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Oral history interview with Adelyn
Dohme Breeskin, 1979 June 20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Adelyn Dohme Breeskin on June 20, August 1, and August 14, 1979. The interview took place in Washington, D.C., and was conducted by Julie Link Haifley for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. In 2024 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

Poor audio throughout parts of the interview led to an abnormally high number of words and phrases being inaudible; the original transcript was used to clarify passages.

Interview

[00:00:02.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I had to let a little of the tape run at the beginning to get started.

[00:00:07.97]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Okay.

[00:00:10.23]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And this is Julie Haifley interviewing Adelyn Breeskin at the National Collection of Fine Arts. Today is June 20, 1979. And we're here in the Finley Conference Room at the NCFA [National Collection of Fine Arts -Ed.]. Mrs. Breeskin, I've reread the Avis Berman interviews. And she seems to have done a pretty thorough job of your career in Baltimore. So what I'd like to do today is first ask some general questions about your childhood and the years you spent in Baltimore and then perhaps concentrate on the time since you've come to Washington, which is—must be going on 20 years now, isn't it?

[00:00:56.15]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Hard to believe, but it's true. [Laughs.]

[00:00:59.60]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So just as a way of some general background, I wonder if you could tell me

what you recall about growing up in Baltimore, and what that was like for you?

[00:01:11.34]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I had a very pleasant childhood and a big family, which I think, in itself, is very educational. I had five sisters and a half-brother. And my mother was a—had a background in music, mostly. She was a concert pianist until she was married, a pupil of Teresa Carreño, who was one of the South American prima donnas. And when my mother married my father, Teresa Carreño gave her, as a wedding present, a beautiful Steinway grand that she had used in concertizing. So that was part of our household as I grew up. And I was usually put to sleep at night by hearing her play the piano, which was quite lovely. Well, she was very well trained. And that was, I think, a special treat that I had during—as I grew up, hearing music a great deal at home.

[00:02:54.05]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you take piano lessons yourself?

[00:02:55.93]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes.

[00:02:58.00]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did she teach you at all or did you take from someone else?

[00:03:00.53]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I took from someone else. But she died when I was 11. And that was terrible. She died of typhoid fever, contracted at our best department store in Baltimore. She was doing Christmas shopping for her six little girls and went to the soda fountain to just get a soda for lunch. And they found that the unclean conditions there had caused three different deaths, of which one was my mother. Terrible. And her youngest child had been born in September, and this was the following Christmas. And she was very strong. But, having contracted this typhoid, she finally succumbed to it by the end of January. She tried very hard to overcome it and couldn't. And I think the fact that she was just recuperating from having had her sixth little girl born that made it more difficult for her.

[00:04:42.25]

But, anyway, her mother came to stay with us, then, for two years. And then my father decided that he had to find a mother for these little children. And the first person that he asked was Miss Charlotte Noland, who later had Foxcroft School in Virginia. And she turned him down. And she later told a cousin of mine that she thought she probably made a mistake. She should have taken on six little girls instead of this whole school full that she had. She had it for many years after. [Laughs.] And then I went to the Roland Park Country School, which was a nice school in Roland Park.

[00:05:48.32]

JULIE HAIFLEY: A private school?

[00:05:49.59]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Private school. Until I was old enough to take—go into the city. And then I went to Bryn Mawr for all the main later years. I graduated.

[00:06:09.35]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did your sisters go to Roland Park, also?

[00:06:12.53]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Also. And then, later we all went into either Bryn Mawr, or I had one sister who went instead to instead to a little less difficult school called the New School. And—but the Bryn Mawr school had as headmistress Miss Edith Hamilton, who was a remarkable woman, of course. And she was the author of *The Greek Way*, and *The Roman Way*, and so

forth.

[00:06:58.29]

And I've always regretted that I didn't take any Greek. I would have liked to study Greek. I did study Latin, but I think Latin is coming back now in many of the schools. But, for a time there, people thought it wasn't necessary. And, consequently, I think, young people today have a much harder time with spelling, for instance—

[00:07:29.63]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, they do.

[00:07:31.52]

ADELYN BREESKIN: —than we ever had. And it was the Latin that helped us.

[00:07:38.01]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What position were you in your family?

[00:07:41.11]

ADELYN BREESKIN: The second. I have a wonderful older sister, still alive, and I visited her recently out in Santa Fe.

[00:07:54.45]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:07:55.98]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Beautiful part of the country.

[00:07:58.77]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you all stick together pretty much after your mother died?

[00:08:04.26]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Not as we grew up. We had this stepmother who was difficult, and not a real mother. She had very few motherly feelings. And I think it's—that brought us together more because we all had a somewhat difficult time due to that.

[00:08:43.14]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I imagine you helped care for some of the younger ones at least for a time, didn't you?

[00:08:50.31]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I tried to. We had governesses, mostly German, but one English. We never had a French governess. And they were all bad, I think. [Laughs.]

[00:09:11.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Bad in what way?

[00:09:13.89]

ADELYN BREESKIN: They—you know, they thought that they were too good to be governesses, and felt deprived. And many of them—we had one good one, in the whole group. And she was really more a governess to my young half-brother. She was a lovely person.

[00:09:45.88]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How old was he in relation to you and your sisters?

[00:09:50.29]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, it was a case of my older sister, who's now already 85. And I was two years younger. I'll have my 83rd birthday a week from yesterday. I mean, a month from yesterday, 19th of July. And then, the next sister was two years younger than I. And the fourth one two years younger than she. And then there was three years between the fourth one and the fifth and three years between the fifth one and the sixth. But it was, I think, a privilege to grow up in a family that had each one of us is very different from each other one. We had different interests, too. So we learned from each other.

[00:11:07.61]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were any of the others interested in art at all?

[00:11:12.05]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. I was the only one. My older sister was much more social—socially adjusted, and made her debut in Baltimore, and then went—started in playing bridge. [They laugh.]

[00:11:37.11]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And how did you get out of making your debut?

[00:11:39.74]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I just refused. [Julie laughs.] And, at that time, even the girls in my class at Bryn Mawr who made their debuts at the Bachelor's Cotillion, and so forth—would take a year off—a whole year off—

[00:11:57.23]

JULIE HAIFLEY: From school?

[00:11:57.89]

ADELYN BRESKIN: —for just the social parties. And then they'd go into college after that. And I think, with a year out, takes quite a big deal of readjustment.

[00:12:13.31]

JULIE HAIFLEY: At that age, too.

[00:12:14.24]

ADELYN BRESKIN: At that age.

[00:12:14.93]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I would think so.

[00:12:15.83]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yeah. But that's the way it was done then. I didn't do it. I went right ahead at Baltimore, and went—I tried Bryn Mawr College, because in order to graduate from the school you had to pass your college entrance exams. But it was before they had really established their art department. And so, I decided to go up to Radcliffe instead, and to try to go into an art school at the same time.

[00:13:07.82]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How long did you stay at Bryn Mawr College before you decided to leave?

[00:13:13.67]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Just long enough to find out that they didn't have what I wanted—[they

laugh]—in the way of art courses.

[00:13:21.39]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And then, how did your parents, or your father, feel about your moving to Boston?

[00:13:28.01]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I don't think he minded my making the change. So—I loved Boston. I loved Cambridge. And I enjoyed four years out there.

[00:13:49.16]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Had you been there before you went to school?

[00:13:53.72]

ADELYN BREESKIN: My stepmother came from there. And I'd gone up to visit her as a sample of the children that she would have to take care of. [They laugh.]

[00:14:13.90]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were you selected for that honor?

[00:14:15.76]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I was selected for that. [They laugh.]

[00:14:19.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And how long did you spend with her when you went up at that time?

[00:14:24.59]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, I think about a month.

[00:14:25.96]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:14:27.43]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I remember she lived out at Jamaica Plain. I remember going to the Arboretum. And I behaved myself.

[00:14:43.84]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, you must have passed the test.

[00:14:45.56]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I passed the test. [Laughs.]

[00:14:46.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: She married your father.

[00:14:49.00]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yeah.

[00:14:56.52]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You also read a lot as a child.

[00:14:59.15]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, I did.

[00:15:00.18]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What were some of your favorite books?

[00:15:04.84]

ADELYN BRESKIN: *Otto of the Silver Hand* was one, illustrated by Howard Pyle. That—I remember those illustrations so well. And in my father's library, which was an exceptionally good library—he'd inherited a lot from his father, who was a great admirer of Napoleon and of the English theater. He had a lot of books on the English 18th, 19th century theater, which I didn't delve into very much. But I loved the books illustrated by Gustave Doré, which were rather—the one of *Paradise Lost*—rather gruesome illustrations in some of them. But impressed me tremendously. I think influenced me to want to go into art as a specialty.

[00:16:29.88]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And you did some sketching as a young person too.

[00:16:32.28]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I did. I had a—it was while my mother was ill, I contracted measles or chicken pox, one of those childhood diseases, and had to be isolated. And they were preoccupied with her illness, of course. And I was just put in a room. And my meals were put—left at my door. And I was alone for that time. And my father had wonderful bound copies of old *Harper's Weeklies*. And I would copy from some of those. I remember copying, for instance, the—well, some sort of portrait of Leonardo, I think it was, that I found as a drawing in there in the *Harper's Weekly*.

[00:17:45.77]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you take any art classes as you were growing up in school?

[00:17:50.96]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, always. I remember, for instance, in the fall, getting lovely berries that I copied in watercolor, that I painted from a group, a still life. And I finally—and I went also to a place called the Charcoal Club in Baltimore, where we had models, and where I drew in charcoal. And, at the end of the year, we were asked to bring in any paintings or drawings that we made during the year for an exhibition. And I went out and picked—which I shouldn't have done—some wild azaleas, and sketched them very quickly, and covered a small canvas with these flowers and sent that into this exhibition. And the painting was stolen out of the exhibition.

[00:19:29.80]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh!

[00:19:32.41]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And I decided that was a good time to stop.

[00:19:38.08]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It wasn't a clue for you to go on, that your work was so—

[00:19:43.24]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. I soon realized that I didn't have the talent that it takes. I think an artist has a very hard time, a hard life. And when they do get ahead, it's very exciting, of course. But I was just reading yesterday—I had two very nice people come to see me with the work of an American artist who didn't make the grade. And the reason he didn't—he was tremendously talented. But he had to give it up because—and earn his living another way—because he was ahead of his time, actually.

[00:20:45.01]

He went in for abstractions as early as 1908, 1909. And he must have had such a tragic time

because it was his great interest. And, yet, he couldn't pursue it. He married, had a wife to support, became a farmer instead, a fruit farmer. And then, later on, he did—sporadically, he'd go back to it but never really had any success. And that's hard. I mean, beautiful work. I hope maybe we're going to have an exhibition of some of it, because he left it all. He didn't sell it, didn't sell very much at all.

[00:21:59.68]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And what is his name?

[00:22:01.72]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Manierre Dawson. And before he died, one of the dealers in New York, Mr. Schoelkopf—who showed me one or two of his things that they had. And it was while I was the curator of 20th century art here. And I was so much interested. And Mr. Schoelkopf said, "Well, if you really want one, I think Mr. Dawson would give you one." And he did, he gave one to us, which we have on exhibition upstairs in the Lincoln Gallery now.

[00:22:51.63]

So it's a case of how difficult—what a difficult time an artist can have, and yet have all the necessary talent. So you really need—he must have been a very modest man. And he couldn't push himself at all. So it takes a lot of know-how, as well as the talent, I think, for an artist. And I think every artist should have a dealer to push him, because you can't expect the artist to concentrate on his art and—

[00:23:43.56]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It's too hard to do both things at one time.

[00:23:45.88]

ADELYN BREESKIN: To do both, yes. And this Manierre Dawson, met Arthur B. Davies, who begged him to come and take a studio in New York and just work at his painting. But he didn't do it, became a farmer instead.

[00:24:15.99]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you save any of your early sketches and drawings or—

[00:24:20.82]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No.

[00:24:21.14]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You didn't.

[00:24:21.93]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No. I think we took them and made a fire. [They laugh.]

[00:24:34.48]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Let's see. There was someone who was influential in your life at Radcliffe, Katherine Child?

[00:24:42.88]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Katherine B. Child.

[00:24:44.14]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Yeah. Could you tell me about her?

[00:24:46.54]

ADELYN BREESKIN: She was marvelous woman. I've known three very great women in my

life who influenced me. And she was the one who influenced me the most, I think, of the three. She had this school, art school, in Boston. And I went to that school for the four years that I was in Boston. And I went—took courses at Radcliffe at the same time, a few even at Harvard, because one could do that also. So I took Hambidge's course in the whirling square of the fourth dimension. And that I found fascinating. It interested me very much. Then, I understood. Since, I've forgotten all about it—[they laugh]—as one does if you don't really continue to concentrate on it.

[00:26:02.74]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It must be part of your consciousness at some level. [Laughs.]

[00:26:06.91]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Maybe. But, anyway, Miss Child really guided me through those years. And she had this Stuart Club on the Fenway, where I lived. And she was at the school every day and was watching my progress. But I also was there with a few other girls who were going to Radcliffe at the time, as I was, and also music students, and a few—one of my best friends while I was there—was just taking a sort of Katharine Gibbs course. She came from Honolulu. And she was in Boston for the years that I was there. When I was married, she was my maid of honor. Then she went back and married someone in Honolulu.

[00:27:40.74]

But this group at the Stuart Club were an interesting group of young women, all of them pursuing their education. And I think that it meant more to me to be there than it might have in a college dormitory because there was that variety of the people pursuing different avenues. And those were good years.

[00:28:20.87]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What did you do during those summers?

[00:28:24.20]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Went to Europe. My parents had this summer home up in Blue Hill, Maine. And it was a great big house. And my three daughters went up and stayed with them for the summers. And they had a wonderful time, because my half-brother had a sailing boat. And he was delighted to have the help of my daughters in sanding the boat, and in painting it, and keep—

[00:29:10.79]

JULIE HAIFLEY: All of that work.

[00:29:11.45]

ADELYN BRESKIN: —polishing the brass and all that. They learned to know sailing very well. And it was a good healthy life.

[00:29:21.15]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Also wondered about your summers during college, whether—did you go back to Baltimore, or did you stay in Boston during the summer?

[00:29:31.19]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I always went back. I didn't stay up there during the summer. But they would—my family would be going away, because the heat in Baltimore before air conditioning was not exactly of the variety that would make one want to stay put.

[00:29:59.79]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So the whole family would go off for the summer, then, to Maine or—

[00:30:05.18]

ADELYN BREEKIN: Before Maine we went for a few summers to Gloucester. And that was nice too. [Inaudible] good. But Blue Hill was even better. And I would drive my children up there in my car and then come back and leave for Europe as quickly as I could. One year I went over by shipboard with the Curator of Manuscripts of the Walters Gallery, Dorothy Miner. And we worked in the British Museum about six weeks, two months—she in the manuscript division; I was working on drawings in the drawing division there. Thrilling experience.

[00:31:18.93]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was that your first trip to Europe or—

[00:31:21.87]

ADELYN BREEKIN: No, I'd gone over at the age of 16 with my parents, I and my older sister. And my father had one of the first Packard cars in Baltimore. And we had a Black chauffeur, William Jackson, who was a character. And we took the car on shipboard.

[00:31:51.85]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You did? You took the car with you to England?

[00:31:54.51]

ADELYN BREEKIN: Yes, took it.

[00:31:54.96]

JULIE HAIFLEY: My goodness.

[00:31:55.75]

ADELYN BREEKIN: And traveled all through Europe for four and a half months.

[00:32:01.05]

JULIE HAIFLEY: That must have been marvelous.

[00:32:02.49]

ADELYN BREEKIN: And it was wonderful. And because the fact, William Jackson, of course, couldn't speak any of the European languages, we had a courier as well as William who sat up in the front seat with William in his touring car Packard that William called "the cream puff." It was cream colored, beautiful car. And so, this courier, his name was Monsieur Antoniadis. He was Greek. And he had plenty of other languages, of course. And he took care of William Jackson.

[00:32:53.63]

Interestingly enough, William Jackson, also, of course, went up to Blue Hill in the later years. And he was well known up there. He would tell the natives in Blue Hill, Maine all about his European trip over and over again. So that just a few years ago, when my daughter and I drove up to Blue Hill to see what it was like after all these years, they remembered William. They didn't remember my father and my mother or any of us. [Laughs.] But William Jackson, they remembered.

[00:33:39.86]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you visit museums in Europe on that trip?

[00:33:43.18]

ADELYN BREEKIN: Yes, I did. Oh, yes. When I was 16, you see, that was my first trip when I was with—on this automobile trip with William Jackson. And we went—we started in at Paris. And that was interesting, because we arrived on a Sunday. And my father hadn't gotten quite enough French francs to make it possible for us to get the best seats at the Longshore races for that Sunday afternoon. William was taken by the manager of the hotel and sat in a

box.

[00:34:32.34]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh my goodness.

[00:34:34.21]

ADELYN BRESKIN: You see? This was back in 19—it was before World War I. And so, a Black man in Europe was quite a sensation. I remember I saw—it was a very famous sort of a Music Hall star, made quite a—I guess a sensationally advertised person named Gaby Deslys, who got some gorgeous pearls from, I think it was the Duke of—the Prince of Wales. I saw her wearing the pearls that afternoon. But I went back to Bryn Mawr school as a senior. I was 16 during that trip. And I remember how helpful it was to have seen so much during that summer, and especially all museums.

[00:36:06.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Had you been to many museums in this country before this?

[00:36:10.75]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, in Baltimore, at the Peabody Institute. When the Peabody Institute was founded in Baltimore, it was founded for all of the arts. And so, there was a very fine collection that came—I don't know who brought it together, but there was one—at least one big exhibition on the entire second floor of the Peabody, of paintings. And there was money appropriated to buy paintings, as well as to have concerts. And then the music school was there, too.

[00:37:11.13]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What about the Peale Museum then. Was it open?

[00:37:15.13]

ADELYN BRESKIN: That was opened later. I don't think it was when I was—wasn't open—yes—no, it was sort of—it was open. It didn't amount to very much at that time, but later it did. And McGill [ph] James became the Director of the Peale Museum before he came to the National Gallery as assistant to Mr. Finley, who's name we have as—in his memory, we've named this particular room that we're in, the Finley Conference Room. That's David Finley, the first director of the National Gallery. And McGill James was his assistant—Assistant Director. But before that, he'd been the head of the Peale Museum. And we had such good times there. He'd give wonderful parties.

[00:38:27.69]

Every spring, Mr. Paul Sachs, who taught museum course at Harvard, would bring his class down the East Coast from Cambridge, stopping at Philadelphia and Baltimore, and then arriving in Washington. And when they came to Baltimore, they would always come out to the Baltimore Museum, and be given at least a lovely lunch. And then we would have cocktails at the Peale Museum, and then have dinner connection with the Walters Gallery. So they'd have a lovely day in Baltimore. It was the Fogg Museum course, class. And he would come year after year. It was a high spot in the year.

[00:39:46.51]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was the Walters open when you were growing up, or was that later?

[00:39:50.31]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, that came later. But it was open only during Lent every year. That's what Mr. Walters did.

[00:40:00.90]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:40:01.65]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And I always went during Lent, and even, one year, copied an early Giovanni Di Paolo panel in watercolor. I did that more than one year. When it was opened in Lent, I'd go down and sketch. But I was very close to its very, very beginnings of the Walters Gallery after it opened to the public, and knew Morgan Marshall, who was put in charge of it.

[00:41:02.73]

And then, they had to have this—form this committee of advisors. And that was—they came from different other museums. Belle Greene of the Morgan Library was on the committee, and George Stout, who was up at the Fogg Museum, and some local people, also. And then it was they who engaged the staff. And all of those early staff members I met as they came, and tried to help to introduce them to Baltimore. Baltimore is a very traditional city. And the strangers don't have an easy time. That's always been true. You see, there isn't much—there hasn't been very much hotel life, either, restaurant life. People in Baltimore entertain in their homes.

[00:42:32.77]

JULIE HAIFLEY: In their homes or at the club.

[00:42:34.98]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, very much more that way. So with these young people, when they'd come, I'd try to be friendly to them. And that was—one of them was Dorothy Miner. One was Winifred Kennedy, who was a registrar, and Dorothy Hill, who was a classicist in charge of the classical collections, and Marvin Ross, for the medieval, and then Edward King, and George Hamilton. That was George Hamilton's first job, was at the Walters for post-Renaissance art.

[00:43:22.97]

There was a wonderful story told about George, who's been here as the Kress Fellow this last year at the National Gallery. During the war years, World War II, he couldn't stand the news every day in the Baltimore papers. So he went over to Howard Street and bought a pile of 19th century newspapers, daily papers, that they sold by the stack, by the foot. And he had a whole big stack of those, and would read those every day instead of the war news. It was too sad to read.

But the relationship between the Baltimore Museum and the Walters Gallery has always been very friendly and outgoing. And we tried not to buy in the same field. In other words, the Walters didn't try to go into the modern field at all. And we, for instance, knew that they had a very fine group of—they didn't have much American art. But they had wonderful Indian paintings by a few of the earlier painters. And they had, of course, all of the Europeans. And our Baltimore Museum was a museum for European art as well as American art. But Mrs. May, who was one of our great patrons—I think the most generous patron that I've ever come across, because she would buy—she didn't have a home, and she—studying in Paris under—

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[00:00:10.78]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Before we go further with your time at the Baltimore Museum, I wanted to just get back to when you were in Boston studying. And I wondered if you ever took any printmaking courses, or how your interest in prints developed.

[00:00:27.43]

ADELYN BRESKIN: The Boston Museum of Fine Arts had a very active print department headed by Fitzroy Carrington, an Englishman come over having been trained in England in the print field. And I spent all of my spare time, seemed to me, a great deal of it, in that print department of Boston Museum where he was delighted to teach me. There were so few people interested in that field in those early years. And, therefore, I had the place almost to myself over there—the only person, other than the curator, Mr. Carrington, and I.

[00:01:28.78]

And Fitzroy Carrington was really good. He did teach me so much that, when I left Boston, I got a job right away at the Metropolitan Museum in the print department. But that was because I had such a good teacher in the curator there. And, really, he was all—he did a great deal of publishing too, Fitzroy Carrington. There was a *Print Collector's Quarterly* that he published. And then he had two extra publications. He had, for instance, the work of Brázda, a printmaker, beautiful printmaker. He wasn't known at all then. And, of course, it was Mr. Ivins who was the curator at the Metropolitan after I went, who went there, who first introduced me to Mary Cassatt.

[00:02:51.10]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:02:52.43]

ADELYN BREESKIN: He showed me these drypoints of hers, and mentioned that she wasn't at all known in our country. And yet this was great work, and she was American. So that started my interest in her work. That was great, those years at the Boston Museum, while I was taking courses at Harvard, going to the Boston Museum.

[00:03:31.56]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you ever do any printmaking yourself?

[00:03:34.71]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, yeah.

[00:03:35.61]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You did?

[00:03:36.36]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes. And when I was at the Baltimore Museum, I was Curator of Prints. I gave a course at Johns Hopkins of the history of prints. And I had the entire class—we met at the museum, and they all had to make prints, drypoint, and etching. Yeah, I had a little press, right there. And then, when it came to lithography, there was the Hoen Lithograph Company in Baltimore. There were quite famous then. And I made arrangements to take a whole class down there, and we made lithographs there. And if you've never felt the stroke of a lithograph pencil on a beautiful stone, lithograph stone, it's the smoothest stroke you can imagine. And lithography is something that you have to really feel in order to appreciate it.

[00:05:07.60]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It's much easier to understand than when you look at it too. If you—

[00:05:11.26]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, if you tried it yourself. It's true of all printing. So teaching history, I made them all, we actively were concerned with it. And I taught the class at the museum in a beautiful big gallery where we had prints. And I gave them a test every once in a while. And they had a big print collection. When I went there, there were less than 50 prints in the collection. And when I left, there were just about 80,000.

[00:06:04.33]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Wow.

[00:06:05.32]

ADELYN BREESKIN: And it's exciting to have that full of a collection.

[00:06:11.19]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:06:12.78]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And for these tests that I'd give, I'd pick out fine impressions and poor impressions, and then an original, and a copy. And I worked hard. And then, those courses were done at night, after a hard day's work of curating. And later I did it even after I was director at the museum. I still led for 11 years. I had courses at Hopkins, night courses, because my salary needed a little supplement indeed.

[00:07:04.92]

JULIE HAIFLEY: In reading the other interview, you said that the salaries were just abnormally—not only were the salaries in the museum field low at the time, but in Baltimore they were even lower than—

[00:07:17.64]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yeah.

[00:07:19.83]

JULIE HAIFLEY: —other comparable institutions.

[00:07:24.20]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, indeed, it's true.

[00:07:27.75]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So now, back to the time when you were at the Metropolitan, did you meet your husband when you were in New York?

[00:07:36.29]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, up in Blue Hill.

[00:07:37.73]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:07:38.96]

ADELYN BRESKIN: In the summer. That was one summer when I didn't go to Europe. And he was studying with Franz Kneisel up in Blue Hill. And I met him up there. And two of my very good friends from Boston were up here also studying with Franz Kneisel. I remember that they had—Franz Kneisel then could get \$25 for an hour lesson. And we thought that was pretty tremendous.

[00:08:30.07]

But, anyway, no, no, it's been quite a—has had quite a music colony, thanks to Mr. Kreisler being up there. Fritz Kreisler came and stayed with him, with the Kneisels. The director of the Boston Symphony for a long time was Karl Muck, German. He came up there. Krehbiel, the critic was there. So there was plenty of music interests. And Kneisel's daughter, Marianne Kneisel, started a whole—followed on after her father, and had many music students there with the whole staff of teachers. And so, up until a few years ago, the music element had flourished there.

[00:10:03.05]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And then, when you—did you quit your job at the Metropolitan right after you were married and moved? Did you live in New York, or did you move away?

[00:10:15.61]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I went to Australia on my wedding trip.

[00:10:18.48]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, I didn't know that.

[00:10:20.01]

ADELYN BREESKIN: We stayed a whole year.

[00:10:22.05]

JULIE HAIFLEY: A year in Australia?

[00:10:23.19]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yeah.

[00:10:23.94]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I never knew that. [Cross talk.]

[00:10:27.06]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yeah. I loved Australia. It's a very nice place. And the people are very kind, very good people, much more like Americans than they are like English. Although quite a few of them would speak of going home to England. And I acquired a beautiful Great Dane dog while I was out there during that year because my husband was touring through Australia, concertizing. And the travel was very primitive. I stayed in a charming little house in a suburb of Sydney called Manly.

[00:11:24.51]

I had a beautiful little white bungalow. And I stayed there. It had a huge poinsettia tree over the front door. And I acquired this dog. When we left, of course, the dog had to come along. I just couldn't leave it—a beautiful animal. But it never was well in our climate. It could have been if I'd been able to give it more care. But being such a huge animal, we did take an apartment in New York after we returned. But when my first child was born, I couldn't manage to take this huge Great Dane and give it the proper exercise, so I sent it down to be at my parents' home. And they had a 25-acre estate. But my stepmother wouldn't allow the dog in the house. And the winters were too severe for the dog being kept out. I had a big house built for it, and how big of a house. But, of course, we couldn't heat it. And so he only lived a few years.

[00:13:09.66]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:13:12.75]

ADELYN BREESKIN: And, on the way back, the ship stopped at Pago Pago, Samoa. And I was so eager to be able to give the dog some exercise ashore. Usually the better natives, when the ships come in, disappear up into the hills, the mountains, and just leave the more merchandized type to sell trinkets to the people on shipboard may stay around the ship. But the others would disappear. But when they saw this dog, everyone came running. They showed me all their greatest treasures—

[00:14:09.90]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, how wonderful.

[00:14:11.14]

ADELYN BREESKIN: —and wanted an exchange. "Leave the dog here, and you can have all of this." I could have really made quite a beautiful collection of the type of clothes and the wonderful inlaid tortoiseshell objects, very handsome.

[00:14:33.56]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I guess if you'd known what a hard time the dog was going to have—

[00:14:36.74]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I would have left it—should have left it. Would have been nice.

[00:14:47.07]

JULIE HAIFLEY: But were all of your daughters born in New York then, or did you move around?

[00:14:51.72]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I moved around. The middle one was born here in Washington in the middle of the summer, the 23rd of July. Oh, it was so hot, the heat. Under the skylights, you know? And then the youngest one was born in Pittsburgh. My husband—we started the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

[00:15:24.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:15:25.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: He was the first conductor of that. It's still one of the best orchestras. And I had a few good years there and was at the museum quite a few years, curating. And knew Avinoff, who was the director, a Russian.

[00:15:53.29]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you work there at all or did you just—

[00:15:55.87]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I would haunt the print collection there too. And then, and also of course, all of the international, Carnegie International was there when I was living in Pittsburgh. And I later became, more recently, I was the American juror for that together with Roland Penrose and Hindler [ph] and Hans Hartung [inaudible] from Paris. Hans is really German. He was more French than the French. And he always liked French art and Japanese art—hated American art. But Mr. Penrose and I had the chance to really give Ellsworth Kelly the first prize, the two against one, and we won out.

[00:17:08.18]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It must have been a good way to keep your opinions in art during those years.

[00:17:13.85]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, haunting museums.

[00:17:19.13]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you do some teaching then too during that time?

[00:17:21.23]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Oh, yes, I did. When my oldest child was ready for school, I was in Pittsburgh. And there was a progressive school there where I was keen to have this child enrolled. And I went and saw the director of the school and asked if I could give an art course for them, and get a rebate on tuition price, which was considerable. And so they took me on, and I taught just the top class in the school. It was just for younger children up to 12, 13 years, the primary grades, and maybe intermediate before high school. But I had a wonderful time at school. And one of the nicest letters I ever received was from one of the children, a little girl in that class, who, after she was grown, married a brilliant lawyer who was very close to Rauschenberg and Billy Kleeever? Clover? Kleeever?

[00:19:20.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Kluver?

[00:19:21.39]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Kluver.

[00:19:21.90]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Yeah.

[00:19:23.58]

ADELYN BREESKIN: And helped to start that school they had in New York for a time. And this child, Rose, after she'd married, she wrote me a letter saying how much that course had meant to her, and she remembered it more and used it more than she did any other course that she had in school.

[00:19:49.68]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And that was the history of art?

[00:19:54.66]

ADELYN BREESKIN: What I did was start in with Egypt and then was going on to Greece. But [inaudible] a friend of my dear friend Miss Child, was excavating on the island of Knossos while Sir Arthur Evans was also there.

[00:20:25.53]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:20:26.58]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I corresponded with Sir Arthur Evans and with Mrs. Williams, who was excavating at the other end of the island, and told my class about Crete. We spent the whole rest of the half year, first half year on just the art of Crete. They became so fascinated by it. And I could tell them about the different layers and the excavations. And I corresponded with the two people active in the field. It made it more interesting.

[00:21:11.08]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Very exciting.

[00:21:14.10]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Later I went to Knossos. And I was so disappointed because I don't think that they've done a very good job renovating the place.

[00:21:33.63]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. Because many of the things they found there, or did they go to other museums, or other—

[00:21:44.84]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No, there's a good deal there, still. But it doesn't look to me quite as it should.

[00:22:03.16]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So then, I guess, you came back to Baltimore.

[00:22:07.52]

ADELYN BREESKIN: In 1930 I came back. I'd been married for ten years. And I brought my three little girls and came back to Baltimore and, right away, got a job at the Baltimore Museum, which was just opened—just starting on Wyman Park. And there had been activity trying to form an art museum. And, let me see, it was under the—The head of Bryn Mawr College, Lichtenberg lived in Baltimore, and had a beautiful home. And after she started at Bryn Mawr College, she wasn't in Baltimore very much, so she loaned her house for the

Baltimore Museum, which they started.

[00:23:35.25]

And that was done. But then, it was limited, of course in its activities, helping more the local artists. And then along came this idea of a federal grant. No, it wasn't really a grant. It must have been some sort of a loan. And the beautiful John Russell Pope building was completed. And they moved in at the end of August in 1929. And by January or February of 1930 I went down and asked for a job in the print department. I started, and—

[00:24:47.56]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was there a print department or—

[00:24:49.72]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, they only just—

[00:24:50.65]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You went there and said they should have a print department? [Laughs.]

[00:24:53.20]

ADELYN BRESKIN: There—no, it just happened that on the board was this Blanche Adler, who had given these 50 prints. And the director moved what had been there in the old Gallery House in downtown. They moved into this building. And I think I didn't have any competition for it. [They laugh.]

[00:25:41.03]

There weren't many people in the print field at that time. And I started in. I remember, it was in that first summer that I found out that the Garrett Collection that had been the Cleghorn Collection—Cleghorn was a first big print collector in the USA. He lived in Philadelphia. And he was—when Seymour Hayden came over on a lecture tour, he stayed with Mr. Cleghorn, and went through his whole collection. And he was especially interested in seeing the Rembrandts in the collection, and marked on the back of each one—in pencil—the ones he considered were excellent.

[00:26:42.36]

So the whole collection was bought when Mr. Cleghorn died, by Harrison Garrett. And well, one of our foremost citizens. And then, when he died, his two sons, John Garrett, who became our ambassador to Italy, and Robert Garrett, both Princeton graduates. Robert Garrett had won the discobolus in the Olympics, which gave him a little extra notoriety.

[00:27:27.58]

But, anyway, the two sons, when they inherited this collection, they put it in storage in a warehouse in Baltimore. And we had the terrible Baltimore fire that burned down the whole lower downtown part of Baltimore in 1904. And just about a week before that fire took place, these two Garrett brothers had decided that they should get that collection out of this warehouse and made arrangements to send it to the Library of Congress for safekeeping, on loan. So it was just—

[00:28:21.54]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Certainly fortunate.

[00:28:22.85]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Certainly fortunate. And there are about 28,000 in that collection. And my first job, my first summer in Baltimore, in 1930, was to commute to Washington every day to prepare to bring that collection back to Baltimore. And I had to go to the Library of Congress every weekday. And with one of their young assistants, who happened to be named Alice Parker, the two of us had to go through every print in that collection and check it off in a beautiful panel that Mr. Cleghorn had made of the entire collection. So that was my

first summer in Baltimore. It was a hot summer, too. And I was crossing the street to go to lunch from the Library of Congress one day. The asphalt had melted. Shoes—shoe marks all over the street. And I think I had a slight concussion from heat.

[00:29:58.65]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Must have been a great day when you brought the collection back to Baltimore.

[00:30:02.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Oh, we had a wonderful opening. And Fitzroy Carrington came down from Boston to be our speaker. He said that if there was only one Rembrandt in that collection, it would still be one of the great collections. And that was the one-fourth state of Rembrandt's "Three Crosses," of which there's a beautiful impression.

[00:30:39.44]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Why did you decide to come back to Baltimore? Was it because your family was here?

[00:30:44.87]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. That was it. My family happened to be in Florida for the winter. And my parents have a home down there in Mountain Lake Park. Anyway, after coming back—I always loved Baltimore. It's a nice city. I still love going back to seeing the Baltimore Museum and the Walter [inaudible].

[00:31:36.27]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And your father was involved in starting the Baltimore Museum too.

[00:31:40.89]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. He was head of the Citywide Congress. And it was he who, I think, helped put across this great amount of money needed to get John Russell Pope to design the building. And it's a very nice building, that [inaudible]. When Mr. Pope was asked to design the National Gallery, he was an old man then, but his firm did design the National Gallery. What they did to start with was just blow up the design for the Baltimore Museum.

[00:32:39.59]

And I remember seeing later, as soon as the National Gallery opened, they had a big exhibition of, I think, over a hundred drawings that were produced by the John Russell Pope firm before the actual designs were completed. And, of course, David Finley had a great deal to do with that, being the first director. And I was talking to him in his later years. And I was saying I thought that the building was a beautiful building. And he was so pleased that I mentioned it, because he said he found it so fine in which to work. And there were very few changes that he wanted to make. Now I think the East Wing—which is very different, but also very handsome.

[00:33:59.24]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you come to Washington often during those years that you were in Baltimore? I mean, aside from the summer that you spent working on the print collection?

[00:34:08.67]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I was at the opening of the National Gallery. One of the coldest nights I've ever experienced—terribly cold.

[00:34:18.23]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What year was that?

[00:34:19.76]

ADELYN BRESKIN: '40—

[00:34:20.42]

JULIE HAIFLEY: '41?

[00:34:21.50]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, later than that. I can't remember. I think it was as late as '47. '46. I don't know.

[00:34:41.29]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Then the first publishing work that you did on Mary Cassatt, when did that come along?

[00:34:49.10]

ADELYN BRESKIN: That was in '48. And I was—let's see—I was just Curator of Prints. No, I was Chief Director of the museum at that time. And well, I pursued my interest ever since I've been at the Metropolitan in her work. It seemed all I could, wherever I could.

[00:35:26.34]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You organized some exhibitions, too, of her work.

[00:35:29.99]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. The first one was in '36. And mostly prints, but also drawings and pastels, one or two oils. I don't remember any other museum exhibition as early as that, except for print exhibitions at the Grolier Club in New York, and the Avery Collection, of course, at the New York Public Library. They would show her prints quite often. But it's amazing what's happened just in the last ten years. Actually, it was in 1970, that my catalogue of the oils, pastels, watercolors, and drawings was published by the Smithsonian Press in 1970. And it was at that time that the National Gallery asked me to organize an exhibition of her work for them in celebration of my catalog.

[00:37:17.19]

And so, I can remember taking all the photographs over to the conference room of the National Gallery and spreading them out and saying, "This would make a beautiful exhibition, I think." And they would change a few things. And John Boyd [ph] was the person who helped me, and was there, together with Carter Brown, to look over my choice of the show. And it was after that show that John [inaudible]—because their photographers had taken wonderful color photographs of the entire exhibition. He then published his book on Mary Cassatt using all of those color photographs, which was fine. But it's since then that there's tremendous interest in her work has grown.

[00:38:46.79]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And your book coming out has been reprinted?

[00:38:50.18]

ADELYN BRESKIN: The 1948 spring catalog will be out. First they said last April, then they made it June, then July, now it's August. But I'm not criticizing them, because it's quite wonderful. The print catalog raisonné was published, as I say, in '48. And all of the plates for it were made at the Meriden Gravure Company in Connecticut. And it was about maybe four years ago that I decided—or three years ago, I decided that the catalog really should be reprinted, and aroused the interest of the Smithsonian Press in doing it. But even just at that time, I decided I'll write the Meriden Gravure and just ask if they, by any chance, still had all those plates that they used in the publishing of the '48 catalogs. And they'd saved them all.

[00:40:23.18]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Isn't that wonderful?

[00:40:24.35]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I think that's quite wonderful. They knew that her work was important, and that they shouldn't—they should save them for another edition to come out. And that's just what has happened. I think it would be interesting to compare the two editions, this new edition with the '48 edition. Because the process used is not the same. But they could easily adapt those plates to a more modern technique.

[00:41:19.23]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You think the reproductions will be better in the new one?

[00:41:24.14]

ADELYN BREESKIN: They were awfully good then. They had to be, you see, because with these drypoints, you had to be able to see every line. And those lines are very delicate. So—and Meriden is the best for that type of work, as good as any in the country. But they take time. But the Smithsonian Press, my editor is Louise Heskett, and the designer is Betty Sur, both from the Smithsonian Press. And they tell me Meriden is wonderful, but they're slow. You have to give them time. So I'm—we're giving them time until August. I hope it will be out by August.

[00:42:20.83]

JULIE HAIFLEY: But this other book will be reprinted also?

[00:42:23.89]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, that will come next. And I'm working on that—working hard, getting that ready, for 1970. Because it was out of print by '72. And I had a call earlier this morning from someone. "Where can I get a copy of the '70 catalog?" It's just not available. And as for that print catalog of 1948, that was—there were only 550 of those printed. And most of those were remaindered because the publisher, H. Bidner, died right after he completed the publishing book. And most of them were remaindered, therefore. His estate wasn't interested.

[00:43:32.29]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, We're About out of tape for today. So I guess the next time I'll ask you about becoming Director of the Baltimore Museum. And then maybe we'll get to your time in Washington at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art and here at the National Collection.

[00:43:51.95]

ADELYN BREESKIN: All right. I don't think I did this well at all.

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[00:00:13.22]

JULIE HAIFLEY: This is the second interview session with Adelyn Breeskin at the National Collection of Fine Arts by Julie Haifley for the Archives of American Art. Today is August 1st, 1979. The last time we talked, we were in the midst of discussion of your work at the Baltimore Museum. And during your first 12 years there, you moved from Curator of Prints, to Chief Curator to General Curator. Is that right?

[00:00:47.12]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Correct. Yes.

[00:00:48.19]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And what were some of the highlights from those years before you became director?

[00:00:54.61]

ADELYN BREEKIN: Putting on very interesting exhibitions. And I think one of the important details about those years is the fact that I found a curator who had had one of those remarkable educations given for Ph.D.s in Germany between the wars. And Gertrude Rosenthal had a Ph.D. under Brinkmann over there, and then when the Nazis came along, had to leave, went to London, and was offered a job there. But her two brothers were in our country, in New York. And so she decided not to go to the Courtauld where she could have been a worker, research worker, but instead came to our country, and was looking for a job, found a very menial job putting away slides at Johns Hopkins, or Goucher, I think.

[00:02:28.30]

And then we met, and she came to be with us. And she was a tremendous help to me because although her English was somewhat limited, she managed to be able to write beautifully after she'd been over here only a short time. And we worked together on exhibitions. And I think we put on some remarkable exhibitions with loans from all over the country, and one marvelous 18th century exhibition, mostly French art of the 18th century, with beautiful Watteau drawings, and wonderful small maquettes of different architectural details, one of a whole little chancel, and another [inaudible] came from a private collection. And we really had to twist that man's arm to get it because it's very delicate. It is simply very [inaudible].

[00:04:09.76]

But it was a beautiful show. And the hardest one that we had to do, I think, was one that was especially hard because it was furniture, Baltimore furniture of the 18th century, which had never been tabulated. And we managed to create the definitive book on Baltimore 18th century furniture, which was closer to that of English Chippendale, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton styles. Closer to the English than, I think, any other American type. Philadelphia Chippendale, of course. And then in New England, Sheraton and Hepplewhite, as well. But this was a big show. And it took us over a year to do it.

[00:05:24.63]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was it mostly from private collections?

[00:05:27.60]

ADELYN BREEKIN: Yes. Actually, all from private collections. And we had to actually go around and see the different pieces of furniture in private homes, private apartments. And then, having chosen what we wanted—and I didn't do the choosing, nor did Judah Rosenthal—we left it to our best commercial antiquarians to choose for us.

[00:06:16.13]

And the very best one, I think, was Joe Kennedy up in York, Pennsylvania. And then John Schwartz in Baltimore. And the third person we had was Eleanor Pinkerton Stuart. Three very good antiquarians. And they would go and see the things. I sent a secretary with them who could take shorthand and write down their comments. Then we had to send our photographers the next week to photograph them.

[00:07:02.28]

And in some of these little apartments, actually, in the city, such small rooms, and to be able to get a photograph at a sufficient distance to be able to take in the whole piece was not easy. Then at the very end, when we had it all together—and it took a whole year—we asked Mr. DuPont, *the* Mr. DuPont, to come and examine all of the photographs and tell us just what he thought wasn't quite up to scratch, if he thought any of it wasn't. And he only took out about two things.

[00:07:49.50]

So that was a great show. And the book of it, the catalog, remains the standard catalog for Baltimore furniture. And through that, I did every description of every piece. And we had to, of course, learn about all these different sections with a piece of [inaudible]. It was hard work, but it was tremendously worthwhile.

[00:08:22.25]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did that idea come about for that show?

[00:08:25.88]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It was my idea. What I did was to go to a board meeting of my board of trustees, big meeting where we had 40 people, and said that I would like to do this show. I thought it was very much needed. If there was anyone on the board who considered themselves sufficiently knowledgeable in the furniture field to want to undertake to choose the show, just to speak that out. Of course, no one did. [Julie laughs.] So then I told them what I was going to do and get these antiquarians, commercialists.

[00:09:08.94]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were there any other shows from that period that stand out in your mind?

[00:09:15.98]

ADELYN BRESKIN: We had one doctor, a Johns Hopkins doctor, in Baltimore, Mason Lord, whose specialty was geriatrics. And it was partly sort of out of respect for him, because when he was a schoolboy, he went up to Andover to school, and then went on, I think, to Princeton. Most Baltimoreans simply always went to Princeton in the earlier days. And he collected a whole history of art with small little examples of the various types and styles and objects. And that, he actually left happy to handle. He died of leukemia much too early. But he interested us in the possibility of doing an exhibition with examples of the art, of different artists, with an example from their youth, and one in their old age.

[00:10:49.80]

And that made a very interesting show, and one that I enjoyed doing very much. But of course, there were always shows. We had one following another always. But I think there was none that was more difficult than the furniture show, especially since we had no one on the staff who was really a specialist in furniture. We did have a Curator of American furniture, but even that came a little later as a result of that show rather than before the show.

[00:11:41.49]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you involved in any activities outside the museum during this period, other than your family? Or you probably didn't have time, the way you were working.

[00:11:53.04]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. Well, I taught at Johns Hopkins for eleven years at night. That's not easy, after a hard day's work, to rush home, have a quick supper, and come back for a two-hour class from eight [p.m.] 'til ten [p.m.] once a week. And I gave two courses, one in history of graphic arts, using all original illustrations from our collection. Of course, we had a tremendous print collection. Before I left, there were just about 80,000 prints. And when I came, there were about 20, 30. So that was something to build. But then also, I gave this other course on the development of modern art.

[00:13:12.23]

And as you know, I felt that my chief concern after I became acting director, and then full director of the museum was to prove to Etta Cone, one of the two Cone sisters who survived. Her sister, her older sister, Claribel, died in 1928. And Etta lived on until '49. And I had felt I had to prove to her that Baltimore had sufficient appreciation of more contemporary art. And it was Matisse, of course, 19th and early 20th century, painting and sculpture. Some sculpture. And so that was really my main object. And so I knew that developing interest in contemporary art all around was of great importance, and had practically no importance for any members of the board.

[00:14:38.00]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Hmm. Were you able to persuade any of them to take your course?

[00:14:42.53]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, I did. In fact, the one who later became the president of the board took my course in graphic arts.

[00:14:54.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, not in contemporary.

[00:15:00.33]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No, not in contemporary. But it wasn't easy going back to teach after a very full day. I was director of the museum. Every minute during the day is taken. And fortunately, I had a wonderful housekeeper maid.

[00:15:24.92]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I always wondered how you managed to combine your strenuous career.

[00:15:30.32]

ADELYN BREESKIN: That was the greatest bit of good fortune that I had. She was a distant relative of the Duchess of Windsor.

[00:15:42.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. How did you find her?

[00:15:46.90]

ADELYN BREESKIN: She applied for the job. She'd been with some friends of mine, and she stayed for the time my children, my three daughters, two of them had started in at school—the youngest was still at home—until they were all three grown.

[00:16:17.34]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, how wonderful.

[00:16:17.55]

ADELYN BREESKIN: She was always there. And she really was a second mother to them. I don't think they suffered at all not having a father around.

[00:16:32.94]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And she lived with you, then?

[00:16:34.35]

ADELYN BREESKIN: She lived with us.

[00:16:35.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What was her name?

[00:16:37.53]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Rose Templeton Wheelhall Warfield Bradley.

[00:16:43.86]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What a mouthful.

[00:16:46.14]

ADELYN BREESKIN: All those names. Her father was Warfield, the Duchess—

[00:16:57.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Then when the war came, you became acting Director.

[00:17:02.14]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. That's when I became the acting Director. And of course, I only received that because all the men went away to the war.

[00:17:16.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And Wesley Cheek had been there, but he—

[00:17:18.40]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Only for two and a half years. And he went to Washington. Worked in camouflage. He never back to see us. But—

[00:17:36.94]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How were you able to keep the museum exhibitions and programs going during the war?

[00:17:45.76]

ADELYN BRESKIN: We managed. We had one exhibition called "Art for Bonds," which was part of the war effort. Mrs. Roosevelt came and gave a talk, and asked if she could come earlier; she wanted to hear the special broadcast about her one son who was at the Anzio beachhead coming into Italy. And that was to be broadcast, and she wanted especially to hear it. So she asked if she could just have a simple sandwich supper with no guests before we went upstairs and into the auditorium to give her talk. So that's what we did. I met her then over a year later as I was passing West 57th Street. I went by Bergdorf Goodman. And she was just coming up from there and stopped and spoke to me and called me by my name. And I hadn't seen her for a whole year. But she had that gift. It's a rare one, I think.

[00:19:27.11]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was the staff substantially diminished during the war? Or did it stay pretty much the same size?

[00:19:35.54]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It was diminished, but not appallingly so. And they were awfully loyal, my staff. Never had any different factions on the staff. We never had any backbiting of any kind. It was a good staff, mostly women. But I did have—Gene Foster came as assistant to the Director as soon as the war was pretty much over. And he graduated from American University here and specialized in painting, and hoped to be a painter, and asked right away if he could have a room where he could paint at night with putting in a daylight bulb.

And I said, yes, we can give you the room. We can give you the daylight bulb. But I can tell you, you will not be able to keep it up. Our work is too involved and too constant to make it possible to do more than token painting, really keep it up. [Inaudible]. So did he do? He became a museum director, or design director, after been with us for ten years. I received a letter from Santa Barbara from the president of the board, wanting to know if I had any ideas for the directorship, that they needed a new director. And I knew he was ready for the job, his own man. So I recommended him so highly that he got the job the first time.

[00:21:57.83]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] And then you were without—

[00:21:59.33]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yeah. Then it was like cutting off one's right hand. But I've been very proud because he stayed there for, I think, seven years. And then in the war, he'd been in the Navy and been stationed in Honolulu. And he loved the Hawaiian Islands. So that directorship in Honolulu became vacant, and he got that.

[00:22:32.06]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:22:33.44]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And he's still there. One of our best museum directors, I think. So that was a real satisfaction, that he got ahead so well.

[00:22:53.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did you convince the board that you were the person to be director, to be made director, instead of acting director?

[00:23:03.20]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Not everyone was for me. I know there were two or three people who all were already sort of putting feelers out to see who would be available to take over. But I had sufficient majority so that everything was running perfectly smoothly.

[00:23:34.43]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You certainly had the experience by that time. [Laughs.]

[00:23:37.14]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, indeed. Being a native Baltimorean was a help, too. Before I first went to the museum way back in 1930, spring of 1930, we'd had a director who moved the museum into the building in Wyman Park. And he was a very good man from St. Louis. He'd been at the St. Louis Museum. But he didn't know Baltimore. And he started making very critical comments about Baltimoreans not having any feeling for art. Very critical. And Baltimore won't stand for that. Just won't. If you know a few things like that, it helps. [They laugh.] So he didn't last any time at all.

[00:24:51.80]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So you were made Director then in, what, '47?

[00:25:01.64]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yeah. '42—'47. Five years. I stayed on for 15 more years as full Director. And then I felt what I had accomplished in that time was [inaudible]. I received this offer from Washington. Mrs. Gates Lloyd [ph] came over to see me from here, from Washington, asked me to come and start this Washington Gallery of Modern Art. And she was from the Whitney. They got together and raised money to start this, and asked me to come and direct it. So I came without any regrets.

[00:26:03.63]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Before we get on to the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, I wanted to talk some about how you developed your relationships with Baltimore collectors and what acquisitions eventually came to the museum while you were there.

[00:26:21.36]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. I think it's absolutely true that a woman's committee is a wonderful thing to have in a museum. And we started a woman's committee. The first chairman of it was a grand person. And really, we had it going so well. And one thing that this woman's committee did was to start a sales and rental gallery in the museum. And of course, I was the one to go to New York and pick out what could go into the sales and rental gallery. And because I had plenty of good friends among the dealers, we got very good things. And I know that the foremost collectors now in Baltimore started their collection by buying a Hans Hofmann black and white brush painting [inaudible] from the sales and rental gallery.

[00:27:54.62]

And of course, that's a great thing to have in more ways than one, because you could rent a painting, a sculpture, too, and have it at home, see how it fit into your decor, your environment, and then decide to buy it if you like to go to buy it. And that's the way we have

really started our collecting building, through that sales methodology. And through the years, it still goes on. And we have different people go to New York and choose what should be shown. And we have maybe, I don't know, three or four changes during the year.

[00:28:51.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Are they on consignment there?

[00:28:52.95]

ADELYN BREESKIN: On consignment.

[00:28:53.85]

JULIE HAIFLEY: From the New York dealers?

[00:28:55.07]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, dealers. And we've had, for instance, Victor Carlson, who's the Curator of Prints and Drawings. He went not too long ago. Beautiful things among the drawings. Emphasis on drawings when he went to choose. And I remember one big businessman in Baltimore whose wife I knew well. And I knew what his tastes were. And they were very conservative. And I went into the sales and rental gallery one afternoon. And he was there. And he said, "I'm taking that." And I said, "Oh, I'm amazed. I had no idea that you would like anything like that." He said, "I don't, but it's going to be an awfully good conversation piece to my guests who come to my office."

[00:30:09.39]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] What was it? Do you remember?

[00:30:11.23]

ADELYN BREESKIN: It was an abstract.

[00:30:12.48]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:30:13.98]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Complete abstract. And you see, this was already enough years ago. So abstractions were quite unusual [inaudible]. Now I think I'm most [inaudible]. They say, [inaudible] waterfront. There are all kinds of art abstractions being considered now, which I think is good and healthy, too.

[00:30:56.23]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What about your negotiations with Etta Cone about the Cone collection?

[00:31:03.49]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I became a very good friend of hers. And she would invite me to come in and see every new thing as soon as she bought it. She bought almost everything in Europe and then brought it back. As soon as it arrived, I would be invited to come in and see it, tell her what I thought. And we were good friends.

[00:31:37.81]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was she still buying after Claribel died?

[00:31:39.82]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, yes. Very much so. And at times, I always felt that Claribel had a much broader viewpoint than Etta. Etta liked more conservative art, somewhat more conservative than Claribel. Claribel had not only the "Blue Nude," but also the "White Turban," which is very broadly painted by Matisse, and a number of things that I have shown that her viewpoint is somewhat broader.

[00:32:36.81]

But Etta, after Claribel's death, did try to go along with what she thought was Claribel's interests, too. And she really kept at it, also. She went to Europe every summer, and would go to see Matisse right away. And Matisse actually would save out what he considered his best works for his family, and then also for the Cone sisters, because he realized that they had this idea of having a Matisse collection with the supplementary artists to compare with Matisse. But I think if Claribel had lived, she would have followed Picasso right into his abstract period. And Etta later did get one of the small sketches in connection with the *Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which was quite a step for her, also. But she loved—and she did follow Gauguin. That came later. Very fine.

[00:34:33.99]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did their brother Frederick have any part in building their collection?

[00:34:39.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: They tried hard. They were very fond of that brother who had an apartment right next to theirs. There were two apartments. But I think they had to give him a few interesting drawings for presents. But he never really came to collect. He was on the board of the museum for a time. And then he insisted that Etta be put on in his place. And she was.

[00:35:24.97]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So she was convinced at some point that Baltimore was the appropriate—

[00:35:32.11]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Most appropriate place for a collection. And after she died, we were given *carte blanche* to go in to the two apartments and choose anything that we felt would enhance the museum's collection.

[00:35:54.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you know that was going to happen? [Laughs.]

[00:35:58.12]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Not in so much detail. But it took us—three of us went down to do this choosing. Judah Rosenthal and [inaudible] and myself. And we worked ten days solid just going through bureau drawers, and closets, and boxes, and so forth. You know at the present time, at the Baltimore Museum, what they had done—I don't think I would have done it. And I'm not sure whether it was actually Chuck Parkhurst, who was my successor as Director, who did it, or Tom Freudenheim, who was his successor. But they did put into the Cone Wing a small room that was supposed to reproduce one of the rooms in their apartments. And it does look like very much the way their apartments used to look. Many interesting pillows, and an overstuffed couch, and small bronzes on the mantel, and a painting over there, and every inch of space taken.

[00:38:05.81]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] What is it about it that you wouldn't have done?

[00:38:13.34]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I don't think you can—it did reproduce it, but I don't think that's as important as having all of the things out where you can look at them in detail. There's a Renoir. They didn't put the very best paintings, of course, up in this simulated room.

[00:38:52.84]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Probably be hard to see them.

[00:38:54.55]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, exactly. Very prominent on the table is a tremendous, big Dutch milk container, I think, brass, in which they would put flowers. They always had beautiful flowers. And her favorite flowers were anemones. And in this big brass milk jug, they always looked very handsome.

[00:39:39.87]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Then Saidie May was another—

[00:39:43.50]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Saidie May was the most generous collector that I've ever met. She didn't have a home. She traveled. And she lived—when I first went to the museum, she was most of the time in Paris. And she was studying painting with Autun Frias. She had this artist friend who went around with her to see different collections to see different dealers. And she would buy and wait until she had about eight or ten different paintings amassed, and then would send them to the museum without keeping them for any length of time for herself at all. Amazingly generous, I think.

[00:41:01.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did she ever send things that you didn't really want?

[00:41:05.55]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, unfortunately. We had a very conservative accession—

[00:41:20.36]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was that a committee?

[00:41:21.38]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Committee, yes.

[00:41:22.86]

JULIE HAIFLEY: From the board?

[00:41:24.18]

ADELYN BREESKIN: From the board. And the chairman of that was our most conservative portrait painter, Thomas Carr, his name was. He could influence the other committee members to do just what he felt was best. And we had two items that came over that I saw. And I couldn't believe that they turned them down. They did. One was a most marvelous terracotta by Despio that was turned down. But even worse was a painting by Vuillard. Both of those pieces, the Museum of Modern Art New York took. Just grabbed them. You see, that made me think, well, if we don't do better than that, maybe Etta Cone will have this idea that Baltimore isn't appreciative enough.

[00:42:48.42]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you try to persuade them to take those? Wasn't that just—

[00:42:53.25]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I was just a print curator at that time. [They laugh.]

[00:42:55.15]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. But after you became Director, you probably could influence them?

[00:43:03.03]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, yes. Yes. We still have this accessions committee you'd have to sometimes [inaudible] to persuade him. But we did.

[00:43:25.02]

JULIE HAIFLEY: That's the end of this side. So I'm going to stop and turn it over.

[00:43:28.83]

ADELYN BRESKIN: All right.

[END OF TRACK AAA_breesk79_2784_m]

[00:00:07.89]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Are there any other acquisitions from the time that you were director that you'd like to mention?

[00:00:23.64]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, we had a chance because of the fact that one of the main dealers at Knoedler's in New York, Bill Davidson, was a very good friend of mine. And it helped me in many ways. For instance, I put on a Mary Cassatt show at Knoedler's. That was way back in the '50s. And we worked together on that. So after Mr. Henschel died at Knoedler's, who was the most erudite as a dealer—of all of the dealers in New York that I knew, Henschel was quite remarkable. He died, and had his own beautiful apartment in New York. He had no children. Just had a wife. And they had in their gorgeous apartment, they had an early Poussin painting. It was a great painting, an early Poussin. And Bill Davidson persuaded Mrs. Henschel—she wanted to get rid of it. Said it was too big. She hadn't ever liked it. It was a biblical subject. And many figures in it. She didn't like that so much.

[00:02:20.45]

So anyway, Bill Davidson came and spoke to me about it, or I spoke to him when I was at Knoedler's one day. And he said he thought that Mrs. Henschel would be willing, for tax deduction, you see, to give us a half of the value of this Poussin painting. And for the other half, with just a little cash and a few paintings that he and I between us could look over in her storage that were things that we really hadn't very much use for. One was a small Sorolla painting. Sorolla is a Spaniard. We don't have any other Spanish art, very much. So it wasn't anything that we really needed.

[00:03:28.66]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:03:29.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And— so that, and few unidentified Americans, plus some very small [inaudible]. We could get this. [inaudible]. The chairman of my board was absolutely sure that there must be something phony about it. [Julie laughs.]

[00:03:56.62]

So what did I do? One of my good museum friends was William Milliken at the Cleveland Museum—the Director of the Cleveland Museum. I telephoned and asked him if he would come and settle this matter for me. And he was just out of the hospital. He was on crutches. And he came. He said he would come if I could meet him right at where the plane landed, and see that he got off at the end of the day the same way, which I managed to do personally. [They laugh.]

[00:04:53.74]

And he came and we had a special meeting of the Executive Committee. And inside of five minutes, he just had them right in the palm of his hand. Very persuasive. Brilliant that way and many ways. Great director. So we had the piece. And then, my tremendous satisfaction took place the following year when the Louvre had a great Poussin exhibition and asked for this painting especially. [Julie laughs.] So that was worthwhile.

[00:05:42.63]

JULIE HAIFLEY: That's great. Nice.

[00:05:45.38]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And there were other small triumphs like that. That's a triumph.

[00:05:54.94]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did the administrative tasks of being director keep you too much from the part of working in the museum that you really liked?

[00:06:03.84]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. We had such a small staff that everyone had to work together.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:06:12.05]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You were saying that the staff was small enough that you could still be involved in curatorial?

[00:06:17.18]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. Every exhibition. And then, I took most of the trips to New York to get loans. They had to ride around to get supplies. Did most of them [inaudible]. Worked well [inaudible]. I had a wonderful installation team for two people, both women, [inaudible] partly Japanese. She had beautiful taste.

[00:07:22.93]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Who were the installation team?

[00:07:32.15]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Mimi [inaudible], Japanese women. [Inaudible], which is great design. Great installations. She died after I left the facility. Mimi still continues. She's still in the installation.

[00:08:03.25]

JULIE HAIFLEY: There?

[00:08:03.92]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. When I go back, I see her.

[00:08:09.25]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. Do you go back very often?

[00:08:11.67]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Not as often as I'd like, really. And since it's my native town, you see, I grew up outside of Baltimore, it makes a difference too. I have great affection for it.

[00:08:26.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Skipping a little bit ahead, but I had wondered whether you thought about moving back to Baltimore if you ever retired from your active work here.

[00:08:38.94]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. I don't want to be held back. I feel very much at home in Washington.

[00:08:50.44]

JULIE HAIFLEY: One of your other big accomplishments, I know, was the Venice Biennale in 1960.

[00:08:57.75]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Oh, yes.

[00:08:58.69]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Do you want to tell that story?

[00:09:00.67]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Well, many of the Board of Trustees had never heard of the Venice Biennale. They had no idea of its importance. Had never been to one. And of course, the Biennale is set up, primarily, for collectors. It's a chance to see contemporary art as you couldn't see it without going to many different places. And so collectors want to gather 'round for the opening. Can't wait to put in their bid for one or another painting or sculpture or—mostly painting and sculpture.

[00:09:58.93]

And so there were about three, four, five at the most of our 40-some trustees who knew what it was like, and they were the ones who really backed me up when I was asked if I would take this on. And I was asked, of course, by the people of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, because they had taken the responsibility for our pavilion for quite a few years.

[00:10:44.34]

And it was there Porter McCray, who was in charge of the international exhibition service, who was the one who actually asked me if I would pick for him, which meant that I had a chance to choose who was to be shown of our artists. And there are many pavilions, you see, the Biennale, has one for each country. The American pavilion is supposed to be the best in more recent years, and to try to make it so. So you can't show an artist who's already been shown in recent years, as opposed to someone who hasn't been shown. And I chose Hans Hofmann, who was no longer known as a painter in Europe. He left there, you see, very early. But he went first to Paris. And then, came over and taught in Brooklyn.

[00:12:14.39]

And then, decided to have a New York School and went up to Provincetown taking students with him in the summers so that he didn't start painting himself very much. And [inaudible] well, certainly, he was in the '50s. My chance to show him was in 1960. [inaudible] painting some beautiful things.

[00:12:57.81]

And I went and picked them out with him in his studio. And then, Franz Kline hadn't been shown. And I went to his studio, and he also gave me a list. He had a dealer too, who helped me quite a good deal, telling me who he thought were the best owners of clients throughout the country. And then, I just happened to have, as one of my favorite artists, Philip Guston. So he was the third painter. And I thought I should have one sculptor. So I chose Ted Roszak as a sculptor. He'd been doing very good work at that time.

[00:14:01.87]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you consult with anyone else about your choices or did you make them independently?

[00:14:08.74]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Well, I talked to my staff about them, but not anyone else. And I also talked told Porter McCray who decided [inaudible]. So Judah Rosenthal and I went over and did the job single handed.

[00:14:37.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, my.

[00:14:40.25]

ADELYN BRESKIN: But then, seeing that the pavilion was opened up, seeing that we had the workmen to hang the paintings in plenty of time, seeing that we had invitations printed and sent out for our special American party. And I saw Peggy Guggenheim. I had to see her, and persuaded her to let us have our party in her beautiful garden and her villa as well. And it was a lovely party. Everyone came. And the British only had served tea there. [They laugh.]

[00:15:37.32]

But we had plenty of good, hard liquor and that brought a lot of people. So it was a great party. And the thing that pleased me very much was how much he—the pavilion was visited by all of the people who came. And the Italian artists were so keen about Franz Kline's work, the black and white Franz Kline, that it has influenced them ever since. And like Capogrossi, the Italian—he was there almost every day studying, looking, getting all excited. Talking a mile a minute, as they do. So that was nice.

And then, the Scandinavians I found were—and the Germans were very much influenced—interested in Hans Hofmann's work. And they all wanted that show to go stay in Europe and go around to different other museums. So that was good. It was a very successful activity.

[00:17:17.51]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you stay there all summer while it was on?

[00:17:20.49]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, we didn't.

[00:17:22.30]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you have to go back and pack it up at the end?

[00:17:27.79]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, we didn't even do that. For the packing up at the end, we had our own packer go and pack up. But we stayed just long enough for this grand party that we gave. I guess we were over there at least three weeks. But we stayed at the best hotel. It was Porter McCray who told us that we had to do that, because the one way to get out your invitations was to get the majordomo at the best hotel, which was the Gritti, the Gritti Palace Hotel. He would have these hand delivered for us. [Julie laughs.] So we did it that way. And it did work out very well. But to stay at that hotel for any length of time was a little expensive.

[00:18:41.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, then there was the matter of raising all the money for the exhibition too. I mean, the board gave you kind of a hard time on that.

[00:18:51.70]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, they didn't realize how important it was. But we actually ended up by having—oh, and then, they told me that I should not ask anyone who otherwise would give money to the museum. That was rather limiting.

[00:19:12.79]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'll say. [Laughs.]

[00:19:15.01]

ADELYN BRESKIN: So I had to go outside of Baltimore to get quite a good deal of it.

[00:19:19.72]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did you do that? Did you advertise or travel?

[00:19:24.46]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. We did put on a local campaign, and we had even the schoolchildren

trying to help us raise the money for it. But also, I did get some substantial sums from different collectives; the Mariemonts in Chicago had a beautiful collection. They helped me considerably. He was in one business that was paper. They gave me all the paper for the catalog that we put out. It was very intricate, these dealings. Dealings with different collectors. But we managed.

[00:20:29.12]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was there ever a point at which you thought you might not be able to raise the money?

[00:20:33.80]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. Couldn't think of that. Just couldn't allow it to enter our minds. [Laughs.]

[00:20:39.67]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So it wasn't close or tight then at the end?

[00:20:44.43]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I don't think. Alan Wurtzburger was a great help. And he and Janet, his wife, came over to Venice. They were there for the opening. It was quite wonderful to have them there.

[00:21:05.08]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you ever work on the Biennale after that? Or was that the only time?

[00:21:09.32]

ADELYN BRESKIN: That was the only time. It's actually up to one particular person to do. I don't think the Biennale means as much today as it did in those days. Through the '60s.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:21:42.31]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Does that about cover the Biennale then?

[00:21:44.97]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:21:48.78]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I guess moving on to Washington, unless there's anything else that you'd like to add about your experience as Director of the Baltimore Museum.

[00:22:01.05]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I might just end by saying that I think that the experience that I had being the Director in Baltimore was a good experience altogether and a happy experience. And I don't think being a museum director today is as satisfactory as it was [they laugh] in the '50s, let's say.

[00:22:39.92]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Because it was smaller then, or [inaudible]?

[00:22:43.82]

ADELYN BRESKIN: The Association of Art Museum Directors was a very much smaller organization. Everyone knew everyone else. And the cooperation was very friendly and very generous. Now, there's so many museums, and they've taken in smaller ones and bigger ones, different kinds. So it's more complicated today than it was then.

[00:23:28.57]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What other problems do you think directors face today, that perhaps you didn't have to contend with?

[00:23:35.22]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, this idea of putting a business administrator over an art director I think is just shocking. And yet, it's being done, not only at the Met, but in quite a few other places as well. Chicago. And I just don't know how it could work.

[00:24:03.58]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] Did you have any reservations about coming to Washington after living in Baltimore for so many years?

[00:24:11.06]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. I mentioned the wonderful housekeeper that I had while my children were growing up. But after that, when Mrs. Bradley was no longer with us, and after the children were grown and in college, they didn't need that so much. Then, my parents died, and they'd had one wonderful maid in their house who, when they died, just expected to come to me. So she did. And when I moved to Washington, she always lived in the house of her employers, and my parents, who'd been her only employer. And she'd come as a young girl, and stayed with them throughout their lives. And then, came to me. But she would have been scared to come here to Washington and lived in an apartment house. She just expected me to have a house [they laugh], which is one reason and I got one. Very good reason. And I never regretted it, because now I own my house here and that's very nice.

[00:25:54.56]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you move to Georgetown directly?

[00:25:57.27]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Direct. I decided I wasn't going to commute for one day if I could help it, and I didn't. I moved right over and moved in, and got started on the Washington Gallery of Modern Art. And I have really enjoyed living in Washington very much.

[00:26:23.18]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you have friends here before you moved?

[00:26:26.13]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, but my oldest friend that I had here was Alice Acheson. She was about my age. And went to Boston together, the art school that I went to there. And I had other friends. It was a good change.

[00:27:04.31]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What was the art scene like when you came here? It must have been, what, '62?

[00:27:11.81]

ADELYN BRESKIN: '62. There was no contemporary art being shown at all. Now, of course, we had the wonderful Phillips Collection. But Duncan Phillips was very busy collecting such beautiful things as his huge Renoir, "The Boating Party." And also, but not the contemporary—it was after his death, really, that Mrs. Phillips and Laughlin, who was already interested then in bringing the collection more up to date. He, of course, put on the great color Franz Kline exhibition this last year, which I thought was a very interesting show.

But when I first came, we already had a wonderful Phillips Collection, but without that third-floor contemporary gallery. Duncan Phillips used to come over to the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, which was just across the street, catty corner from the Phillips Collection, on 21st Street. And I left word with our receptionist at the front desk that whenever Mr. Phillips

came in that I was to be notified, and then I could come down and greet him and go through the exhibition—different exhibitions with him.

[00:29:22.74]

And he wanted to buy a Stella painting. So it wasn't that he was in any way prejudiced against the contemporary. But he was no longer going to New York very often. And so he was glad to have a chance to see the contemporary art at the Washington Gallery. And he chose this one a Stella painting to buy. And then, I was so disappointed because Emmerich, I think it was, who was Stella's dealer, telephoned to say that painting had been sold. So Duncan couldn't buy it.

[00:30:22.19]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you know him before you came to Washington?

[00:30:26.11]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Duncan Phillips? Oh yes. I came over quite often bringing two Baltimoreans over to join Laura Watkins' painting classes. And while they were taking their painting courses, I was studying the collection. It was very nice. Driving over in my car. Didn't come every week, but came every few weeks during the season.

[00:31:09.46]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What was the most difficult part about running a contemporary museum after having run the Baltimore Museum?

[00:31:19.13]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I think my idea in connection with the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, was that we had to build a permanent collection because it's impossible to fit in one loan exhibition following another without having a week or so in between. And then, what do you show? You don't have anything to show on your walls. What do you do, close down? So I think you have to get a permanent collection to tide over those times between the loan collection and the loan exhibitions. And that was my idea, and that was when I left Jerry—Gerald Nordland came to take over, and he had the same idea.

[00:32:21.83]

Jerry had some very fine things as gifts. All of these were gifts. I'd go to New York and ask the different dealers there if they could let us have something. And they did. So that by the time Jerry had left, and Walter Hopps took over, we had 110 paintings that formed our nucleus of our collection. And then, Lenny Stern, as President of the Board, sold those to an art center out West that was just starting. I think it was Kansas City. And sold it for a very nominal sum, which was supposed to be used to keep the building where—that I'd helped to create—to convert into a museum. Before we opened that building, it was a lot of conversion had to be done. I worked with a very good architect. And I really enjoyed hanging exhibitions there, because the wall spaces were good.

[00:34:01.11]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Good space?

[00:34:01.74]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, very good.

[00:34:03.53]

JULIE HAIFLEY: For large paintings?

[00:34:04.89]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. Plenty of big spaces. So, anyway, I was sad that they gave all that away for \$110,000.

[00:34:25.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: They were in financial difficulties by that time.

[00:34:28.91]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, they were.

[00:34:29.21]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, I guess, always the money was a problem, wasn't it?

[00:34:33.08]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, it was.

[00:34:33.35]

JULIE HAIFLEY: From the beginning. But you had a membership program. People could join the gallery? Sort of like this—sort of like the Smithsonian Associates.

[00:34:51.65]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, exactly. I didn't feel very bitter about the Washington Gallery of Modern Art closing down as it did and became instead a branch of the Corcoran where their students could have studios. Older students. Because I think it had—it served its purpose.

[00:35:31.31]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was an idea whose time had come and gone.

[00:35:35.58]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Gone. Right. It was all right. But I think it served a very good purpose.

[00:35:43.14]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How big was your staff?

[00:35:50.31]

ADELYN BREESKIN: About five.

[00:35:54.01]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you worked with them pretty much like you did in Baltimore. You were involved in all of the aspects of it.

[00:36:02.95]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes. Well, we only had one handy guy who did the hanging of the paintings and the packing and the unpacking and all that sort of thing.

[00:36:17.52]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How did you organize and fund some of the major exhibitions, like your Franz Kline retrospective?

[00:36:27.55]

ADELYN BREESKIN: We had a budget and kept within it.

[00:36:32.03]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I mean, did the money come from the board?

[00:36:34.37]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes. The money had been raised by this group of private citizens. And

they wanted this to happen, and they managed to make it happen. So it was good while it lasted. And it, I think, had a very meretricious time while it lasted.

[00:37:15.62]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Then you have another—a big van Gogh show too, didn't you?

[00:37:20.61]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, you see, the number of people who were crucially interested in contemporary art in Washington when we started was a very small group.

[00:37:35.60]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] How small? I mean, a handful or—

[00:37:39.80]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, there were these the ones who were on the board, and a few others, but not very many. So I felt that we needed to a larger audience decidedly. And it seemed to me that we could do that by having a van Gogh show, as well as we could. Better than we could with anyone else. There's no one who's more universally admired and understood than van Gogh is. [In Dutch accent:] "Van Gogh." [Julie laughs.]

[00:38:22.29]

So I'd had—I knew the nephew, who was an engineer. Also, his name was [inaudible] Van Gogh. Dutchman. I've met him. I'd been to his home outside of Amsterdam in Holland and had arranged for the exhibition to come to Baltimore, of his own private collection. And I toured the exhibition from the Baltimore Museum to three other places. Cleveland was one, Buffalo was one. I think there was a third place. And then, send it back to Holland.

And I got this wonderful letter from the nephew saying everything had come back in perfect condition. And he was very grateful to me for having arranged all the tours and so forth. And if we ever wanted it again, all I had to do was to let him know. So I wrote and ask if we could have it there, and we did. And I think that, really, the group of people as a whole felt that they wanted exhibitions that were much more really contemporary. And the fact that we've had 110,000 people come to see that show in a month—you see, it just put us on the map of Washington. I thought it was a great treat for everyone to have a chance to see it. And it was also very good for our future, because everyone would know where the place was located, how to get there, and so forth.

[00:40:39.52]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you charge admission to that show or not?

[00:40:46.44]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. [Inaudible] managed [inaudible]. As I remember. I don't think we charged. But the treasurer of this group of people was Walter [inaudible]. It was [inaudible]. He paid the bills.

[00:41:14.95]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] Who were the most active board members in supporting the activities as well as the financial end of the gallery?

[00:41:24.83]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I think that they were all quite active. They had to be. There were board meetings quite often and they all came. I think they must have felt somewhat that they wanted more sensational contemporary—

[00:42:03.04]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Avant-garde.

[00:42:04.09]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes.

[00:42:04.80]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Kind of.

[00:42:05.77]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Right.

[00:42:07.00]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were you interested in doing anything like that?

[00:42:11.11]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I wasn't. I think that I was all for a different approach, which was one reason that I came here. I left after two years. And David Scott had just taken over here when I came. And he had been Professor of Art at Scripps College in California, and didn't know the museum field. He's since been planning, helping with that new wing. You see, he was employed by the National Gallery to help us to pay—to think of the practical details, payment and otherwise. So it was a great opportunity for [inaudible] to pay for those years. Quite a few years on the building.

[00:43:38.51]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was it in between the time that you left the Washington Gallery and came to the National Collection that you did the State Department tour, or had you already come to the NCFA? Didn't you lecture around the world at some point?

[00:43:59.67]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Oh, yes. Oh, that was great. No, I was here [at the NCFA -Ed.] then.

[00:44:07.75]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. How did that come about? Do you remember?

[00:44:15.96]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I was certainly asked by—it was the USIA who [inaudible]. They sent many specialists around to different parts of the world. But this was, I think, the first art—so-called art specialist that they asked to go on such a long tour. It was four and a half months. And I prepared five different exhibitions. One was on contemporary paintings, one on contemporary sculpture, and one on contemporary prints, and one on museums—art museums in the USA. And the fifth one, I remember, this was back in '65, '66. The fifth one is on the rise of women artists. That was quite early to be thinking about that.

[00:45:43.43]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It was. It really was.

[00:45:45.62]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I prepared this long—

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[00:00:04.75]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'll check it and make sure it's working. This is the third interview session with Adelyn Breeskin by Julie Haifley at the National Collection of Fine Arts in the Finley Conference Room. Today is August 14, 1979. You know, I believe last time when we were talking about the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, you were saying that most of the board members were more interested in more avant-garde exhibitions than you were, that you then decided to come to the National Collection of Fine Arts.

[00:00:50.53]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes.

[00:00:51.28]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And I wondered what it was like to come from a very contemporary, forward-thinking gallery like that, to a federally-funded institution?

[00:01:06.91]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Well, David Scott had just become the Director of the NCFA. And he came from Scripps College, from teaching as a teacher at Scripps College, and was eager to have my help in making NCFA become a more contemporary organization, because the director before him had been completely steeped in the 19th century. And he hadn't kept up with contemporary art, nor had the library kept up with contemporary books. I think Bill Walker had just come. If he hadn't just come, he came shortly after. And I had found, in what had been our library, a stack of books in one little room stacked up on the floor, on a table, maybe. So pathetic, because there was no order or anything. They had just been dumped there.

[00:03:01.39]

So that's the way Bill Walker got the start. And of course, he's done, I think, a magnificent job. And he's always so helpful and eager to cooperate with every branch of NCFA, which has made a big difference. On the other hand, Dr. Scott was eager to have some contemporary shows. And so we started in together to push the whole interest forward into the 20th century. It's a job that I was very keen about, so we started in together. Working with David Scott was pleasant. And I really found that we could be very cooperative.

[00:04:43.86]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you make specific recommendations?

[00:04:46.20]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, I did. I did.

[00:04:48.14]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And what were some of them? Do you remember?

[00:04:51.74]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I wish I had—I have notes on that that I can give you.

[00:04:56.06]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, good.

[00:04:59.36]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Recommendations.

[00:05:04.06]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Part of it must have had to do with upgrading the collection as far as acquisitions, that sort of thing, specific acquisitions.

[00:05:16.13]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes. We didn't have very much money. It was more gifts that we were looking for. I remember that he and I went up to see Mrs. John Stuart Curry, for instance, and found her very charming. His larger paintings were kept under a shed outside with no sides. And she realized that was the best way to keep them was to put them in our care.

[00:06:04.72]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And did she donate?

[00:06:06.91]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, she had us bring them down. We borrowed them.

[00:06:15.66]

JULIE HAIFLEY: For a loan exhibition?

[00:06:18.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, for a loan exhibition. This exhibition was more covering his drawings and his prints, as well as his paintings that she sent. And the paintings that she sent were a self-portrait, and some of his works that were in larger size, but were taken from this perfectly outdoor shed. It made a good exhibition. And they stayed here for quite a long time before she decided that she had to sell some of them. So she asked the Graham Gallery to take over, and they came and took them to New York. We hadn't had long enough to really be able to study them. He was never one of my favorites of that period, but it's interesting to compare with Grant Wood and Tom Benton. The three of them: Benton, Grant Wood, and Curry were lumped together by Mr. Thomas Craven, mostly. And my first lecture that I ever gave, cause of course, we had to start lecturing. And the first lecture that I gave at the Baltimore Museum was called "Taking Issue with Thomas Craven."

[00:08:36.30]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:08:38.07]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It was quite a lecture. I didn't mince matters at all. I just thought he was awful, and his insistence that art had to be American, nothing else, wasn't of interest to him, shouldn't be to other Americans, which I didn't agree. And especially the regional approach seemed to be very narrow and bigoted. I said so. But of the three, it seemed to me that in one way I like Curry, but I didn't like either of the others. And he didn't have quite as much stylization, I think Benton had his tricks. Always making his figures and his curves. And I think Grant Wood made his trees look like puffballs. Just didn't appeal to me. But Curry didn't have quite as much stylization. However, I think he was very weak at drawing at times [inaudible].

[00:10:27.06]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You had some other loan exhibitions early on. Didn't you do a Stuart Davis retrospective?

[00:10:34.29]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. That was interesting because I had worked very hard in getting a well-rounded Stuart Davis together. I'd been to see his widow, and she was very cooperative. But then just at that moment—I think this was '65, '66.

[00:11:06.73]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I saw some letters, I think, that were '64.

[00:11:10.05]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes.

[00:11:11.37]

JULIE HAIFLEY: The organization.

[00:11:12.40]

ADELYN BRESKIN: The organization. But I was asked by the State Department to take a four-and-a-half month lecture tour to the Orient. And so I wasn't here for the opening.

[00:11:37.43]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh.

[00:11:38.19]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And Harry Lowe took over for me and brought together the show. And this became his show. But I had worked very hard. And the idea for it was mine. And I think was a very fine show. But that lecture tour, I feel, really was almost the highest part of my entire career.

[00:12:14.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Really?

[00:12:14.93]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. It was quite wonderful. I went, of course, mostly—anyway. I went to many different countries and stayed a whole month in India, and had started in, for instance, in Manila in the Philippines. And they'd written from Manila to the people in charge here in Washington, in charge of my whole trip, to say that since the Philippines were the only Christian country in the Orient that they wanted me to come before their Christmas holidays started. And in order to save fuel—it gets pretty cold in the Philippines.

[00:13:31.71]

And they wanted me to come before the Christmas holiday started. And it started, I think, probably late in November and went through until after the middle of January. They just close down in order to save fuel. So they asked me if I would mind going there first, rather than going to Japan first. I said no. So I went first to the Philippines. It was mostly Manila. And then to Korea, and then to Japan, from Japan to Thailand, and from Thailand to India. While I was in Thailand, I got to go to Cambodia and see how to go about. And that, of course, was marvelous. All this by myself.

[00:14:42.48]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I wondered, did anyone travel with you?

[00:14:44.54]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. No one traveled with me, but I was always met and was given really red-carpet treatment. It was quite—I think they did wonderfully well for me. And I never missed a plane. I never missed being met at a place. I never missed a lecture in the whole tour. And I lectured 77 times, I think it was, over somewhat over four months. I wasn't sick for a day. That was helpful. The thing that I was almost as proud of as anything was that I never left anything behind in a hotel. [Julie laughs.] That's something I'm proud of, I think. So easy to leave a belt in a bureau drawer somewhere. But I didn't. I fortunately took a warm fur coat, had a very beautiful Australian opossum coat. Very smooth like [inaudible].

[00:16:21.10]

And it was in Japan—after being in Japan, I was going into Thailand and decided I wouldn't need it anymore. Of course, it was Christmas. It was Christmas time when I was in Tokyo. And I thought after that, going into Thailand and India, it wouldn't be cold enough to really need it. So I asked them in Japan if they'd pack for me and send it to a sister of mine in Munich, and I'd pick it up there and bring it home. And they packed it in Japan in a carton that was less than a foot long and less than six inches wide. And when I unpacked it, it was so wrinkled. It was so sad. It was really hard on the fur. It's never quite as beautiful after that.

[00:17:52.57]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you travel around in Europe, then, after the tour?

[00:17:58.99]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, the tour really ended in India. I stopped in Tehran. No. I also went

to Korea. But I went to Tehran, where I stayed with friends. And then I went from there rapidly to Munich. And then back to Washington.

[00:18:47.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was the Davis exhibition still on when you got home?

[00:18:51.63]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, unfortunately it was over.

[00:18:54.42]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So you didn't see it at all.

[00:18:57.61]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, I did, too. I did see it. It was beautiful. Really handsome. Harry, of course, installed everything that he did, especially well.

[00:19:19.89]

JULIE HAIFLEY: He was here from the beginning too, wasn't he? Well, from the beginning, I guess I mean—that was before this building opened. Long before.

[00:19:32.43]

ADELYN BRESKIN: We were in the [inaudible] exhibit on the second floor. [Laughs.] And I'll never forget the way the collections looked before David's Scott took over. You wouldn't believe it. It was so awful. Stacked up tiers after tiers.

[00:20:01.22]

JULIE HAIFLEY: On exhibition or in storage?

[00:20:03.74]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, this was an exhibition. Shown on exhibition. Couldn't have been worse, really. And he had never meant anything to [inaudible]. He just wanted them shown. He didn't care how they were shown.

[00:20:31.03]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You mentioned in a previous session the importance of the American Association of Museum Directors. And was it a useful advisory group?

[00:20:44.50]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It was, indeed, because it was small enough. It was only of museums that had over \$100,000 yearly. There weren't too many then that had that much.

[00:21:09.95]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you turn to them for advice for—

[00:21:12.62]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I knew them all by their first names. We all were on a first-name basis. And I was, at times, the only woman. [Inaudible] you see. But it was a very different kind of museum. She was admitted. They had plenty of money, of course. But that was really entirely a different kind of museum. I don't think they had much of a staff at all. It was a showplace for very fine paintings. But it didn't change much.

[00:22:09.77]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did that group offer advice for the national collection at this point? Or did you turn to someone else?

[00:22:21.26]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I turned to different members of the organizations here. And they were always helpful. Of course, we're friends. Now the organization is so big that I don't think that could still exist. I'm sure it doesn't.

[00:22:56.24]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you find it easier to concentrate on curatorial work without the fundraising that you had to do, both at the Baltimore Museum and the Washington Gallery?

[00:23:11.01]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Wasn't very different, because although we had so little money to spend, there was no use considering buying very much. But there were always gifts, the possibility of gifts, and trying to interest Washingtonians in giving. And it's never been easy.

[00:23:44.02]

JULIE HAIFLEY: So you were still doing pretty much the same sort of getting to know collectors—

[00:23:52.21]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. And interesting them so that we'd have a chance of them giving us something. But there were good things that came, and dealers were helpful, too.

[00:24:15.55]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Who are some of the early dealers who were helpful?

[00:24:20.50]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, we met after I was here. Bill Davidson from Knoedler's was one of my very staunch friends. Until he became ill, he was really a great help to us then. At the Hirshhorn opening the other night, I spoke to Bella Fishko. And she was definitely among the few dealers who were asked to the dinner party beforehand. But she was very good to us, and gave us some interesting things. Also, Virginia Zabriskie. Big [inaudible] abstraction [inaudible].

[00:25:49.17]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Were there any Washington dealers at that time who were helpful?

[00:26:00.20]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Not that I remember. I saw little of them. But I think Barbara Fendrick, as she was starting, was very helpful to us. Such beautiful prints [inaudible] Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Helen Frankenthaler, and has featured them ever since. But when she started, I knew her before she'd opened up a shop at all, and did it all from her house, or came to us.

[00:27:01.31]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you work with the print collection, too, at that time?

[00:27:04.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes.

[00:27:05.60]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Was there a curator?

[00:27:07.61]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, it was Jacob Kainen. We worked together closely.

[00:27:21.18]

JULIE HAIFLEY: The staff was quite small then, wasn't it?

[00:27:25.14]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Very small. As it grew, I had a wonderful assistant, Jan Mueller, who's since gone on to be the head of the Iowa University Museum. I will go for her, I'm sure. She was with me, I think, seven years before she asked for that job, applied for it. And I remember when she applied, there were 35 different people aspiring to that position.

[00:28:19.38]

And then I watched it as it was reduced by maybe five, and then to three, and then she had got it of the three. That was exciting. So of course, Fluorine was with us. Florine Lyons became Florine Carter, who's now in Boulder with her husband, and doing very exciting work. Mostly volunteer, but right in the art field, putting on festivals. And very active, writing up different shows. So I think she's a splendid ex-staff person.

[00:29:23.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What do you recall about preparation for moving into this building?

[00:29:30.55]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, the thing that I remember most vividly was the fact that we couldn't have any new furnishing because the money that had been set aside for that had to be used instead for changing the lighting, because before we entered the picture—and that meant David Scott, too—the lighting had been all set up. And it was eggcrate lighting, which is no good for paintings at all.

[00:30:20.27]

And we had to use what should have been used for furniture for changing all of the lighting from the eggcrate setup. So it was worth it. Gradually, we had enough furniture from other Smithsonian setups. So we got good desks. I don't think we got better ones today. And the chairs were all right. That looks very good. And the fact that we weren't sure if everything was going to be ready, of course, in time. It was a wonderful opening in this building. Very exciting. And it certainly went over well.

[00:31:29.87]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Everything was ready, then, in the end?

[00:31:32.24]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, it was.

[00:31:35.81]

JULIE HAIFLEY: And what was the inaugural show? I'm trying to think. I should know what it is, too.

[00:31:52.10]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No. I think at least it must have been all American.

[00:32:03.25]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Has dealing with the bureaucracy been a problem since you were used to sort of solving problems on your own?

[00:32:14.12]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes, I think that's always a problem. It's no use dodging it. [Julie laughs.] Have to just expect that it won't be a problem.

[00:32:26.93]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Has there been any particularly difficult area or incident?

[00:32:37.87]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No, I don't think so. It's just always with us.

[00:32:49.72]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What have you enjoyed most since coming to the National Collection?

[00:32:55.94]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Other than my wonderful State Department tour?

[00:33:01.55]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Right. [Laughs.] Well, I've enjoyed many shows that I've done. The Tobey show was wonderful. And of course, before putting that on, I had to go to Basel to see Tobey and his friend Mark Ritter, who is still alive, still in Basel. I took Jan Mueller with me. And she took a tape recorder and taped my conversations with Tobey. We stayed, and three wonderful visits with him over a week. And he was very friendly and outgoing, and interested in helping us any way he could. And that was very exciting.

[00:34:21.07]

And then, of course, for the Romaine Brooks show, I went to Nice to see her. And saw her really just—I don't think it was much more than six months before she died, because she died before our show opened. But I had a lovely time with her. She was so generous, and interested, and helpful. She set me up in a beautiful hotel right on the beach, at the end of the beach, really, so that you looked out onto the whole sweep of that marvelous beach in Nice. And I went and had lunch. And she had an Italian who was taking care of her, a man whom she brought from Italy. And she and Natalie Barney during the war years had been in Italy at a villa.

[00:35:52.10]

When she came back, she brought him with her. And he did her cooking and everything. But she had him come and call for me when I went to have lunch with her, and escort me through the streets to her where her apartment was, which was not more than two blocks away from the hotel. [They laugh.] She had him escort me there, bring me up. And then we went from her apartment down on the elevator a few floors to where she had, I think, rented the room in which to have this luncheon.

[00:36:46.29]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. Was anyone else there?

[00:36:47.64]

ADELYN BREESKIN: No. Just the two of us, served by this Italian man. And then I looked through the studio saw what she still had. There were still a number of things there that I thought we wanted. And I remember one of them was the later painting that she did that she called "The English Girl." And I said, may we have that? She said, "Oh, you don't want that old thing." And actually, what had happened to her was that she had lost all interest in her work. She had finished that phase of her life. She was so good.

[00:37:50.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Did you select things from the studio there for the show?

[00:37:53.96]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes. And kept them.

[00:37:58.03]

JULIE HAIFLEY: It must have been exciting.

[00:37:59.54]

ADELYN BREESKIN: It was. Very exciting. Made it very much easier to write about her for the catalog, in getting to know her to some extent.

[00:38:21.57]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How long were you there on that trip?

[00:38:27.88]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Not very long. Probably three times. Of course, her family were in Nice. And are still there. Then I went from seeing her to seeing Natalie Barney in Paris. That was interesting, too. And Laura, also, both of us visited the Barney girls.

[00:39:12.87]

JULIE HAIFLEY: They were both there?

[00:39:13.68]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yeah. Natalie was living at the Hotel Maurice. And Laura had her same old apartment, which was in the building where Romaine Brooks had had her apartment, also. Beautiful apartment. Well, it's a good trip, seeing Romaine, and then see the Barney sisters.

[00:39:57.73]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Have you been interested in local artists here in Washington, as you were when you were in Baltimore?

[00:40:08.09]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Yes, I think so, but I haven't followed them in the last few years. There are so many young ones now coming along constantly. And it seems to me that there are more of them than there used to be. It used to be very easy to pick out the ones that you wanted to really follow. And now I don't know. It's harder to do that. But in any case.

[00:41:02.06]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Are there any particular ones that you've followed over the years?

[00:41:08.63]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Well, the main one I followed over the years is Jacob Kainen. He's still painting beautifully. Really one of our very fine painters, I think.

[00:41:24.09]

JULIE HAIFLEY: He's having a big show at the Phillips this—

[00:41:28.61]

ADELYN BREESKIN: Is it this fall?

[00:41:29.97]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, I think it's actually December, that it opens.

[00:41:35.29]

ADELYN BREESKIN: I'm glad.

[00:41:54.67]

JULIE HAIFLEY: If you were to retire, which seems unlikely, what would you do?

[00:42:01.90]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Probably go around and see more exhibitions. It's difficult, I think, to do that when you're working a full day, every day. And I haven't been keeping up as much as I'd like to. It goes on here instead. But I think that would be one thing. I would see more shows. Maybe hear more music. Go to the theater every now and then more. I am going this week, though, to see Stoddard.

[00:42:56.95]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh, is that *Every Good Boy Deserves Favor*?

[00:43:02.86]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yeah. I always had it, "every good boy does fine." Right.

[00:43:13.91]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Right. What—go ahead.

[00:43:15.47]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I think it'll be an interesting new kind of a theater. It's quite different.

[00:43:27.22]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What exhibitions are you working on for the future?

[00:43:32.05]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I don't have any I'm working on at present. But I do hope to be able to do this Cassatt show for Japan, which will be very exciting. And Peg Cogswell will work on that with me. So we don't know if it's actually coming off as yet or not.

[00:44:02.10]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Who's planning to fund it? Do you know?

[00:44:06.61]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, it would be the Japanese newspaper, the *Asahi Shimbun*, who asked for the show and asked me to do it, to put it together for them. And it would be necessary for Pam Cox, who will attend to all the shipping and the business end of it, and for me to be given a leave of absence from here in order to be able to work out all the intricate business connected to it.

[00:44:57.84]

JULIE HAIFLEY: That's an exciting prospect.

[00:45:00.00]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Yes. The most exciting.

[00:45:05.30]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You haven't been to Japan since your State Department—

[00:45:08.99]

ADELYN BRESKIN: No, I haven't. And it will be much more crowded.

[00:45:16.30]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'm sure.

[00:45:17.95]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And much more international, I think, too. In the intervening years, it's

become so few Japanese costumes.

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[00:00:04.41]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I hadn't mentioned working under Dr. Taylor. Has he been here ten years?

[00:00:16.96]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I think so. Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:00:21.33]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It had been ten very exciting years. I've enjoyed working with him very much. I have the highest respect for him as a Director. So, it's been really good years.

[00:00:48.76]

JULIE HAIFLEY: How have you worked together in planning exhibitions and so forth?

[00:00:55.12]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, you take this little childhood show for instance, that was his idea. And then Richard Murray and I were supposed to—together—to see what material we had in our collections, whether we'd have enough to make a well-rounded show. And certainly, we had more than enough. I think it makes a very charming show. I think he's pleased. Richard is going off now to other fields, but the show remains here for another month, I guess, and adds a very nice exhibition department show.

[00:02:09.66]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Are there any other people, whom you haven't mentioned but whom you've known, that have influenced you? I know we talked—I believe in our first session—about early influences in your life.

[00:02:29.90]

ADELYN BRESKIN: With Mr. Ivins, for instance.

[00:02:32.73]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Right. And—

[00:02:34.11]

ADELYN BRESKIN: With my interest in Mary Cassatt, which he really started me on. I had one very interesting experience when it was Bill Davidson, after Mr. Henschel of Knoedler's died. He came to see me about the possibility of acquiring one of Mr. Henschel's privately-owned paintings that he thought would be a great addition to the Baltimore Museum. And that was an early Poussin painting. And we worked it out so that we only had to pay very little money for it. Half of it was a gift anyway, for Mrs. Henschel, tax deduction. She never liked the painting. Was too big for her drawing room.

[00:03:50.36]

And then we went through our storage areas, and found three paintings that Knoedler's could use that meant nothing to us in our collection. One, for instance, was a Sorolla, a Spanish artist, who was very much liked in South America, but meant very little to us in our collection. And two others, unidentified Americans and early Americans that we didn't need. And so we got this painting. Now the president of the board was sure there must be something wrong with it. We couldn't get such a good set up. So he wouldn't believe me when I told him. All right. Let's go.

[00:05:04.40]

So I had to send one of my best museum friends, who was William Milliken, who was a

former Director at Cleveland. And he came and spoke to the board. The accessions committee of the board was about it. And said what a great, lucky setup this was. Had them all convinced that after five minutes. And I had my great satisfaction when, within the following year and a half, the Louvre in Paris put on a great Poussin show, and asked for that painting.

[00:05:55.46]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Oh. [Laughs.]

[00:05:56.84]

ADELYN BRESKIN: As one of the outstanding ones from his early period. That was a great satisfaction. And it's still there. An important painting in the Baltimore Museum's collections.

JULIE HAIFLEY: And you said before that you didn't think you'd move back to Baltimore, that Washington is your home now?

[00:06:22.59]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Washington is a beautiful city in which to live. Where I live, it's just a lovely setup, to my way of thinking. But I did have one—I have a very strong feeling that when one acquires a painting that has any connection with a museum show, the painting should belong, in the long run, to the museum, and not to the Director.

[00:07:12.42]

I know one case that I thought it was not right. This was a case of a former Director of the Baltimore Museum, who put on a very fine Eakins exhibition—one of the first arranged after Mr. Eakins' death, in connection with his widow. And this director had gone to Philadelphia, seen the widow, and arranged the show, which became a beautiful show. And as a thank-you for having put it on, the Director was given one of Eakins' very beautiful paintings. And he kept it for himself, and I didn't think that was right.

[00:08:10.69]

Now, I had, in Baltimore, one of the very first exhibitions of Alfred Maurer painting, which I got from Hudson Walker, who was given the management of the estate. And he gave me a painting for having put on that show. And he insisted that it was for me, it was not for the museum. I said, "It has to be for the museum, but if you'd like, I'd keep it for some years. But certainly, it would have to go to the museum in the end." So was the arrangement that we made. And I still have it in my living room, but of course, it will go to the Baltimore Museum when I die. It was really—if he hadn't been so insistent, I would have insisted upon its going at once.

[00:09:32.97]

JULIE HAIFLEY: What other works do you have in your own collection?

[00:09:40.84]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well I have this follower of the Master Helfing which is a painting of the 16th century that I inherited from my father. And it has a very special interest for musicologists, because it has in it a picture of a very early clavichord that this charming little woman is holding. That is the clearest rendering of this first antecedent of the piano, that has been found to date. So all musicologists are keen about it, and they come to see it. So anyway, it's a lovely painting that I have in my living room, but it isn't by the Master of the Helfing. I am a close follower of his. That's what I inherited from my father.

[00:11:00.93]

Other than that, I did ask the board of the Baltimore Museum to give me \$5,000 to spend at the close of World War II, when I was going to Paris. And I said that I knew there'd be wonderful bargains there for purchases. And just give me \$5,000 to see how far I could make it go. And they refused to do it. So I went anyway, and I managed to buy for myself with my own money, a beautiful Cézanne drawing. A first portrait sketch from his sketchbook of his chief patron Choquet. I still have that. But it won't go to museum. It'll go to my family,

because they wouldn't give me that \$5,000. [They laugh.] Of course, we were hard up. That is that to be said. We didn't have too much.

[00:12:21.64]

JULIE HAIFLEY: But even so, that was such an opportunity.

[00:12:24.30]

ADELYN BRESKIN: It was. I could have bought them a Miró painting. A wonderful Miró of the farmyard, with the little boy in it. I could have bought that for \$4,000. And it's worth probably a million, I guess. Really. So it goes. But it's all a fascinating field in which to work. And—

[00:12:55.96]

JULIE HAIFLEY: You have some Mary Cassatt prints, don't you?

[00:12:59.89]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I wouldn't have had if I didn't have a very dear friend, who insisted that I should have a few, and just gave them to me, because I hadn't ever tried to buy any for myself. So now I have three. Actually, four. I did manage to buy one that at the time that I bought it, I didn't realize it had any particular significance. It was a late one, and I like her earlier work so much better. In her formative years, her prints were fascinating. She was learning from doing them so much.

But this one happens to be a late drypoint. And I found out that there are only two or three other impressions so far have been found. I didn't realize when I bought it that it was that rare. Everything in art, as in everything else, is so relative. And the inflation, of course, has driven all prices for artworks up and up and up. And it's certainly true of hers. Until ten years ago, her works weren't considered very much. And they were certainly reasonable in price. It's no longer. Way up there at the front.

[00:15:27.38]

JULIE HAIFLEY: I'm sure a lot of that has to do with your work on her, and making her better known to the public.

[00:15:36.51]

ADELYN BRESKIN: Well, I'm afraid it has.

[00:15:41.21]

JULIE HAIFLEY: [Laughs.] Is there anything else that you'd like to add before we close?

[00:15:45.68]

ADELYN BRESKIN: I'm sure that I'll think of a lot of things, Julie. But it's been a pleasure to talk with you.

[00:15:54.61]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Well, I've enjoyed it, too. And on behalf of the Archives of American Art, I'd like to thank you.

[00:16:01.39]

ADELYN BRESKIN: And as a Member of the Archives of American Art, it's a special pleasure.

[00:16:09.85]

JULIE HAIFLEY: Thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]

