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Oral history interview with Richard Bellamy, 1963

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Transcript

Interview

B: BAKER
RB: RICHARD BELLAMY

B: I'm about to interview several individuals concerning the Hansa Gallery, which formerly existed in New York City and has for some years been closed. The first individual I'm going to speak to about it is Richard Bellamy, now the director of the Green Gallery. Mr. Bellamy was not associated with the very first days of the Hansa, however, so I'm going to read first, two statements about the origins of the Hansa as a general introduction. One of them is adapted from the Art Student League's News of December 1961. In December 1951 quote, ASix unknown artists all quite young held a joint exhibition of their works in a loft studio at 813 Broadway. The artists were Lester Johnson, Wolf Kahn, John Grillo, Felix Pasilis, Jan Muller and Miles Forst. A813 Broadway@, as this joint cooperation venture was called on a woodcut announcement made by Wolf Kahn, was visited by about 300 artists and two art critics, Thomas B. Hess of Art News and Paul Brach of the Arts Digest. The show led to the founding of the best of the downtown cooperative galleries, the Hansa Gallery. 813 Broadway announced a new interest in figurative painting by a group which had drunk deep at the Pirean springs of abstract expressionism.@ In Dody Muller's account of her husband, Jan's life prefacing the catalogue on Jan Muller, prepared by the Guggenheim Museum for the January, February 1962 exhibition of his works, the statement is made, quote, AIn a sense the 813 Broadway exhibition contained the rudiments of the Hansa Gallery, which was to form on East Twelfth Street and which opened in the autumn of 1952. With Jan, such artists as Jean Follett, Barbara Forst, Miles Forst, Wolf Kahn, Allan Kaprow, Felix Pasilis and Richard Sankiewicz were among the founders. For the next six years Jan was to have a show there each year,@ end of quote. Richard, do you have any comments on these two statements, are they incorrect in any respect?

RB:Well, almost everything is incorrect, actually.

B: Well, that=s interesting.

RB:Well, I don't mean about this particular statement that you made, but I'm, you know you have to keep redefining and qualifying. Actually I would make these corrections in the documentation in Dody Muller's account of the forming members of the Hansa Gallery; there were only eight, as I remembered, and so I think probably what we ought to include, the other two names, which I believe are missing, this is from memory, the other two artists that she does not mention who were the founders of the gallery are Jacques Beckwith, who does not now in 1963, have a gallery, and last showed at the Hansa, the other is Jane Wilson who now shows at the Tibor de Nagy gallery and is quite well known.

B: She was a founding member?

RB:Yes, she was indeed, she and her husband, her husband who's John Greun, who was or is a composer, who now I think writes criticism for the Herald Tribune.

B: I've read some, yes.

RB:Yeah, and knows practically nothing about painting, was the program director of the Hansa Gallery.

B: Who was?

RB:John Gruen, who was at that time Jane Wilson's husba-

nd He was called the program director, now this might have been only for a year or two. Perhaps I can, I might as well straighten out this chronology right now. The Hansa, she says, opened in the Autumn of '52, I think that's correct. It might have been actually the winter, it might have been January or February. This is perhaps important because the Tanager Gallery and the Hansa Gallery opened approximately at the same time. The Tanager date of opening will the date as 1951 and the Hansa opened approximately the same time, but I think it moved.

B: 1951?

RB:Yeah, the Tanager Gallery opened in 1951. The Tanager and the Hansa are looked upon as the best of the cooperative galleries, and during the years there must have been twelve or fifteen on 10th Street and the neighborhood streets. At any rate, where was I, oh yeah, well in mentioning John Gruen I think that would I mentioned that to ....

B: I did not know that John Gruen had been associated at all with the Hansa Gallery. That is very interesting to

me because I met him at the Martha Jackson several times when he was on her sales staff.

RB:Well, he wanted a title and the at that point you see, or should I go into this now, at that point the well, let me say this, I did not become associated officially or become associated with the Hansa Gallery until 1955 after they had moved from the 4th Avenue address to 210 Central Park South. I became its director in the fall of 1955. However I had known all of the artists and had seen many of the exhibitions, although I was out of town a good deal. One of the original functions of the gallery was to make available to the artistic community or to anybody who wanted to listen, to speakers on art and one of the them was Clem Greenberg who I heard speak there once on 4th Avenue. That must have been 1953 or '54 perhaps. I don't, I think that perhaps there were even a couple of music concerts. I don't know. The Hansa did not, is intended to be one of the votices that existed at that time. The other was the Club I suppose that was begun on 8th Street by Leo Castelli, DeKooning, etc. I wasn't in on-- I heard a couple of people talk there, not that it's intentions were to be a vortex as it were, but it wanted to use its space for other things, things other than exhibitions of painting. They wanted to have a program, as it were, cultural activities sort of related to the plastic arts and John Gruen was its program director. I don't, I just remember attending Greenberg's lectures because I was there.

B: May I interrupt and ask that though you weren't director, you were a visitor. Can you describe the premises? There was did you attend the 815 Horatio that was actualy the studio of one of the artists wasn't it?

RB:Yes, it was I think Wolf Kahn's studio and perhaps somebody else's studio combined. And bringing up that, I would like to comment on Larry Campbell's statement that you read first.

B: We're assuming that this is Larry Cambell's initial statement from the Art Students League News, anyway he's editor.

RB:It sounds like his writing and certainly the one the premises of the statement in which he says A813 Broadway announced a new interest in figurative painting by a group, which had drunken etcetera, Pirean Spring and well...@, actually of those artists of that time, only Wolf Kahn and Felix Pasilic were using recognizable objects in their paintings. At that time Jan Muller exhibited only abstract work, they were the emosaic abstract paintings, all of which, however, were based on nature. That would have to do with Jan Muller. But they wer eabstract paintings, I mean, they would be nominally recognized as abstract paintings. John Grillo was also abstract. He also was painting in the mosaic style, of which Muller and Grillo were preeminately the masters of during those years.

B: You don=t think any of [inaudable] portrait drawings, such as of late have been exhibited? And is it risky? You see, this peice that I quoted from already by Larry Cambell, concerns that ressurection of an original 813 Broadway show held at the Sobrisky[phon.sp.] Gallery, I think, and I beleiv I went to see it, and either in that show or others, there wer e some of those early heads that Jan Muller did --

RB:That were watercolors or pastels. I don=t remeber those heads. If they wer exhibited, tehy wer a minor part of Muller=s statement at that time.

B: So, you feel that this statement, the implicarion atht Mr. Cambell has given to the origins of this, is reading into something with hindsight, and there was no initial figurative impulse there governing this group?

RB:No.

B: How would you imagine they got together? Simply becasuse they were personally aquainted, or perhaps Hoffman=s students and wanted to show? Do you think that was--

RB:No wait a minute, I was wrong as I see, Lester Johnson was paionting figuratively then -- no wait a minute -- or was he painting figuratively then? I don=t think he was--

B: Well I don=t know his history well, but I don=t think his earliest work was figurative.

RB:No, it definitely was not. At any rate, I would say the possibility in the composition of the Hansa Gallery there was a this how do I want to say, there was this bias toward a direction which you may or may not want to call figurative painting. At least it was I think there was in the group a wanting to get at a bias which would veer from abstract expressionism in which it was true they had steeped. Every member of the Hansa Gallery had studied with Hans Hofmann. Right. Every one of the original members. Now in the 813 group founding members were Miles Forst, Jan Muller, and Felix Pasilis and Wolf Kahn of the Hansa Gallery. Grillo was never of member of the Hansa Gallery nor was Lester Johnson, although Lester Johnson was given an invited exhibition in 1953 perhaps or 1954. The, I suppose we ought to talk about how and why the Hansa Gallery was formed. Well ....

B: Yes, if you have clear second hand information about this, but if you feel on shaky grounds about that early part, I can presume that we can get that part from ....

RB:From Stankiewiez of course.

RB:Somebody else who was in on that period, but anything you want to say, go ahead on that. I especially want to get you own direct participation. I think it's helpful though if we can get this early part fairly clear. Let me ask you as an individual who went to those early shows, to what extent were you personally knowledgeable about contemporary art? You were not yourself an artist.

RB:No.

B: You were friends however with a number of these people and you found this group stimulating and interesting as a spectator?

RB:Right.

B: So looking back then.

RB:They gave me my apprenticeship.

B: As people or as artists?

RB:Yes, well as people and artists.

B: I just wanted to resurrect your own impressions there as a spectator, non-professional, upon those early shows. What did you remember of them?

RB:Well, I missed quite a few of the exhibitions on 4th Avenue. I was in and out of town, I wasn't here all that time. I can say this that ....

B: Well, let me interrupt.

RB:Yeah, okay, interrupt.

B: I'm sorry, I shouldn't interrupt you when you're thinking, I was thinking towards the end of the fifties, well perhaps in the beginnings of the sixties some of the galleries founded in the 10th Street area seemed to have especially to reviewers like John Canaday of the Times to be a completely lacking in standards, to be such gatherings of amateur trash that they hardly justify their existence. Now I would like to clarify your early impressions of those early shows you saw, against the possibility that Canaday's later attitude might be correct for the later period, that is, the 10th Street of 1961, let's say, as compared with the 10th Street of 1962, I mean by 1961 quite clearly there were an immense number of uptown galleries that had not existed at the time the group created the Hansa Gallery, the picture had changed quite a bit. Now have you any observation about this, or am I wrong?

RB:No, you're right. One hates to alight oneself with a statement by Canaday, just put it that he noted in the columns of the Times what he felt would be the limpness and irrelevance of work on 10th Street during this past couple of years. I believe that it is true, however I would look at it from a different standpoint from Canaday and as a matter of fact that had been noted, the observation that 10th Street lacked a vitality had been noted several years before, you know, by a great number of people, including Clem Greenberg, I think in print he even coined the term Tenth Street Painting as a deneogatory term which would be that it was kind of old hat, because Clem Greenberg's stand of course is that abstract expressionism really lost it's pertinence after the early fifties. But you see in the years that we're talking about, from well, let's say 1952 as before '48, I suppose in a way sort of begins for me because that's when I first saw black and white productions of deKooning in the Partisan Review and I think at that time deKooning had not even had a one man show, I think he was ....

B: It was in '48 I think.

RB:Yeah, those were the black and white [inaudable] paintings. I was in Provincetown in 1948 and came to New York for the first time in 1949. At any rate, at that time artists simply could not show their work on 57th Street and 57th Street was where the galleries were and there weren=t enough galleries and there were no galleries interested in showing that work, no only, well, I mean aside from Charles Egan and Betty Parsons, and Kootz, there was no possibility. A very superior artist, that is, at that time what we would call an avant-garde artist, people making significant contributions, you know even of their age, their kind of maturity for an artist who had just graduated from or who had just left the Hofmann school, then were there in their late twenties or perhaps early thirties and there were a great many ideas. There was a great stimulation in the whole art scene quotes below 14th Street no place for artists to show. The Hansa Gallery was made of ex- Hofmann students, they had known each other. I think they recognized excellences in one another's work. They however formed no point of view at all. I believe that there certainly were artists in the original Hansa group who actively disliked the works of the others but who recognized a certain independence and a certain competence and they wanted to get a

gallery started because they wanted to show their own work, they also wanted to show works of anybody they could who wanted to show in their gallery in group shows who interested them, who properly reflected what they thought was significant work being done. I can also just insert this, since Hans Hofmann was the mentor of these artists they took care never to take advantage of that relationship with him. That is, never to ask him to show in group shows with them and other artists of Hofmann's generation who could be persuaded to do so. They wanted to begin on their own as it were.

B: May I interject here, what has been suggested to my mind by someone who said this group, I think it's fairly clear, was a talented group to whom opportunities to show uptown were very limited compared to what they became ten years later. Isn't that true?

RB:Yes.

B: For young men of that generation, in age I mean, an artist, say, of 24 who had done extremely well at the Hofmann school in 1951, as you pointed out, would have almost no opportunity to show uptown. He might however if he was exceptionally talented, the record I think indicates that some few of the very young people were taken on by 1960, '61 by uptown galleries, therefore I'm just trying to sew up this fact that I think is clear that a Tenth Street cooperative at the time this organization came into being was needed more than some of the later cooperatives of say 1960 and '61 were needed. I mean less talented artists formed later cooperatives, artists who were not good enough to get into uptown galleries. Is that justified to say? I'm trying to give the Hansa, also I wanted, one other thing to point out, that that generation of Hofmann students was the great post war G.I. group of students who had the stimulus of the older men among them and the whole general excitement, as I understand it, of the immediate post-war hero. I think even at the Art Students League, I've heard, in those first few years after World War II had ended there was much more vitality and excitement in the artistic exchange between teachers and students. And among students themselves, so this would be the generation coming out of that educations experience.

RB:That's correct, yeah, it's hard to say. You had studied with Hans Hofmann yourself you would sort of call it much more of an educational experience.

B: Well, it was a very great experience. By that time of course, by 1957 and '58 was ten years later than the great period that I'm speaking of.

RB:Well, let's see, it has occurred to me to say something else about the aims of the Hansa Gallery. We were speaking about it as an institution. I believe it was told to me by several of the people as I say, I wasn't in on the inception of it, although I knew the artists at that time, that the forming of the Gallery was meant to be merely provisional, merely a place for them to exhibit, for other artists to see, for other dealers to see and for other critics to see. Now the fact of the matter was it was probably only artists that saw the shows, at least in the first four or five years of its existence. But it was meant to be provisional until they could acquire an uptown dealer to handle their works. As the Hansa Gallery continued into the late fifties the artists had, oh how can I say, had developed a great deal of allegiance to this gallery now.

B: Esprit de corps.

RB:Esprit de Corps, perhaps, yeah also still being young in a way they felt that it was as it was an idealistic kind of bastion. They wanted to, they wanted to maintain it's excellence and to further it although they knew exactly nothing about the proper operation of the commercial gallery, and for them to exist they had to exist on a commercial basis when the gallery ceased operation in 1959, probably May of 1959, there were two reasons, lack of money. We will speak about what defines a cooperative gallery, one of the most appalling aspects of it is that the artists supported it financially out of monthly dues, to pay rents, advertisements, and the director's salary if any. Well it was lack of money, also the increasing opportunities for number of artists in the gallery to show at very good, what we call commercial galleries, and because it seemed to a cooperative gallery itself, seemed to lack pertinence in 1959, had begun to lack pertinence even a couple of years before that.

B: Let's define right now what a cooperative gallery is, well, you've probably said a good deal of it. Of course you now are director of the Green Gallery, which is not a cooperative, so you have, say, an increased knowledge of other kinds of galleries than you would have had first had when you were running, managing, you say you were called the director of the Hansa?

RB:Yeah.

B: That was your title. And you would have, but you said that John Gruen was called the program director?

RB:He had this title. I don't know for how long, it was his responsibility to do let's say the arrangements, I'm sure that Clement Greenberg was paid fifty dollars, or perhaps a hundred dollars to speak. The gallery lost money, I was there, I think about 25 people were there, but it was their purpose to contribute in quotes whatever they

could, whatever they could in this particular cultural activity, known as the plastic arts.

B: Well, I raised this question of your defining the cooperative gallery, we'd better stick to that at the moment.

RB:The cooperative gallery?

B: Specifically this one.

RB:Let me think for a minute, the cooperative gallery means that there has been, I don't know, there must be or have been at least fifteen, perhaps more that began after 1952 and still do indeed exist on 10th Street, although in a very ghostly state of existence now.

B: Do you know, I don't myself, whether prior to World War II there were many cooperative galleries? Was the Tanager actually the first or ....

RB:The Tanager I think was the first in 1951.

B: Then it was the first in New York.

RB:Yeah, I believe that it was open just about the same time perhaps that this 813 exhibition opened.

B: From what you tell me, it doesn't really seem as if the founders of the Hansa planned to have a formal gallery, such as it later developed into. It was more a kind of club in a sense too, with these lectures and other things as well as, they didn't think of it as a sales vehicle primarily.

RB:I don't think they even knew what a sales vehicle was, but yes, I think that yes, a sales vehicle in the sense they wanted, they felt that they were artists who were ready, who's works were ready to be seen by the public. They wanted their work to reach the largest public that they could. There was no sense of, well as I say, they wanted, it was a provisional, it was a provisional institution so that they could move on, to show their works, they were not chosen to move on, that came somewhat later and so they wanted to enlarge the activities of the gallery as much as they could. The space was quite good, the rent was pretty cheap and naturally they wanted to attract attention to themselves and the gallery. They put a lot of energy, thought, and passion into it.

B: We may say at this time, the Whitney Museum was still downtown too, wasn't it? SO that perhaps I wonder as you talk about this, to what extent the general art buying public, as distinct from artists, ever got to the early shows of the Hansa.

RB:I would say, practically none. The only museum participation well, let's say, I believe that James Johnson Sweeney went to the Hansa gallery downtown one time because Miles Forst and Jean Follett were included in Mr. Sweeney's exhibition. Perhaps you remember, what was it called and when was it, about 1954?

B: I don't know what show you mean. He had two, one of contemporary younger European and one of contemporary younger American. Well would he have known their work prior to seeing it from the Hansa?

RB:Well, I think he walked into the Gallery and liked some things and picked them. The Whitney Museum showed none of these artists. I think probably, I think it was, let's see, I think Richard Stankiewicz was invited to the Whitney Annual in 1956, at least the 1956 exhibition for the first time Mr. John I.H. Baur came to the Gallery, I spoke with him, picked a work. I doubt that he had ever been to the downtown Hansa in other words, the gallery had been in operation for four years before any of the artists were given any kind of official sanction. Of course, the question was the work that good at the time, yeah it was.

B: But we didn't quite show up, I suppose we'd better do it, this distinction of, we make between the kind of gallery you now operate, which I presume keeps financed and is a corporation or else it's owned by somebody.

RB:An international combine of industrialists, yes.

B: Well, we all know the Green Gallery at the moment, historically I know what it will become or is, but I do want to just finish with the cooperative. These individuals had to pay out of their own pockets do you know how much they paid, they had to pay monthly?

RB:Yeah, there were monthly dues assessed. It was run on a kind of parliamentary system. There was a chairman, I believe he was called a chairman, a secretary to take the minutes of the meeting, a treasurer, a vastly important position and dues were assessed monthly. Had to pay for the rent and for the electricity and for the telephone and for miscellaneous expenses. How the artists had one man shows paid all of their expenses that is, announcements, advertising, etc. In part of the activities of each monthly meeting would be for everybody to help with the mailing to stuff the envelopes, seal them and to stamp them and mail them out. Decisions were made as when the artists would show, who formed a group, sort of dates were given and artists

were expected to show on those dates. There was the selection of new artists which they tried to incorporate into the gallery. Artists would bring works to the gallery and there was a vote, a majority vote would either accept an applicant or deny him.

B: May I, now the difference presumably here I think with the Green Gallery, you as director if you have a financial backer, perhaps he does or the two together, but this would be one of the main functions of the director as I imagine in a privately owned or corporate gallery.

RB:Yes, he chooses the artists, he chooses the artists to show, when to show, also group shows. Now Hansa was a committee action in other words, democratic.

B: Is that right?

RB:Yes, that's a wild distinction, since it was impossible even for the artists to sell their own work it wasn't a question in other words of a gallery as a business attempts to make money, so therefore the assumption is that the artists that they would choose to show would be chosen on their merits as artists as seen by the members of the Hansa Gallery without any advantage reasonings. They wanted more members, I believe also it reduced dues, when it came to that after a while in 1958 and 1959 when we moved uptown, when the gallery moved up town that is, the rent was a hundred and fifty dollars.

B: A month?

RB:Yes, a month. Perhaps downtown it something like seventy-five or sixty, I don't know what. And of course things had gotten more expensive generally. They had to pay me, for instance. I mean I forget my salary actually, I think it was about ten dollars a week, I'm not sure, but that amounted to forty dollars a month, now I was also given as director a 25 percent commission of sales, if a sale was made 25 percent went to me or the director during two years I shared the directorial activities with another man named Ivan Karp, perhaps go into that later. Before I came there there was a succession of young, tall, beautiful girls who have been known throughout the history of time as the mistresses of the artists who sort of sat in the gallery. I don't know whether they had the title of director or no, perhaps so.

B: Yes, I wanted to, I wanted to clarify this in my mind and for the record. Before you took over which I take back to have been a full time week that you devoted to be present, later sharing with Ivan Karp, but you were present as the sales man in the gallery. But prior to this, in the period of John Gruen and afterwards there were, there was no fixed person in charge of sales who always sat, would it be shifting as you say these beautiful girls, the girl friends of the artists, people like that.

RB:Yeah, or friends, at one point there was a girl named Antina Lanshell who I think was probably there for at least a year and who attempted to carry on the activities of what a director or an owner of a gallery might do, that is, the addressing of letters along with sending photographs to collectors and to museum officials to try to draw attention to the gallery and its artists. The artists knew nothing about how to do this, they knew that it was done.

B: How did pricing take place for your time, I presume maybe we're getting ahead somewhat, but, when you got there presumably you and the artists may have jointly agreed and such and such a painting would be four hundred dollars. Prior to your being there did the artists or did the committee as a whole price?

RB:No, the artists priced their own works.

B: Even after you were there?

RB:Yeah, they might have asked my advice, I think some of them did, yes, yes, that's true, you see, my ....

B: You had a financial stake, you were getting 25 percent, I mean you had to decide whether it was worth it to charge eight hundred and not sell it or charge five hundred.

RB:I was so loose then, Dick if you had come into the gallery and offered, you know seventy-five dollars for something that was priced eighteen hundred you probably .....

B: What an enormous opportunity now.

RB:But as I remember the first exhibitions of Richard Stankiewicz and Jean Follett their price structures began at ten thousand dollars, I think I mentioned this to you before. Well, at any rate, they become more realistic, at least Richard did later on, though he's now approaching that level again, I understand. The girls who sat for the gallery, they were called sitters, I think Anita Manshell took on a lot of the responsibility that the director should it seemed.

B: Could you spell that.

RB:Manshell, she is since married and has another name, I think she herself even purchased a couple of works of the artists. At any rate, in 1955 when the gallery moved to 210 Central Park South and I was asked to become its director and I did. It actually operated there for perhaps a season or half season before I came.

B: Uptown?

RB:Uptown before I came. At any rate before what, to define my responsibilities, the girls who were the directors or more properly the sitters would simply keep the gallery open and quote prices if any were to be asked and answered the telephone, etc. They were given no part in the decision making of the body of the artists, when I became director I was given a vote.

B: As if you were an artist?

RB:Just as if I were an artist and a member of the

gallery, although I paid no dues. But I was given a vote and as my, you know, as my experience increased in running the gallery, I believe the artists as individuals depended upon me for advice, as we just suggested about pricing, etc. But you know, we were all pretty totally ignorant about ....

B: May I ask you here Richard, at the time you took this job, what did you have to recommend you by way of experience? You had an interest and a personal acquaintance with the artists, but you never had worked in a gallery.

RB:No, and I had no ambitions to.

B: You did this. You told me once years ago, when the Hansa was operating that you did not consider yourself an art dealer, you sense I presume do.

RB:Yes, I was always trying to make some kind of, as I can remember probably in my point of view, I was probably trying to disassociate myself from the nasty business end of art and trying to assert my dis-interested idealistic preoccupation with it.

B: Well, let's find out for a moment how you happened to be offered this job. We might just have a brief, auto-biographical statement who you are, which is a fascinating subject actually. I hate to have it brief. But you came to New York, you've already said, in 1949, did you say?

RB:Well, I first came sort of around and yes, I went to Provincetown.

B: Before you came to New York?

RB:Yeah, and I met a number of artists there and I saw reproductions, actually a very important exhibit took place in the summer of 1949 in Provincetown. I don't know who arranged it, I can't even quite remember the story, but in the summer of 1949, there was a very large exhibit, let's say fifty artists had a show in Provincetown. The sitter at that gallery, and it also had a number, a number on commercial street, was an author. His name is Cecil Hemly, he's a poet and he's just finished a nove.

B: Hemory?

RB:Cecil Hemley. He's a describable person I believe and probably a nice minor poet. But at any rate he was sitting there and I heard him make comments about certain, well, okay, then I'll come later and say who was there, represented there was practically everybody on the avant garde New York scene except deKooning who did not submit a picture. Pollock was there with a very great picture, I remember it very well, I think the title was number 17, Hofmann, Baziotes, not sure whether David Smith had a painting there or not, Tworkov, Fritz Bultman, Marca Relli, you know, etc. Perhaps Rothko, I'm not sure, I think so and Stamos. I remember this poet, Cecil Hemley, saying to somebody in talking about the pictures, well you know, I just don't see how art can do without the lyrical. Now look at this beautiful tiny little painting of Stamos and look at that Pollock, now how can you get away with something like that? I do remember this and I remember some other statements he made, but it's not a Cecil Hemley day. But it was a very important exhibition. I think probably important because I don't think that there was any group exhibition of its size that had ever been assembled before, except I guess the Eighth Street show, which was, when was the Eighth Street show before? Well it was just about the same time, probably a little bit later, maybe. At any rate, what was I saying, what was I talking about?

B: Well, this made a great impression about you

personally.

RB:Oh, yeah. Well, okay, so then I came to New York and I ....

B: Well, if I may imagine, of course I didn't myself know any avant-garde painting at this date, you say it was the summer of '49 that would have been a very early time. A lot of the younger men I imagine who constituted the Hansa Gallery would have been possibly summer students in Provincetown?

RB:At that time, yes.

B: They would have seen this too, and this is where you learned about these people mostly. So then you came to New York already knowing more than most Americans about the newest avant-garde painting. You'd seen works by many recognized as sort of the New York School work.

RB:More or less.

B: I mean very much in advance of most people, and you yourself at that time could you say you were really responsive to abstract paintings, abstract expressionism?

RB:I could say that I was, but if we go into that I think that really would be a different thing.

B: No, no you can say you were, then you were, so you were sympathetic to this new developing movement and naturally when you came here you were social with people. You might just put in you had come to New York from Ohio.

RB:Yeah.

B: If I'm not mistaken, you were born in what?

RB:Cincinnati.

B: Cincinnati, and I will ask you to make the statement about your ancestors because I think it was interesting.

RB:Well my mother was Chinese and my father Kentuckian and I came to Provincetown after being expelled from several institutions of learning, higher institutions of learning in the the, and so, okay, so I came to New York about 1949, the winter of 1949. During the winters of '51, '52,'53 I think I spent one winter back in Cincinnati. I worked out of town one of those years. I was not, I wouldn't say, I did not attend therefore two important seasons of the Hansa Gallery downtown at all, however I did know most of the work of the artists from their studios and I can remember several exhibitions distinctly I did see.

B: Do you know who it was among them that suggested you for employment in the gallery?

RB:Yes, it was probably Miles Forst who was and is my closest friend. Evidently Anita Manshell had been in the operation at the gallery, you know, held its reins for a year or so and I forget, oh at any rate they needed somebody to run it and I was asked to do so and it took me several months to decide for it. One I had a family to support, I didn't see how I could do that. Well how I managed was simply to be at the gallery five days a week and I'd take other jobs on the weekend or at night. Which and, the other jobs were simply painting houses, house painting and I got by that way somehow.

B: Well, your pay certainly, even then when the cost of living was somewhat lower would have been very minimal.

RB:It was very minimal, yeah.

B: May I ask what age you were when you took over this directorship? You were about the same age as some of the, up most artists, or what age were you, do you think?

RB:Well, let me see now. I'm now 35 and it's 1963, therefore in 1955 I would have been, oh, let's see, I'm 35 and 1955, that's eight minus 35 is 27 or 8.

B: You were in your twenties anyway, middle twenties or upper twenties.

RB:Well, I think at this point, let's say Stankiewicz is a couple of years older than I am.

B: He was born in 1922, as I recall.

RB:Then he's five years older than I am.

B: And Jan Muller at the time of his death was 35 so he was older than you.

RB:Right.

B: And is Miles Forst your age?

RB:Miles Forst is a couple of years older than I am, yes they were all a bit younger.

B: So you were a bit younger than most of these artists, I would think. But still they were all pretty close to their early thirties one way or another, either being in their twenties. So it was a young group. This edifice where you worked, since you came, well, we might as well say where it was, and say something about the building. Because all the time you were with the Hansa Gallery it was in the same premises.

RB:Yeah, it was a very nice address, 210 Central Park South, and it was a sort of five floor apartment building and the gallery occupied the premises on the one floor up, that is, a studio. There was a basement of course, it was a rather small gallery, but at that time it seemed very spiffy I'm sure to everybody.

B: Who had been, do you know, what group had found it? I mean was it Stankiewicz or Miles Forst or Jean Follett?

RB:The committee was, I don't know who found the location, it was probably Miles or Richard who sort of did most of the work.

B: Well, I wanted to ask you, who provided the real leadership in the gallery in your opinion at this time when you came in, was there any outstanding artists in terms of leadership? I mean ....

RB:Yeah, I think mainly, I want to get some chronology correct at the time that I began to work for the Hansa Gallery, Wolf Kahn was in Mexico and he was deciding to leave the gallery. So I was not present when Wolf Kahn was a member. I think that it could be pretty generally stated that the most respected as far as leadership, well, let's see, how can I say it, we have to define leadership, I would say.

B: Something you did.

RB:Most of the responsibility evolved on Richard

Stankiewicz I would say.

B: He put the most energy into actual matters relating to the management, that' what I'm thinking of.

RB:I would say that Richard was certainly the most

efficiently organized person there, mentally and there were .... I want to say that there were hugely divisive opinions amongst the group. But I would say generally that a good deal of the responsibility evolved upon Richard Stankiewicz and upon Miles Forst also. Richard was certainly the best chairman in that he kept things in order. Miles Forst was always a disruptive influence. But this worked very well, actually, and of course Jan Muller was, there I suppose we could call it now a mystic, it is after the fact, but I believe that Jan Muller was respected in a very deeply personal sense by everybody. Jan was always the most violent in his, in taking of stands. Let's say for or against an artist who was to be voted in or out of the group perhaps.

B: Jan would not have enjoyed very good physical health very much of his time, so in some respects I don't think, I don't know, but I would think he was less able to devote time to the business.

RB:He was never very vigorous. There was not much business side, in other words, what the responsibilities involved would be the treasurer had to collect dues, now when we speak about dues, to artists at that time, during the late years of the Hansa, '58 and '59, I remember our dues reached an incredible sum, something like thirty dollars a month. Now this was a great deal for artists at that time.

B: A dollar a day.

RB:And even, you know, the eight, ten or twelve dollar and fifteen dollar dues was a huge sum to artists, they made no money.

B: At this time when you took over, can you go over in your mind what sources of income these people had as individuals? That is to say, I know Richard Stankiewicz was earning money, probably as an engineer and draftsman, not as a sculptor. Now how did the others manage it? None of them, I think I can presume, were earning through the sale of his fine art enough to live on. So could you rehearse what some of them did at that time?

RB:Oh, Miles Forst worked as a, for a frame maker as a carpenter. Jacques Beckwith was a carpenter, and by the

way Jacques Beckwith was also anything that had to be done with the gallery physically. It was usually Jacques who did it because he was a carpenter, and Miles also. A wife supported one of the artists. Jan Muller lived on practically nothing, I think his rent was twenty dollars a month and he would sell something every once in a while. I don't believe that Jan ever held a job but it was certainly a bare existence.

B: Was he helped by his family at all?

RB:No.

B: Of course Jan was an immigrant to this country, was brought by his parents. He wasn't helped by them?

RB:No, so it was a question of odd jobs, or I think Richard, you know, held the most substantial job as far as earning capacity and ....

B: But I don't think his job was a regular sort of nine to five job. He was a freelance. So none of them, in other words, were really sort of full time stock brokers or elevator operators.

RB:No artists have really, most artists pretty generally have a distinction to hold a steady job, I mean they had to have time to paint. So they probably, the ideas was to get a job to make some money and then paint as long as one could before one had to go back to earn some more money.

B: I had read that Jane Wilson was a fashion model.

RB:Oh yes, Jane Wilson was a fashion model.

B: And Jean Follett, I think somebody said ....

RB:She was a mechanical draftsman. She did hold a nine to five jot for a good bit of the time.

B: Oh, she did. So this was generally what that group felt, once you had got there, we spoke about this a bit earlier, this degree to which the group had a common point of view. By the time you had came in in 1955 for instance, I think probably Jan Muller had evolved to a figurative painter.

RB:Oh yes.

B: And was there by then a common point of view, would you think? I mean did you think of it in terms of working for a group of individuals of talent or did you feel any common sort of cause artistically or point of view artistically, that they especially held?

RB:I think, I think it is correct to say that they were a group of individual artists, there was no, there was no point of view, certainly no programmatic view point intended or expressed by them as a group. It's true that not members was what we now call an action painter or an abstract expressionist, closest to that would have been Miles Forst at a certain point. He even began to evolve figuratively after a while. Now there were of course, during these years a number of people who dropped out of the gallery, a number of people who were taken on, it's composition changed continually. However the basic, the nucleus did remain until the end so to speak. I think, well, no, actually Richard Stankiewicz left the Hansa Gallery during its last year of operation. He went to the Stable Gallery in 1958. At any rate, I think that to read in, I mean I think that it is correct to say however that this was a generation of artists who felt, not out of programmatic intention, but who felt that they had to discover another mode of working that that which had been mastered by Hofmann, deKooning, Kline and Rothko. So in that group we can call it, you know, it's a post-abstract expressionist group. I mean there are still young artists today who are painting today abstract expressionist pictures, I mean there are a lot of them, but its very, there's a French word for it, it's kind of unbelievable. These artists were very, very strong artistic personalities on their own.

B: Well, could we put it this way, I think it's true from my own feeling of, say, the best of them were sufficiently strong individual talents to be working in no sense derivitively of a fashionable trend and therefor they slightly stood out against a fashionable trend in some respect, the fashionable trend being action painting and abstraction now.

RB:We speak of a fashionable trend now after the fact. In the early fifties it wasn't a fashion or trend, it was as it were it was these you know, we certainly don't think they didn't think of it as a fashionable trend at that time, it was .....

B: No, but the word is very misleading. I shouldn't have used it, because certainly in 1956, '57, I would think abstract expressionism had not been accepted by a great percentage even of artistic people. Nevertheless what I meant when I said fashion was, the leadership of the avant garde was doing this sort of thing and the second generation, the younger men of weaker talents would be logically swept along in following what they saw done

by the men they respected, whereas these individuals like Stankiewicz and Jan Juller felt, as you put it, an urge to do something more independently and they didn't really oppose so much these other men, but they were trying to be themselves more fully than some other people who began to show in other galleries. By the end, by say '57 and '58 there were lots of exhibitions of second-rate abstract painting of which your gallery had perhaps fewer, shall we say, of this kind of fashionable I know fashionable's a bad word.

RB:Yeah, I understand, I think what you might say, there was, it was kind of Hansa Gallery was formed of kind of a pretty odd, hybrid lot of artists. I mean, no gallery today or then, I mean could possibly hold them together as a unit, I mean not even speaking of trying to impose any kind of aesthetic upon them which would let's say tie them together, they couldn't be in the same gallery. It would be completely idiotic, senseless, you know, it was a part of it's strength and of course part of it's weakness let's say as a gallery, as a financial gallery. On couldn't, I mean you didn't go that gallery to look for any certain kind of painting or any certain kind of sculpture.

B: May I say something here, I do think that Richard Stankiewicz's sculpture tended during the period from '56 to '60 to become more abstract than when I first saw it, in the beginning it was more related to figures or to birds or to subject matter more directly observant of what his source in the earlier shows, so he did as a person tend somewhat towards abstraction in his work. One other person I want to speak of who may, I don't know when Myron Stout came into the gallery, but his of course, he had a show involving drawings of trees in a sensitive possibly around say 19th century plus a kind of abstraction is black and whites, these hard edge black and whites were certainly non-deKooning, non-action painting. I don't know what others you might have shown at that time who were abstract, but there were these tendencies and there were, none of them were quite what I mean by this derivative, following the leader kind of abstract painting.

RB:Yes, that's right. I think that you might say that the Hansa Gallery, well, I'm trying to rephrase it, it was kind of a loose grouping of artists with kind of eccentric insights, oh, that isn't right either. While we were talking it just occurred to me that, I mean I thought of a couple of exhibitions were held, guest exhibitions and the kind of work these artists did that were invited to show, which brings us back again to the Raison Ketre of the Hansa Gallery and how it would differ from a commercial gallery collection of what to show and who to show. Supposedly as I say, the artists selected to exhibit there and artists each month would bring paintings into the gallery and they were voted on as I say by the members, there were other artists who did not belong to the Hansa Gallery with whom most of the, the majority of the members felt a great deal in common and who were always sought to join the gallery to become members.

B: You mean Al Leslie.

RB:Well, I think Al was, although Leslie did show at the Tibor de Nagy gallery, but he did have a guest exhibition for Hansa, which I'll bring up in a moment. I'm thinking of artists such as John Grillo and Lester Johnson, two specifically, Lester Johnson was given a guest exhibition at the Hansa and Grillo showed many times in group shows. At that time I believe Grillo was a bit older than the others, he thought of himself, well, I think possibly he had you know, in more professional terms, he was waiting for an uptown gallery. There was also the question of other artists who sort of didn't want to join the Hansa who had this original esprit as you say, they did it and they were very, they wanted to stand by their accomplishment of making an art gallery composed of artists and run by artists and directed by artists. They were very proud of this, the other artists who they might, whom they wanted to join, did have the, probably didn't because they were always waiting. So there was another gallery who might show them, so that they wouldn't have to pay their own expenses, so that they wouldn't have to pay these dues each month. Well, a number of artists were, as I say, nevertheless a number of artists of high excellence were chosen and taken in after the original formation of the gallery.

B: I was going to observe that there would be rather little inducement from a financial point of view for an artist to go into this gallery, he had initially the expense of membership and I imagine that you could not show artists a good sales record, so that join us and you'll make a lot of money, you couldn't every say that to them. But how much, what was the situation of an artist like Lester Johnson who was given a one man show as a guest artist, what financial obligations did he have to ....

RB:I think perhaps he was probably asked to pay for the expenses of the show, that is ....

B: No rent?

RB:No, no, he was probably asked to pay for his

announcements and he had an advertisement which he wished to take and this we all ....

B: This exactly what the members had to pay, plus their dues, I should think a non-member would somehow be penalized to a certain extent by not being a member, in financial terms.

RB:Well, then that would be, you know like extracting money for rent which is, which is how, you know if

anybody wanted to show, there were many uptown galleries and galleries still do sort of charge for the, with various charges among them being the rent. But the idea of this gallery was not that. They wanted to show the work that they thought was worthy of being shown if nobody else would show it and there were very few other outlets.

B: So if an artist was considered by the committee to be a good artist and was invited to show, he could show there without any thing but his expenses.

RB:Yes, if there was a spot open in the calendar in the exhibition calendar, and perhaps it was, and they didn't not want or they had just had a group show and they wanted to a one man show and perhaps I'm assuming the artist would be approached and say would you like to have a show and he would say, yeah, but I ain't got no money. And he'd say, well, you know if you really want to show, you know, you will have to pay your own expenses, that's not for rent. You know, that's how things worked. And exhibition we had a 1935, perhaps it was early '56 we gave a three man show to Alfred Leslie, who had then at that time already had three one man shows with the Tibor de Nagy Gallery, but he had left the Tibor de Nagy Gallery for a year or two, another artist named Robert Beacham, oh, it's spelled Beaushamp, who by the way is another of these artists that the majority of the members of the Hansa felt always close to, that is they ....

B: He would have been allowed to be a member.

RB:Yeah, they sought him I think as a member but I haven't got the money to keep paying the dues each month. Well, of course very few of the artists did too, but it was the idea, as I said before, that they made it and they were going to stick with it and they were going to try to make it work as well as they could, and it was a great burden for them to pay their monthly dues. At any rate, so the third was an artist named Paul Dieu, a French artist who'd been here a couple of years and nobody's ever heard of him since. The show was reviewed by Parker Tyler. Alfred Leslie showed two very large paintings, among the best paintings of his career, one of which is now in the Kunsthalle I think Basel, the other the Longview Foundation bought.

B: I think I saw the show, I'm quite sure I did.

RB:Did you and Beauchamp was beginning to develop a style which he is known for now which is a kind of figurative fantasy style of painting. Beauchamp also was abstract at one point during the Hofmann school. He also was a Hoffman student. Leslie was not however. But there was the attempt to find, of course, new artists if one could that is, to make a discovery perhaps. But it was pretty difficult.

B: Well, let's say one of his testimony a member artist with him however it occurs to me to ask you what during the period of your management there and association, what outside shows are you proudest of? This one just described, do you think it was the outstanding show? Not by members but the gallery.

RB:Oh I would say certainly. Actually we did not give to, after I came to the gallery there were not ....

B: Were there any guests exhibitions given?

RB:Yes, there was a guest exhibition given to Alice Trumble Mason or should I say something about that?

B: Yeah.

RB:Yeah, I think so because that was a proper function of the Gallery.

B: What I asked you, I didn't know that there was so few, I was asking which the outstanding ones were. However do you remember once to the gallery when you were running it and there was a show of photography and you and saw that there was an empty space in the calendar and that for some reason or another and I was thinking that there might have been a different quality and that it might have been sit with exhibitions of outstanding merit as you do in your personal opinion that you remember that were not from the regular membership. Well ....

RB:Well, that, let's see if I can make any

generalizations about it. The show of photography that you mention was that Brasszi show. The show as given I remember because there was an open spot. I think that we didn't want to have a group show and there was no other artists that the members knew of who wasn't a member who wanted to have a show at this time, and John Gruen was working for some kind of photographic agency and they wanted to give Brassai the show. And there was this that it would be framed nicely and that the agency would provide either champagne or vermouth for the opening and there was some sort of idea, I don't know, that maybe we might get some people in with money to see Brassai, he does have a sort of name. But he would become famous and that maybe this agency that John Gruen worked from might, you know, it was that kind of naive thing.

B: It was a surrender to commercialization?

RB:You know, there were very funny nods in that direction things being misdirected and it was our obeisance toward commercialism were kind of sardonically or humorously posed and affected.

B: I have a question to ask you but somehow it seems logical in this connection, where were the people who found the Hansa, supporters and not from the beginning, we spoke of them at the very early age, but the ones during the several years when the gallery was conducted by you. What critics, collectors and museum people were most responsive? Were there any outstanding, I know that you had one or two collectors that came and bought quite a bit? And can you think of some of the people who really did become your public?

RB:Well, I think that well, let's see Dick, collectors were always an accident, I mean, whenever you're wandering lonely at the gallery that magnificent day when you bought this Stankiewicz. I just about fell off from where I was standing actually when our deal was closed, I phoned, well, at any rate let me say that certainly there was always anomalous, nobody knew why it happened or how. Of course the idea was to get collectors but how do you get collectors?

B: But you did have one collector who bought all the time and in a limousine.

RB:Hans Richter. He was a patron of Jan Muller's and Wolf Kahn and he bought a couple of paintings by some of the other artists, yes he was, many Pasilisos, a couple of paintings by Miles Forst, a couple of George Segal's, who later became a member of the Gallery.

B: Well it's such a person like this and there are others who played a large role.

RB:Hans Richter's role, I would like to keep track of that, let's see, you're, who was the publice, who became the publice of the Hansa Gallery?

B: Well, we know you started.

RB:Artists, only artists practically. Then after the gallery moved to 210 Central Park South it was still practically only artists and then once in a while a collector would kind of seep in from nowhere. I can say this, that Tom Hess of Art News was a supporter of the gallery. There's no doubt about it in that being editor of Art News he would mention names of individual artists and in articles he would write he would mention the gallery a number of times. He gave a rather thorough documentation of the Hansa Gallery in an Art News annual of about 1955 or 56, the Art News Annual in which he wrote an article called "Twenty-one Younger American Artists" and he mentioned 813 Broadway exhibition in it. He always, it seemed to me, pretty well saw to it when a show was reviewed that it was placed in a good place in the magazine because he knew that if no collectors went to it he wanted and he thought that the work being done there was important and that what the gallery was trying to do was important and I would say that he was a supporter in that way. In the way that he could be.

B: Meyer Schapiro, I seem to think of as a person who you all knew who came there occasionally.

RB:Yes Meyer Schapiro did. He was, I didn't meet him until about 1956. I think that was true of Hans Richter I think who introduced actually Meyer Schapiro to the work of Jan Muller which he admired greatly. Well, Alan Kapprow is a student of Meyer Schapiro's by the way. We should really go through a roster of those that, the problem also with an original member, by the way, of the Hansa Gallery which is a name that Dorothy Miller did not include in her account. Oh, no it is, I'm sorry, Alan had however had met with the gallery for several years and then returned to the Hansa.

B: Well, I saw a show of Alan Kaprow's which I would suppose was one of the forerunners of what do they call it, happenings, it would be the show in which music and the hanging, what year was that?

RB:That was about '58 or maybe it was the show that he had in '57 and it contained a collage that made sound and it had lightbulbs in it.

B: This was really ....

RB:It was ....

B: We might go into that a little more. Tell us about that show which I personally thought was absurd at the time. The Kaprow show with all the hanging bits of plastic. I was not at the opening but there was a special thing, the whole room was completely heralded with portions of plastic color.

RB:Plastic mainly, painting on cloths of various kinds, there were smells, different smells that were placed in different parts of the rooms by cotton swabs dipped in some kind of chemical. There was like a nasty smell, a pretty smell, you know I forgot, an acid smell and there was a tape recorded sound accompanying it. He called it

an environment.

B: Did Alan Kaprow have any thoughts that he could possibly sell that thing in connection with the exhibit? What he was, what was going on in his mind?

RB:What was going on in Alan Kaprow's mind? Well, I, okay, no, he had no thought to sell it. Nothing could be sold. Nothing was purchaseable in the exhibition. It was an environment. No one at that time or even now is prepared to purchase an environment by an artist. That is a work that encompasses the viewer but however, I understand that Sidney Janis, Sidney Janis at this present time is contemplating an exhibition of environments to take place in his new gallery space.

B: Oh, is that so?

RB:In the winter, right there.

B: Oh, well it will be 1964 or 63.

RB:He asked Kaprow to participate in this and the

information I received was that Alan refused, the reason given would have to do with Alan Kaprow, but he refused but I think James Dine, Class Oldenburg, and George Segal were asked to participate in an exhibition that Sidney Janis wants all environments. At any rate, we would assume that if Mr. Janis were going to do this sort of thing that it would have definite commercial aspects which now it seems to have. I still don't think that any collector is prepared to purchase an environment as a work, certainly such a work as Alan Kaprow made then and much later developed into what is now known as happenings. Which is, I do consider that it is important that Alan Kaprow did make this exhibition at the Hansa Gallery at that time. It has, as you say, art historical importance.

B: I already confessed that at the time I thought you were all a bit batty to have such a show. Did a whole group of artists back it at the time? Or were some of them rather hostile to the notion?

RB:Some of the artists, I would say the majority of the artists were hostile to Alan Kaprow's aesthetic, and there would be possibly personal considerations also. Alan was, no people were hostile in the gallery itself, but of course it was a cooperative gallery and Kaprow was a member and that was what he was going to do and I don't want to go further into that because I don't feel I, certain judgements to make on Kaprow's work in general and on that exhibition, but that I think that the important thing to note is that it did happen at the Hansa Gallery and it is the only place that it could have happened. It was the only existing gallery for exhibition of that kind could have been put on. Kaprow's idea in putting it on you ask could he sell it, were there any thoughts that he might sell it. No, however by its having,he had it, by the very fact of its existence that it would be noted publicly, that is, it was I believe reviewed in Art News. Alan Kaprow is a professor of art, he was teaching then at Rutgers University, and his ideas were that perhaps because of the publicity attending this exhibition and others like it that he might receive some kind of foundation grant to continue his work, or studies, or research or his creation, however you want to look at it.

B: Well this brings me back to something you were

speaking of a bit earlier, a question of success that the Hansa Gallery had in reaching a buying public. We didn't get very far with that. Was it possible that you have practically no sales? Well, let's go into that more fully, now tell us who didn't sell of the artists, Jan Muller sold toward the end?

RB:Yes, toward the end Jan Muller was perhaps let me say this, my knowledge, all the sales made by the Hansa Gallery before I came there in 1955 were anomalous kinds of sales. Sales I don't think that you, I cannot recall as it were, a collector buying a work. In other words, people who had bought before, it might have been friends and friends of the artist, somehow, somebody dragged them there. Or perhaps they had acquired a few paintings, you know, and they heard they were kind of a group of artists and they were told to buy by somebody and perhaps they had a few paintings of different sorts, but no one who we could properly call a collector purchased from these people. This, as I say, was in 1956. There were a couple of anomalous sales, I remember a woman who now lives in Los Angeles, her name is Vicky Sperry, and she was a Chicago collector and she had quite a magnificent collection and her ....

B: How do you spell Sperry?

RB:S P E R R Y. She at one time was a Hofmann student. She had studied with Hofman at Provincetown and she had made it a point, it was rather sociological, well, she made it a point of buying works from the Hansa Gallery very cheaply of course, in other words for prices, cheaply, and she would make it a point I believe whenever she came to new York, wanting, she would want to buy something from the Hansa Gallery to keep it going. And she

took a considerable, well, in her choosing the works she was not capricious about it. She bought only what she sought to purchase works from the gallery. I don't believe that anybody else I know did. To continue along this lien, Stankiewicz to my knowledge had never sold a piece of sculpture of his dating form 1955, you see Stankiewicz had his exhibitions in December of January, so I sometimes get the years mixed up a little bit. Jan Muller also showed, they usually showed for some reason, showed at the same time. At any rate, Richard had told me that the first collector of his work who had bought before that time was Roselind Constable who is a worker for Time magazine.

B: I always thought that Howard Lipman had bought ....

RB:Howard Lipman, I can get this straight. All right Resalind Constable bought a piece of Richard's I believe perhaps it was from his studio before I came to the Hansa Gallery. She was very interested in his work, very interested in avant garde and she still is. That is, I believe one of her functions in Time Inc. is to send around a weekly newsletter to the employee advising them of cultural events and well, events of the moment is what it is called.

B: Insider's view for the benefit of the corporation.

RB:Yeah, she always tries to keep them alert. I think that is her job. One, it is really rather hard to define. At any rate, also now Richard had sold one other piece and that was in Chicago. He sent a piece from the Alan Frumkin Gallery and this piece was purchased by an artist. The first piece that Richard sold to a collector was to my knowledge a piece called I think Lumpy Sitter to Howard Lipman and that was purchased in an exhibition that he had in 1956 and was it the same exhibition that you bought this piece, Dick?

B: I think so, because, well, I think it must be because I believe that this little piece called Encounter which I purchased from you was, which it was since dated at 1955.

RB:Then it was shown in '56 probably January or February.

B: But this was not a piece that you included in the exhibit, because it was a little different in character, a little more abstract.

RB:I had liked the piece very much and I had asked him to bring it up and we had it sitting on the window sill.

B: That's right, the window sill of your office or the smell room out of the main exhibition room, and you waxed very eloquent in the discussion of this piece and we both I think established a kind of rapport between us, which will hopefully always continue. In agreeing to like this particular piece, but I certainly didn't realize it was quite as early a sale in the sale of his work.

RB:And I remember at that time that this piece called Lumpy Sitter was rather a major work in that exhibition, maybe four feet high and three feet in diameter, perhaps. That piece was either $300 or $350 so then in another words we can take that sale and this piece was I believe $125/

B: I think so.

RB:Were the first two pieces that Stankiewicz sold to collectors, before that one, as I say, to Roselind Constable who you might call a, you know, well she would be yours.

B: Well, who would be more professional.

RB:Somebody who hadn't known.

B: Well, let's go on with some of the other artists. Eventually in another year or so, Stankiewicz work was beginning to be purchased by even Alfred Barr before ....

RB:That wasn't until, let's see, he bought the first, yes, I guess that was perhaps the next year. But I think it should be noted that Richard Stankiewicz had received a good deal of publicity because he had been reviewed in Art Digest at that time it was called, now it is Art Magazine and Art News, he had received. That is, the reviewers had been of some length, photographs had been reproduced and he had been declared by interviewers and by the critics and by possible people as being a significant your artist.

B: I would think that ....

RB:And this had been going on for three years.

B: I think he had a great deal of publicity. I'm sure his name was known to me long before I saw that show. However I want to ask, to establish a comparison between last year say and then, did those articles and the

publicity you received? Bring a big viewing public even if they didn't bring sales today? I believe galleries in the New York Times or something that has given a blase of enthusiasm at an artist.

RB:Yes, you will have a certain crew that will come along from an excellent Times review if Mr. Canaday has said it and said it at length, but I don't consider it you know.

B: Can you say something about the general attendance at that gallery. If I may observe, I always felt that the location on Central Park South which was in another section of town in a sense, from most of the galleries made it a disadvantage.

BP: Well, yes of course Dick, there is no doubt about that, and we say we like the address because of the Central Park South but it was quite far from the center of gallery activities, and it was quite fortunate for the Hansa Gallery that the Stable, which was one of the best galleries at that time, was around the corner and we would get some kind of overflow from that, but even collectors whom the Stable Gallery could command, that is, the Stable Gallery had been in existence for a number of years and had well known artists and even now I know that the temper of collectors enough to know that there is just too much reading material going on end and they really don't pursue the material very carefully and they must be told a number of people to go to a certain place. I doubt if there was really, there was not very much run over from the Stable Gallery's collectors. You sort of didn't ....

B: I myself used to go to the Kuhnwallers in that part of town but I recall on many occasions that I, if I were doing a group of galleries, the Hansa would not be in that day's schedule because of its location and I'd be so busy with the others nearer each other, that I would have to make special project as it were, to go over there. So I think that may have limited attendance.

RB:It certainly did, there is no doubt about that. had the gallery been placed properly, well it couldn't have been because of the rent. It would have been at least four or five hundred dollars. But when I remarked earlier that you on the purchase of Stankiewicz's that you wandered in lonely as a cloud, I use the line from Wordsworth for a reason because the scene of the Hansa Gallery was quite pastoral, we can put it that way. No, very few people came in.

B: Well you used to have a lot of personal visitors chatting, mostly artists and I remember meeting a number of people there like Jan Muller, Meyer Schapiro, Richard Stankiewicz.

RB:We'd be very happy.

B: And artists and so on, I don't know that I met many collectors there but I knew few of them.

RB:But very few collectors came into the gallery, the collectors I, in the call of course it was yourself, Howard Lipman came, Howard Lipman is interested only in sculpture and he subsequently purchased other stuff of Stankiewicz's. When Jan Juller had his exhibition in 1957, from which the Museum of Modern Art purchased one, The Fox Number One, I could date a number of collectors coming into the gallery. That is after the Museum purchased this work the work of Jan Muller and it was exhibited in the Recent Acquisition Show, a number of the trustees became interested in Muller's work and therefore came into the gallery. The gallery however had very little storage space, one can say this, you sort of came to see the exhibition that was on and I tried to have as many works as possible, we used a bathroom for a rack, but it was hardly adequate. So there wasn't really, a collector might come in and he would sort of be there by accident but you couldn't, it was difficult to have him come in a second time. I attempted at one time, in well, I attempted at one time to write letters to collectors to say, well, now look here, here is a gallery named the Hansa Gallery, and it included a number of artists who I think are significant and I think that you should see them because I have heard that you are an important collector, and I addressed these letters. They were, of course, very naive and of course I got no response. I even did it by telephone one time. It was like soliciting for, you know, the response I received was like soliciting for Fuller Brushes or something. For instance, during the Jan Muller show I was convinced that there were several masterpieces in that exhibition and I knew for instance, and from reading catalogues of the Museum of Modern Art that a number of collectors specialized as it were in German Expressionism. And although I feel really quite differently about Jan Muller's work, I knew as it were that that was an in to these collectors. And even phoned a couple, wrote them letters, and soon I realized.

[BEGIN SIDE TWO TAPE ONE]

B: This is Richard Brown Baker continuing the

conversation about the Hansa Gallery with Richard Bellamy, it's former director. Now you were cut off at the end of that tape.

RB:I remember I was going on about my ludicrous appeal to collectors to come to the gallery and the subject

was, I think, who formed the public of the gallery other than artists. And so I can say some more things about that. As I say, collectors seemed to come in by accident and once I got them, I sort of didn't know what to do, you know. I mean what to do. Anyway, I would say to my knowledge on one came from any of the museums, except James Johnson Sweeney's visit to the Hansa Gallery while it was still downtown on 12th Street and 4th Avenue. During my tenure there, uptown I think that chronologically we'd better get, I'd better insert this. There was a woman who was director of the Gallery immediately preceding me, I think she possibly had been director of the gallery and she was as it were, the first director, so to speak. Her name was Annette Duveen. Now she must have been there then during the winter and spring of 1955, and the Gallery probably started its own operations in September of 1955, which is when I began and I know that Annetta Duveen was there for instance when Wolf Kahn had his exhibition and Wolf Kahn sold quite a number of paintings and Annette Duveen I think was in part responsible for this. She was a great champion of Richard Stankiewicz's work I know. Being an older woman, I don't mean, I mean that she was, she had been a woman, I think herself was an artist but she was rather a, you know, an executive type of woman, at least in this respect, and I think she tried to pull the Gallery together and say now this is the way to do things. I think it was one of her requirements as director, as I recall it being told to me that the members of the gallery bought her a membership in the Museum of Modern Art so that she could attend it's functions, so that she could meet the collectors and things. Well, at any rate, when Norman Miller had his exhibition Stankiewicz, John I.H. Bauer came to the Whitney, I believe Goodrich came, one time to the Gallery to collect works of Jan Muller who was in an exhibition at the Whitney, that was the first exhibition I think they attempted of that series. Also Stankiewicz was in that show.

B: Yes, I remember him good.

RB:There was, however, rather little interest in sort of seeing the other work, well they were not, they were not regular visitors to the gallery by any means. Naturally as director of the gallery I would use any device I could to get any member of any museum in tot he gallery and, the Whitney was actually rather close to the Hansa Gallery and one would have expected its fairly regularly attendance because of the institution of the Whitney Annual, which shows perhaps just a little bit less than a hundred single works of American artists. The Hansa Gallery I believe should have figured during those years.

B: Let's figure out for a moment, say about 1956 or 57 what members of the Gallery were included in the Whitney show?

RB:Jan Muller was one time in a Whitney Annual and also Stankiewicz I think, '57 or '56.

B: None of the others?

RB:No, none of the others had.

B: Follet?

RB:Follet then showed the last year, I think 1959 she was in an Annual, let me think now.

B: Not Myron Stout?

RB:No, no, Myron Stout was in a Whitney Annual in, right. It might have been 1958, he had his exhibition in 1957. He was in the Whitney Annual, yes, of 1958. And on the last day the Museum of Modern Art personnel walked through the galleries of the Whitney and Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr bought the Stout for it's collection. Let me say this of them, that when Mr. Barr came to see Jan Muller's exhibition, and he came as I remember because I wrote him a series of letters and I once got him on the phone, I'm by nature really a very timid person and this is excruciating for me to try to contact people in these authoritative positions, I was very tremulous about it, it caused me a great deal of pounds in many ways and has done severe damage to my, to my several cortises eerobral nervous, but, well, I'm not going to go into any great detail, but at any rate, Mr. Barr did come to see the exhibition, he admired Jan Muller's work greatly, purchased one for the Museum and a number of the trustees come tot he Hansa Gallery, such as Mrs. Gertude Kellon. I remember and somehow people, also Mr. Whitney who did admire Jan Muller's work and so we got some collectors into the gallery asking specifically for Jan Muller and Jan Muller did drain the last year of his life to sell enough paintings so that he was able to spend a very good year that is, with a nice summer in Provincetown and a nice studio and enough to eat and that was okay.

B: I do remember the occasion when I was at the Art Students League and I think I was in the gallery the day before, and you said with great excitement that you were going to be visited the following day or maybe it was later that same day by this distinguished group of people including Gordon Washburn of the Carnegie Institute I think, John Walker the director of the National Gallery in Washington and one other eminent person, I forget who it was.

RB:Was this with the Brussels Worlds Fair?

B: No, I think it was a show to go to the Orient or something, but it was a big show to be selected to travel somewhere out of the country and you were absolutely convinced that they would immediately admire the latest large Jan Muller which was painted, not yet exhibited and not yet stretched, called The Temptation of St. Anthony, which was to be in my estimation when I saw it stretched one of the most masterly creations. But I came back that afternoon to hear the response of these people and as I walked along Seventh Avenue, I saw these three men together all smiling and chattering and I reached your gallery and you were absolutely deflated, crest fallen, oh you were in a terrible state of mind. I forget whether Jan himself was there, somebody else was there. You tell me, you carry on now.

RB:Well, this was a selection for the Brussels Worlds Fair. I'm not sure whether Gordon Washburn was among that group.

B: Yes, this particular group, I don't think it was for the Brussels Worlds Fair.

RB:Yes it was.

B: Well, alright.

RB:Yes it was, and George Steempfli, this was before he'd opened his gallery, I would have some very harsh things to say about those gentlemen not only in retrospect, but they didn't want to see any more Jan Mullers, I showed them this masterpiece, this new one.

B: They didn't come to see that though.

RB:Well, they had come to see Jan Muller and Miles Forst, they all had heard about these two artists and I was prepared to, well at any rate, well straight, those people did visit, I must say also that Gordon Washburn who was then director of the Carnegie Institution, came to the Hansa Gallery and selected for, was in the '59 International or was it '58?

B: '58 I think.

RB:'58, well you see, because I think of the promotion, well, because of the attention that the Hansa Gallery had got in the pages of the arts magazines, Arts and Art News that he did come to the Hansa Gallery and he chose to my astonished gratification a great percentage of the artists for the exhibition. I believe Alan Kaprow, Jan Muller, Stankiewicz, Jean Follet, Miles Forst, and perhaps that's it, I forget. But quite a good bit of the roster. At any rate, since Dorothy Miller, I believe, was the most consciousness of the museum people.

B: Modern art.

RB:Yes, Dorothy Miller was of the Modern Museum in trying to get to the Hansa Gallery exhibitions. I had heard so to speak of her before I became director, that is, I was told by the preceding director that she had come one day into the gallery and said, please show me whatever you have, I want to see it. And Annette Duveen, she helped, Annette Duveen go into our back room and take out whatever works were there and she tried to follow artists, she tried to get paintings at least into the lending service of the Museum of Modern Art, I respected her a great deal. She of course was not a regular visitor, but I would be happy if she were able to come in let's say three times a year and if I could anticipate her visit then I would be able to bring works in for her to see, but it wasn't of course that we really couldn't arrange appointments that way. But I do want to insert that of the museum officials I believe that Dorothy Miller was the most consciences in trying to see the shows.

B: Did any out of, other that Gordon Washburn, did any out of town people come? For instance the Albright Knox Museum in Buffalo has been a great patron of contemporary art.

RB:They never visited the gallery, but I think rather their purchasing contemporary works has been rather recent, hasn't it?

B: It is very recent, but it's one of the few museums outside of New York that has gone in for a very wide selection of contemporary American and other art, for instance, The Art Institute of Chicago, nobody ever came from there?

RB:No, not that I know of, no, I don't think so.

B: So you did more or less carry on, without a clientele?

RB:Yes, as I remember during one year, perhaps it was, you know '58 or '59, I remember to myself that the majority of the purchases from the gallery, by far the majority as far as the number of works and the amount of money involved came from museums because of purchases, let's say during one year Stankiewicz was purchased by the Whitney, the large Jan Muller was purchases by the Museum of Modern Art, the Carnegie

Institute bought that Myron Stout which was exhibited in 1956, and well, I guess that's about it. But that sort of accounted for more, for more purchases than from collectors.

B: The first person who ever told me about your gallery was Rieber Urban, who was then running the Urban Gallery and she told me about Jan Muller's work and urged me to go and see it, and this was the year before I bought his work, I didn't like his work as I saw it that year. I can see the pattern seems to be Jan Muller was a very big drawing card it turns out.

RB:Yes, it's true.

B: Yes, a lot of people came on account of him.

RB:There's no doubt about it Dick, but he and Richard Stankiewicz were the main drawing cards so to speak of any collectors that would come to the gallery, they came to see their work.

B: Did Jan feel particularly conscious of this, do you think? Or course he didn't, it was only in the last year of his life that this really was going on to a great extent, so it's hard to say whether three years afterwards he wouldn't perhaps have pulled out for a more glorious financial prospect.

RB:Well, I can make some comments about this surely. Jan Muller had received during the last year of his life, and after his moderate, you know, successes were after his exhibition in '57 and was purchases by the museum, he was chosen by Tom Hess to be representative in the Spoleto Festival, that was in '57 also I guess. At any rate, Jan Muller had been approached by a commercial gallery to exhibit and he refused, he wanted to stay with the Hansa Gallery although at that time there was great objections by the members, of the artists to certain aspects of my conduct. I mean I was not, the gallery was hardly ideas. Hardly ideal for selling of works of art, the artists were interested in selling their works of art so that they could live a little bit better. Richard Stankiewicz it was remarkable to me that one time, there was a panel discussion somewhere downtown and I know Ad Rhinehard was on it and a painter named Harry Bodkin was on it, Richard Stankiewicz and someone else and the subject was something like what about cooperative galleries, what use are they, some such thing. Richard Stankiewicz had possibly peculiar to himself, certain idealizations about the Hansa Gallery and you'll receive his impressions I'm sure on the subject when you interview him. At any rate I was surprised to learn, so this must have been maybe around 1956, a statement that he made on the panel, if I can reconstruct the circumstances something like this because it was an interesting confrontation, these three different points of view, Mr. Harry Bodkin was celebrating the fact that perhaps it was the American Abstract Artists had somehow formed an exhibition of a large group of artists to travel to Japan and he cited this as, you know a marvelous example of what, rather, of an example of what cooperative action can do, because the American Abstract Artists Association, I believe is run along the same principals, you might say, applies to the Hansa Gallery. And he thought that was great, and I remember Ad Rhinehard said, "What do you mean, what good does that do, what meaning can you possibly read into that." And Bodkin was non-plussed, what do you mean, why marvelous to have all these paintings go over to Japan and have all those people see them. Rhinehard was asserting his own unique, his unique point of view which I won't go into but Rhinehard was saying, well, so what, now Richard Stankiewicz was trying to describe the activities of the Hansa Gallery and trying to explain his ideas about it and what he thought it's functions were and that it was good, that it was a good thing. Well, that's the context, I don't want to go into it any further than that, but Richard Stankiewicz was asked from the floor, well suppose you were asked by another gallery, a commercial gallery to come and exhibit there, would you go do so? And Stankiewicz said, "Well, I haven't been asked." And then he went on to give his answer which I don't remember, it was probably a problematical one, I'm sure he said neither yes or no. But I was surprised to learn that Richard had never been approached in 1956 by another gallery to exhibit there. Now yes we were speaking of Richard and Jan Muller. Well, Richard did finally.

B: I was just going to say, I had the feeling that there hadn't been many sales of Stankiewicz's work, you've already said so and that some dealers may not have felt it was particularly sales worthy.

RB:Oh, no, they still, I'm sure thought about

Stankiewicz, even though he was thought of as one of the best of his generation of artists, you know, making kind of nasty works out of, nasty looking and feeling works, it's called junk sculpture now, I think that's rather an out-moded term, it worked for a while. No, but never the less, the character of his reputation was what we could call high, termed high. And he had not been approached by any commercial gallery and by that time, by 1956 there were, the galleries were increasing in numbers and there was an ever widening public, it was beginning to ....

B: Well, I think big sales in this post-war generation of art, I mean by post war generation, the new generation since World War II. It really didn't seem to get going much until about '58 or '59, that's my impression.

RB:Yes.

B: So '56, I don't think, '56 and '57 there was this flow of money into these new people.

RB:You are quite right there, perhaps no.

B: Now if I may say so, I had the impression during some of those years that your gallery was a little more amateurish, somewhat less professional in its approach to collectors in the art world, in the worldly sense that I experienced in some other gallery, and I also had the impression, talking to you, well as we became acquainted that you felt that some of the other dealers of the more notable commercial galleries were possibly too money minded, too slick and you rather despised some of the art that they exhibited. You felt naturally loyal to the artists of the Hansa Gallery, but I think this included a certain scorn for some European contemporaries and some other American contemporaries that were selling very well. Have you any comment to make on this observation I'm deliberating?

RB:I will make this comment, your remark that the gallery seemed to proceed on an amateur basis, this is indeed quite correct. I don't attribute any charm to this quality at all, of amateurishness. It might have proceeded from either eccentricities on my part or a more probably a simple kind of ignorance. At any rate .....

B: I think if I may say here, you actually asked my opinion about how to make out a bill. I gather in the conversation we've had this afternoon it reinforces the impression that you really had infrequent occasions to make out bills to collect.

RB:Yes, that was a marvelous activity. I pondered bills very carefully, their design and the kind of pressure I would put on the typewriter. Yeah, and let me assert my gratitude now, Dick. Well, I haven't yet become the master of bill making. At any rate, so your observations, and you said that I maintained a degree of scorn like Miniver Cheery for our competitors. Well, you know that would have to do with the history of my own tastes, which isn't proper here. What you're trying to get at though, as I see, you know, is how, what was the, what were the defining and differentiating qualities of the Hansa Gallery as a gallery from the others. Now I said that perhaps it's the worth of its existences as this kind of ideal effort that the artists had in their minds in forming the gallery and in continuing it. I said before that it was an odd assortment of artists. Now the reasons why the gallery became, why it disintegrated as you put it before, well, it was composed of two reasons. One, the general cultural situation in which cultural and, there was no reason for a cooperative anymore.

B: By the time it went out of business there were more cooperatives were there, not on 10th Street than at the time it started.

RB:But I don't think they fulfilled any kind of a ....

B: Comparable role, they didn't have the importance.

RB:There was no virtue to their, to their being there, to their functioning, the Hansa Gallery had really lost sight of it's own original function. If a number of the artists had begun to sell their works, the gallery could only strive towards arriving at a kind of mechanism and attitude by which these artists could continue to sell and the others would sell also. That is, I now know to, to this, the gallery itself that is, the composition of it's artists has to have some kind of point to it. It just couldn't lumber along on the old terms.

B: Could I ask the question, this is really a personal one. Do you prefer the management of a gallery such as you're presently in, in which I imagine you have a very large percentage and perhaps total control over the selection of the artists being represented to the kind of cooperative of the Hansa where you were only one voting voice in the selection.

RB:Why of course.

B: You prefer it and you think its more practical, and generally speaking the whole machinery of a cooperative was a cumbersome one that isn't likely to work very often, under pressure of the conditions rampant in America.

RB:Well, I would like to be able to really to manage two galleries. The one that I'm doing now that has, there are, the one that I'm doing now has certain limitations. I'd like to run another gallery that would be completely, that could be run under circumstances devoid of any considerations for the satisfaction of the public press and public. It would not differ completely with what I'm doing now with my gallery which I consider an avant-garde gallery. There would be certain things that I could do, a certain kind of utter freedom that, you know, sometimes can be very beautiful and sometimes can be very foolish but there is not enough of it. Perhaps the Hansa Gallery lacks a kind of, during its later years, perhaps it lacked even a kind of foolishness that perhaps should have been permitted.

B: Are you saying, then, that you would deny then that it collapsed because of any basic economic reasons?

RB:Oh yes.

B: It did not collapse because of the failure to make enough money? This would be what most people would assume for its reason for going out of business.

RB:As I said, the reasons were two. We didn't feel that there were, that the situation called for it anymore. It was beginning to be obsolescent, the whole idea of a cooperative gallery. There was not enough. If the gallery had maintained itself as a group, now let's resay again, as a group of artists, artists hang their own shows. Let the artists take care of their own publicity. Let the artists put the price on it, have an invitational show of artists who had been neglected by other galleries, perhaps by artists themselves. This was its function. To put on a show by an artists, let's say by a young one who had never been heard of, or perhaps a much older artist of great competence who could not be shown by a well-qualified commercial gallery for some reason. Let's say his work was out of date, but the artists maintained it held a certain kind of integrity that and therefore it should be shown. Well, it was getting much more difficult to do this aside form the, well, there was the economics. As I say, we had one point as I remember a couple of months, we were paying, the artists were paying $30.00 a month in dues. Now this was not terribly bad, yes there were financial considerations. The artists were getting older, the artists were making their reputations and the artists weren't selling enough and the apparatus of the cooperative gallery was such that it could do very little about it.

B: May I say here that I felt the, and always felt, that as you're now a dealer in the full professional sense, and perhaps you'll agree or disagree with me on the basis of your experience. But would you not think if you had a younger brother who was arriving in town who was a very promising painter who was to be launched but you couldn't launch him in you gallery, wouldn't you want him, since you have great faith in his abilities and his potential salability, to be handled by a dealer who had an established clientele, who was really quite firmly in touch with a number of collectors and others? Wouldn't this be a happier augury of his getting enough money out of his work to be able to live if he were to be attached to that kind of a gallery than one such as the Hansa was which was more idealistic but had very little promise quite obviously of getting a work sold.

RB:Yes of course.

B: Now I think that in spite of the attacks that have been on the collectors an the dealers, I'm sure and I would like to have you explore them, the aspects in terms of your position as the Hansa dealer then towards those other galleries in the late fifties that were more commercially minded. But at the moment I merely want to say that I think, I'll say it in the way of buttering up the clients and all the awful things of publicity and various things that dealers have to undertake really to a certain extent justify and be helpful to the artists, and in bringing these people in who buy to the galleries so that the newcomer is seen by those people who buy or those in people who buy or things like that this is a fairly important factor. The kind of ready-made market that some dealers build up.

RB:My answer to that is yup. YUP.

B: Well, you've probably built up, I think in the present Green Gallery you've built up a good clientele. Doesn't this differ from the situation at the Hansa? I mean you didn't have the clientele that you have in this gallery when you were an affiliate of the Hansa.

RB:No, it's, several years later and also there is the greater financial backing and because there is one person who is doing it.

B: Well, we pretty well explored that, it really does seem that committee management of a gallery is not ideal.

RB:Right. You see there were attempts at the Hansa Gallery during its last year, there were great dissatisfactions among its members, hardly had to do with its director, that is, me. That I should insert here that at one time during the first year, I was there alone. There were two years and I think it was '57 and '58 in which Ivan C. Karp was there half the time and I was there the other half. In 1959 I again took over complete operation of the gallery now because Ivan Karp went to work for Martha Jackson. Now let's see now, yes, as I say, the members of the gallery itself was dissatisfied with the way things were going, namely certain dissatisfactions about or with me. I just want to say that is less important really to the subject, which is the Hansa Gallery than in these following remarks. I've said earlier that for the gallery to maintain, the gallery had a good reputation, it it was known at all, as a place where one could go and find works by young artists of promise and integrity. I would put this in quotes. That would be what people would say about it. I'm sure that you referred to the gallery in this way yourself. You would speak about it to your friends and acquaintances. Now in the gallery for several of its members' reputations had advanced rapidly. The majority of the reputations had not advanced so rapidly. As I mentioned, from the beginning there was amongst the members even there was not unqualified admiration for one another's work. There was a very excruciating period in which the Hansa Gallery's members decided we had to do something about it, that and we had a vote, a secret ballot and this was an horrendous thing for everybody involved. But the gallery was, the artist-members were attempting to save the gallery. the gallery

seemed to have no, the situation aside that is, the situation of the expanding number of galleries and so on. The gallery did not have the kind of, okay, it had taken on new members we had thought in a couple of years who really would keep substantiating the reason for the Hansa Gallery's existence and continuing vigor.

B: Well, who was the last new member, do you know?

RB:Probably the last new member was possibly Edward Avedesian who shows now with the Elkon Gallery and about whom there was a great fight on the floor of the premises of 210 Central Park South. Jan Muller was being most passionately against receiving his membership, and but the question of Edward Avedisian who let's say at that time was a very young artist, he had never shown before and he was coming from Boston and he was still ....

B: Harvard undergraduate.

RB:Right, mid, if not early twenties. He was doing a kind of lyrical abstraction and ....

B: Kandinsky and Pollock.

RB:Yeah, kind of loose lyrical Pollock with lots of empty canvas and kind of drips but then very thick globs of paint. Now the idea that the Hansa Gallery had received, was losing qualities of freshness, it was becoming institutionalized, it was becoming there was a kind of dead rigor about it. Therefore we made a great effort at one time to try to get new artists into the gallery. A committee was formed. At that time of course, well, painters had been painting big pictures for a long time and it was hard to get let's say twelve or thirteen or eighteen people to go to an artist's studio. So a committee was formed and I believe I was a member, Stankewicz was and I forgot who else who would go to see any artist's work who asked us to, or who was recommended by somebody to get new work into the gallery. There was that effort. There was the effort also amongst us to eliminate certain members of the gallery and this is where the internal slaughter began. There was, I tried to say before, a secret vote. All members of the gallery voted on other members upon whose work was to be condoned and whose wasn't. And there were some very close votes and one member voted out of the gallery.

B: Can you tell who?

RB:Well.

B: This is history.

RB:Well, Jane Wilson was voted out of the gallery. She then went to, before Tibor De Nagy, a woman, Estra Stuffman, had a gallery and she went there. There were a couple of other very close counts as it were. Now you see, so there was this feeling that the gallery had to reinvigorate itself. The artists then felt, the artists, let's say Jan Muller and Stankiewicz you, who had been by that time asked by commercial galleries, I believe Richard Stankiewicz had been approached by other galleries. I think Leo Castelli and possibly Eleanor Ward at that time and Richard with great I believe, I mean these are my assumptions I never talked about this with Richard and I believe that Richard with a great forbearance stayed with the gallery and with great perseverance in trying to reconstitute it and trying to make it live again as it were.

B: Yes.

RB:Stayed with the gallery until a certain point in 1959 when he did leave and he went with the Stable Gallery. But Richard was one of the major factors in, quote, doing something about it. We all knew that something had to be done and also at one point Richard made the observation, the pained observation that on the sale of a work of art 25 percent went to its director and eight percent of its sale went back into the gallery fund, went back into the treasury. And so we would assess our financial needs for the next month and if somebody had made a sale, let's say, if Stankiewicz had sold something for $600.00, that would mean that $48 went into the gallery fund which would mean that all the other members would have to pay less that month. Then Richard discovered that he had begun making sales and that it amounted to quite a little bit, quite a little bit and that aside from paying his 33 1/3 percent commission that he was also paying dues and figured that this came out to almost fifty percent during one year of total sales of his works, which was hardly fair and when he stated it, we all recognized this. So at any rate, we computed, or rather Richard was the only person capable of it, computed some kind of system whereby if an artist sold and his eight percent reached a certain figure that he would be able to relax his monthly dues responsibilities. At any rate, you see, we were reaching a certain stage in which these considerations were of importance with the gallery through the years with its exhibiting and because of its reputation its standard had to be maintained, but not only maintained, but furthered. And we were at an impasse to do this because of the dues. We had to charge, therefore we couldn't ask an artist of more or less established reputation who even if the majority of the artists wanted, nor did we get a very young artist because a very young artist had no money. They just come in from out of town somewhere or were starving in some loft and you know that this is quite often literally true. That was an impasse. Well, we thought that perhaps one of

the first corrections to do this would be to make the gallery a little bit limber would be to limit its number, which is rather unwieldy, and there were, as I say, discontented members who actively disliked the work of several other members and so there was this conspiracy if you want to call it that.

B: Leading toward a horrendous secret vote. Well, what happened?

RB:Actually amongst the secret conferences actually from three to five members should have been lopped off from that group probably including the director, that did come about at one time actually. Yeah, I was actually voted out but I offered my services however for the next few months until they got somebody else, you know because I couldn't leave them alone like that. It wasn't magnanimous or that kind of foolishness it was on my part. I made a couple of mistakes and it severely injured my respect among several of the artists. I don't even remember what it might have been, but you know, I realized what it was and I knew I just couldn't leave them there. And they interviewed a number of people but that didn't work, nobody I mean, you know, who would want to work for a cooperative gallery and not make any money. You know, it was only me I guess, so I did stay on the last year. And let me just say that after the last year, which was the summer of '59, let's say in May, we closed. There was an attempt to get funds by some other method and there were several methods devised to continue the gallery's operation. We failed to gain the necessary funds and we closed reluctantly although we were of divided minds, reluctantly and then again with relief.

B: Now that you look back on it, and though you feel that perhaps it was just as well that it did close, but at the time you were anxious to keep it and you believed then.

RB:I was anxious to keep, let me say I was of divided mind. I wanted to keep it for the sake of a couple of the artists. I knew that the whole idea, and had become obsolete and I didn't tell anybody that I was relieved that it didn't continue because I thought it would have been a wasted and very sad effort to have ....

B: Well, I tried to get a question a moment ago, to what extent did the death of Jan Muller which occurred in January '58, was it?

RB:Yes it was '58.

B: And to what extent did this cripple the gallery? Of course he was one of your better sellers. Now you did have a post-humus exhibit of his.

RB:Well, let me say this Dick, what did it do? Actually Jan Muller meant a great deal to everybody in that gallery. A good many, well of few of the artists let's say would be opposed to his kind of art, quote it was figurative and expressionist. But it wasn't that. Jan, besides having, you know, Jan Muller had the genius of passion and the genius of humanity and after Jan's death it wasn't as though you know and the artists could not admit it, it was not that therefore, that there were no longer works of his to sell, therefore the gallery couldn't acquire eight percent. That was not the reason. There was a kind of punch in the belly that all was realized. We reacted again perhaps quite strongly, you know, well we really have to continue. And you know, each of the artists, each of the artists had his own ego. His own presumption, his own belief, and his desires and wanted the gallery to continue. They were not being asked, with the exception of Stankiewicz, to join other galleries and there was, you see, built in this kind of inner mystique, this inner respect for the gallery. It had gone through hard times and it had accomplished a great deal and it was a meaningful part of the history of that decade and it was, we were loath to give it up.

B: Let's just check over who were the members at the time it ceased because stankiewicz had resigned and Jane Wilson had been dropped and Jan Muller died, so who were these concluding members?

RB:They were Mryon Stout, who lived in Provincetown and who was very rarely at our meetings.

B: Yes, so he was not really an active voice in the management of it?

RB:We would seek his vote by mail however, on any important issue. It is interesting to note in the case of Myron Stout as posterity reads this, Mr. Stout's achievement will have been known by them, I don't know how many years. At least now Myron Stout is of the quality that one might say is exceedingly superior and I think it is safe to say that he has made what we call great works of art. Now Myron had shown with the Stable Gallery in 1954, had a one-man show at the Stable Gallery on the second floor and was represented by Eleanor Ward at the Stable. And in 19, after the show he was going to leave her and the Hansa Gallery and Eleanor Ward was completely flabbergasted. Myron told me. I must say that the Stable Gallery was well established. It had artists of note.

B: In the avant-garde.

RB:Yes. And it was a very strong gallery, one of the strongest galleries in New York, and to have Myron Stout

who was not very well, hardly well known then and certainly is not well known now, although there are certain secret pockets of intelligence that claim they know his work. Let's say, so we have a man, and Myron was then in his fifties, leaving the Stable Gallery to come to the Hansa Gallery and Myron Stout's reason was, well they are my friends. I kind of feel a little freer there. I have no pressures about producing work.

B: Perhaps it would have been good for him to have some pressure, maybe producing something.

RB:And he came to the Hansa, at any rate. Well, he felt a community, yes he felt a community there. Felt a community with Jan Muller and with Miles Forst, people who he'd known. For him, who anyway the prospects of anybody selling his work, which then was a kind of a, well, of a geometric nature, it still is more or less, but I really don't call it that. There was little chance at Eleanor Ward's of selling his work. So I guess he thought, well, he might as well be with people that he kind of liked. That he respected very highly for one reason or another, devoid of any of the aspects of their reputation in the world and so on.

B: But let me go back to the question I asked you because I'm glad to hear about Myron Stout and hope you'll say more about him, but we were going over the membership at the time the gallery went out of existence. And he's the only one you've mentioned.

RB:All right, there was Myron Stout, Miles Forst, who do you get this pen to work, this strange looking thing. I felt that I listed them, well let's, well, I think Jacques Beckwith, here we go again.

B: Myron Stout, Miles Forst

RB:Jacques Beckwith, Miles Forst, Jean Follett, George Segal, Alan Kaprow.

B: There were still members at the end?

RB:Right, Lillie Brodie.

B: I always thought she was ie, but I ....

RB:No, was, let's see, was Avenstein still there, I don't think so for some reason or another, no I don't think so. Now that we're down, now that's only seven people. Who am I missing?

B: Well, while you're thinking about it, could we go over and discuss the future representation of these. Myron Stout has not produced much since and I suppose he still could be said to be represented by your present gallery.

RB:He is represented by me, yes.

B: So he is still with you at the Green Gallery. Mr. Beckwith has no gallery, you said earlier.

RB:No.

B: What about Miles Forst?

RB:Miles Forst, I would say that I represent him, when Miles is ready, he has shown me, since we're so close and he is in a very strange position in relation to his painting, he has not shown me any of his work in two years, he's attempting to show no one his work, and my assumption is that when Miles is ready for a show that I will show him. Jean Follett is also represented by me, but again, as in the case with Myron Stout, she has produced practically, she has produced no work in the past two years and very little in the past four. She is now living out of town in St. Paul, Minnesota. Myron Stout, however, as you well know, keeps working. He paints all the time on nine paintings which he began just after his show at the Hansa which was in 1957. He's been working on nine paintings since that date. I just saw them, Dick, two weeks ago.

B: I'd be interested to hear about them, but let's get on with the list.

RB:There's George Segal, who is showing with the Green Gallery now.

B: And has become quite well know, in a quite different style of painting than he formerly showed at the Hansa Gallery.

RB:Yes, he has acquired a reputation through his sculpture although I would like to remind, although in George Segal's last two exhibitions at the Hansa Gallery, each show, he showed one or more sculptures. Although they were considered a minor part of the show which mainly consisted of paintings. Alan Kaprow is represented by a gallery called Smolin Gallery. However Alan Kaprow is no longer engaged in the, he's engaged only in the making of happenings, which are of an impermanent, unsalable nature, that is, the Smolin Gallery gave him an

exhibition, I believe early last, well, in September, of an environment that he had created. And in a way Alan Kaprow's sort of free-lance. He has done happenings in universities, he has just given a happening in Paris a month or so ago. Through, no really some rather important governmental activity of France and the United States, I forget it's title.

B: Have we left out anybody? Lillie Brody?

RB:Lillie Brody is not represented by a gallery, I have some of her works.

B: Oh, yes.

RB:I have some of her drawings and I show them to people, but she is not actually a member of the gallery.

B: But may I say now, because you may have forgotten somebody, but considering that Jan Muller died and that Richard Stankiewicz withdrew, well it is true ....

RB:I'm sorry to interrupt Dick, there was one other person. His name is Robert Whitman, who was a member of the gallery at this time. Now Robert Whitman is now, has devoted himself entirely also to happenings. I have show Robert Whitman in group exhibitions at the Green Gallery and he had a show of his own last year in a loft which he purchased specifically to show a happening of his and an exhibition or more or less stationary pieces. Then he showed some films by the way from the Film Library of Joseph Cornell. Some very beautiful things. Whitman is, I sort of like, I claim to have Whitman in a way, but it's mainly impractical.

B: Well, this is the point I want to make. That is, you see with the absence of Stankiewicz, with Stout working so very hard on such a limited number of paintings so that he's had nothing to offer for exhibition, with Jean Follett not being entirely well, I gather and not having much ready to offer, Kaprow completely concerned as is Whitman with happenings, Beckwith apparently not considered so good.

RB:Well, not working so much, in a very minor mode, I would say Jacques has a very, yeah, I understand what you mean.

B: I'm just seeing that had you all gone on it would really have had to get in a whole bunch of new people. You haven't got enough there with that group of artists over the last three years to have had one full season.

RB:Right, you're quite right.

B: So that is really, really ....

RB:But of course at that time, Alan Kaprow still wanted a gallery so that he could have his happenings in and Robert Whitman wanted a gallery so he could have his happenings in, you see. Well, one of the things about Kaprow is that he has been, he was a teacher, taught art history, also painting, I don't know what subjects. He had to have, he had to have a gallery to, wait a minute Dick.

[END OF INTERVIEW]