

SZ: So that's the bottom line.

BJ: But you know the fact is that whoever the curators are at any given moment that are sent out to look at contemporary art, those are the ones who are going to influence what we buy, and that is where I feel the problem lies. No curators have the right way of going about this yet. I would like us to really question this whole thing much more avidly so that we could develop a system for filtering new art through the sieve, to have a better outlook on what it is we are trying to do. I really think we don't have a plan. And the curators are very busy. They are very overworked, at least in Painting and Sculpture. Or at least they say they are very overworked, and I tend to believe them. They work very hard. They're in the Museum a lot, they don't get to travel as

much as they should. So, for them to sit down and, let's say, give the Committee on Painting and Sculpture a real overview of what they're supposed to be doing, is a lot of work for them, a huge amount of work – [to] get the slides, [to] get the whole thing, [to] present it to a group of people, some of whom are very, very astute, very good and some of whom are there for other reasons. So, I don't really know how we are going to deal with this in the future, but it's something I would personally like to think about.

SZ: Is Glenn open to that?

BJ: I haven't yet discussed it with him. Glenn. . . I think that any director of an institution like the Modern has to have a few years to really. . . I don't believe in judging people. You cannot judge a director from day one, except on certain kinds of qualities, like general intelligence, intellectual rigor, personality, charm, and what seems like the ability to manage. Yes, you can be absolutely sure that you're in the hands of a person who really is amazing, and yet I think you must give a director time to. . . [Tape interruption]

SZ: You said that you have to give him time. . .

BJ: Yes. I believe that. . . first of all, it's not that he needs time to have ideas, because he does have ideas, but I think everybody has to have leeway to experiment and fail. I think the one thing one has to hope is that if Glenn tried something, gave it its experimental period and saw that it really wasn't working, that he would have the flexibility to abandon it and rethink it. I'm very close to a lot of curators because I like them, I want to help them, it's my desire in life, and I purposely decided that I wasn't going to get involved for a long, long time in asking what they thought about Glenn. And no one has come to me and complained. I have not heard any kind of bitter complaints. The complaint is that there are too many meetings. It's almost like a family joke that there are so many meetings. I think probably Glenn likes this, it is the

way he likes to run things. My feeling about meetings is that if they're not too long, and if they have a real purpose and everybody knows what they're for and gets in and out of them, then fine. If they're just meetings for the sake of meetings. . . So, I don't know what has come out of all this meeting culture yet. I'm waiting. When I am at a Board meeting and they're reporting on the general exhibition schedule, [I can see that] things have changed radically. There's a lot more balance in the exhibition program. There's a lot more awareness, for example, that [even if] we have a Léger show now, we also have an [Alvar] Aalto show, a [Chuck] Close show, Ellsworth Kelly's drawings, etc., and the films. Look at the Museum! If you went to the Museum last weekend, you would be staggered. Why is it full of people? It's full of people because there are many different things to be seen. Of course, we know that New York is burgeoning with tourists and it's having this marvelous moment. But I don't think that the attendance would be anywhere near as high if [ . . . ] the program were not as balanced.

So I think that there's much more thinking, better planning, and I also think that Glenn is not letting any one curator dominate the proceedings. I think Dick. . . As I said, he had another way of directing which was almost to not direct, to let himself be directed by the forces that were pushing one way or another, either from the Board or the curators, or whatever department. He was very well liked. The staff adored him. Why? Because they got away with bloody murder, for the most part. It created large problems, problems of jealousy and resentment amongst curators, amongst department heads. Problems of unbalance in the program. Look at the way the galleries are architecturally. I know I've mentioned it before. It's odd. It shouldn't be that way. I do believe that Glenn, as we go forward with this project, will have an incredibly strong influence in shaping the future. Personally, I love working for Glenn. I feel that if Glenn rang me up and asked me to do something. . . It is the manner in which he asks, the manner he presents what he needs, it is incredibly inspiring. And this is what a Board needs. A Board needs a director who assumes a kind of leadership. I think that it is very unusual to find a highly cultured person, as Glenn is,

with as keen an intellect, who can read a balance sheet who can do the whole thing. I think he's an extraordinary person and we're immensely lucky to have found him.

I remember being in Berlin. Before he [Glenn Lowry] even took over as Director, he came on the International Council trip to Berlin. And Rob [Robert] Storr was going off the East Berlin to visit a bunch of young artists' studios. I can promise you Dick Oldenburg would never have set foot in an artist's studio because he would have been afraid, "What would this mean?" And Glenn went off and did it. I feel that this is the difference. He is fearless. As I've said before, he has the guts of a downhill skier. I think that this is what I like. He's aggressive without being obnoxious about his aggressivity. He seems to me to have brought people into the Museum. That was another thing I liked. I liked that he wanted to create his own team around him. For instance, the fact that he got Mike [Michael] Margitich. People have come to work for the Museum, like Michael Margitich, whom I adore, and we've not had a Director of Development, which is a really hard role, in my memory, who was as great. They all say, "Well, I wanted to come and work with Glenn". So people who are in the non-glamorous parts of the Museum. . . These are incredibly important. They have to be granted a kind of autonomy and a kind of respect. And they can't do their job well unless they feel that they are part of what the Museum is doing. If they don't know about the collection, about art, they have to be educated or find someone like Mike Margitich, who really is curious and capable of doing all this. I think we're in a pretty golden moment. I think that we've got good Chief Curators. That's another thing: the change of nomenclature from "Director of the Department" to "Chief Curator". That, I think, was very interesting. I liked that. I liked that it was more like the British system, where you have, "Keeper". I love the word keeper. Well, "Curator" is the American equivalent. I like the idea that by making these brilliant, extraordinarily scholarly people "Chief Curators", you are dignifying their work, what they really do, not just giving them a managerial title. That was very clever of Glenn because it cleared the way to make a hierarchy on top of that of all these "Deputy Directors". But that to me was really smart because if you were going to have change the status of people [in]

Development, Public Information, Retail, Publishing, etc., by giving those people the title of Deputy Director, then you were really making sense. To me, it made a great deal of sense. I really hope we find a great General Counsel. Oh God, do I hope so. This to me is really important. I know Dick [Richard] Koch was part of this Oral History [Project]. I think he was a very interesting man. It's an odd job of lawyering. But you realize how important it is to have somebody like this when you get hit with the [Egon] Schiele situation. [Note: in January of 1998 a subpoena was filed against The Museum of Modern Art preventing the return to its lenders in Austria of two Egon Schiele paintings, whose provenance is clouded by Nazi wartime plundering]. I remember once reading a book by Lawrence Kubly, who is a psychiatrist who did great studies on creativity, and in his analysis of creative people, he came up with this theory that lawyers were incredibly creative. And when you think about it, the law is an immensely creative profession, to imagine. Now, there have been a great many lawyers who have been really prominent collectors. And I believe that what I would love to find - and I don't know who's doing the search for this - I really wish we would find a lawyer who, in a strange way, paralleled Glenn in that this person was visually very acute and creative. And I know that young lawyers can go into law firms and make staggering amounts of money. But, oddly enough, I really believe that there is a lawyer out there who really would have an incredibly good time working in the context of the Museum. So I feel that this is a very important search. Really important. And that oddly enough maybe some people should be on the Search Committee who are not just involved with legal issues. But Glenn, I think, is capable of understanding this. I think Liz [Elizabeth] Addison is an example of somebody who Glenn was incredibly sure he wanted to bring. I think that the tendency in New Yorkers [laughing] of people at the Museum, [is that] they just have these preconceived notions of what people should look like, sound like and they were wrong. And that's one thing I really believe, that Glenn is a person who knows what he wants. From my point of view, all these new appointments, we have to give them time. Jim [James] Gundell, I've had several meetings with him and I like him. I know the curators were very wary of Jim Gundell, the design people. . . . The good thing is

Jim Gundell does not pretend to be a curator himself. He's a retailer, he's a really good merchant. You can't let the Design Store be driven by curators because curators are not retailers. He will learn how to do this, Jim Gundell. I have great hope he will do a really good job. So, I think that Glenn looked long and hard and was very careful about his appointments. Boy, one of the best things a director can do is to appoint good people.

SZ: So you're very optimistic?

BJ: I am.

SZ: For this institution you loved so much.

BJ: I'm optimistic. As I said, what I really cared about was that the new director be somebody embarking on the major thrust of his career, and that we didn't get some warmed-over, recycled museum director who was incredibly entrenched in his ways and was not going to be able to look at this place and just say, "O.K. . .", and who has a lot of energy. This job needs huge amounts of energy.

SZ: So, do you have any final thoughts?

BJ: Well I cannot. . . I can predict the future only up to a point. If I have any kind of, let's say, bead on what makes it incredible for a person to be involved with their own time. . . If you said to me, "What is it that you want more than anything?", I always say, "Surprise me." So, I am one of these people who wants to be surprised by the future and I hope I am.

SZ: And you will be. [Laughter]. Thanks Barbara, that's great.

BJ: You're welcome.

**END TAPE 5, SIDE 1**

**END INTERVIEW**