Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Huntington Hartford, 1970 May 19

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Huntington Hartford on May 19, 1970. The interview took place in New York, New York, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's May 19. Paul Cummings talking to Huntington Hartford at his residence in New York. I think before we get into the Museum and the Foundation could you give me some background on how you got involved and how your interest developed in the visual arts. Was it at home?

Interview

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[Phone ringing]

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: You know, this damn phone I don't know what we're going to do about this. It's going to keep ringing; it rings continuously. That's the trouble and it's very distracting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, if we could talk about education and family and if there was interest there in the visual arts and if that helped, or literature or other things that really got it going initially. Because I know there was ....

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: You ask me what you want and I'll try to answer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you had a great interest in literature initially I think? At least that's what I've kind of discovered here. And did that lead to an interest in the visual arts and the beginning of the Collection?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: In what way an interest in literature?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you did the Jane Eyre. You read a lot of Dickens and things of that nature.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I think that my interest in the arts really started with my concern about what I felt was happening in the society as a whole. I think my interest in arts - although my mother was indirectly interested - I mean she came from Charleston and her home there was always surrounded with beautiful things in an 18th century atmosphere and that kind of thing. And I grew up in that kind of atmosphere. But I suppose perhaps partly because I saw such a contrast between that kind of 18th century atmosphere where I think there was a great deal of beauty and a lot of the things I saw in the 20th century where the emphasis seemed to be sometimes on ugliness - even to a great extent. I became conscious of what I felt was something wrong there. [phone ringing] You know you have to turn it off. What difference does it make?

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was an awareness that ... ?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: My concern I think has always been society itself rather than the arts. I've always felt that artists can be and should be the leaders of society, the intellectual leaders. I've always felt that there is some kind of tie-in between morality and the arts, which is not always a very popular opinion today. I felt that the arts are a teacher. And therefore when I felt that things were going wrong in the society, which I suppose I started feeling back twenty or twenty-five years ago, (of which we see many of the results today) I became particularly interested in what was happening in the arts because I thought this was highly indicative, a kind of dramatic symbol of what was happening in society as a whole. And on top of that I felt that not only are the artists a mirror of society; in other words, not only were they mirroring these things but I think the arts must be more than a mirror. They must, as I said, be a leader. They don't just reflect. They lead; they change the action and the course of events. Or ideally they should and they could. Obvious examples, of course, are television and motion pictures, commercial arts of the sort.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you, you know, realize this and decide to do something about it?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, the first article that I wrote later comprised part of my book which I called Art or Anarchy (which in fact I would like to get re-published again under a new title). I was never too happy with the title. And I got into a lot of trouble with the title because an Englishman had written a book called Art and Anarchy. And I think that a lot of people thought I was trying to steal his title or something. So when titles came

out for the year someone republished his book and his was always on the list and mine wasn't for the new books of the year. And another thing: when you call a book Art or Anarchy obviously the intimation is that you are against anarchy. And it's all right to be against anarchy but you should also I suppose be against dictatorship on the other end of the scale. So it looked as though I was anti-liberal I suppose. I think that people in the art world or the intellectual world had it in for me for that reason at the time of the book. But my original article I think was the one which I called "Has God Been Insulted Here?" It's a quotation from Balzac. This had a great deal of emphasis on literature because at that time I was concerned with the arts in general and not necessarily just painting. But later I got into painting for two reasons: one, I think there was more opening for adverse criticism in the case of painting than in the case of literature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: This was - what? - in the late forties or early fifties?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I think in the whole 20th century that's true. I think there's been much, much great literature in the 20th century.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very little great painting?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: And in my opinion there has been very little great poetry. But there's been a great deal of great plays and great musicals, operettas, and this kind of thing, and of course novels, many great novels. The greatest of which in my opinion is Gone With the Wind. I had an argument with an editor who was on PM with me at the time that Gone With the Wind came out. He said, "Of course it's a great commercial success but it's never going to last." And I was very interested to see an ad just recently advertising Balzac, Dickens, I think Mark Twain or something, and Gone With the Wind, and, oh, Tolstoy, in fact; War and Peace I think was in the group. And I think this starts to prove the point of what's going to happen with Gone With the Wind. But anyway, getting back to my interest in the arts, this article was primarily on literature and primarily had a great deal of almost religious overtones to it. I felt very strongly that the separation of religion on the one hand and the field of psychiatry on the other with the emphasis on Freud was a very unnatural kind of philosophy for the world to live by.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, in the sense that the people that live by Freud had very little concern about religion; and the people that live by religion have very little concern about Freud. And I felt as a matter of fact that a latter-day coming together of those two - which I in no sense approve of - I think the theory is right, is scientology. But I did feel that the arts were losing some of that moral element which I feel always ought to be an integral part - not ought to be - but is an integral part of great art. I don't think you can have great art, in my opinion, without a moral overtone of some sort. In other words, great art tells a great story of some sort except in the case of something purely abstract like music; even music had a feeling of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was apparent in the visual arts that led you to the conclusion that these things were being dissipated and becoming lost?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, I know that I'm in a very controversial area, but just as I think that there have been very, very few really great musical compositions in the 20th century since Richard Strauss in 1911 and 1913 I think was his last great work, and Stravinsky's Firebird around the same time; I mean there are a few isolated cases such as Sibelius and Prokofiev, perhaps Shostakovich; but you know there have been very few really great musical works. And I think there's been even less great poetry. I don't think we've had a Kipling or a Tennyson in the 20th century at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are there any American poets that interest you?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I don't think....to me there are great poets. And those are the only poets as far as I'm concerned. I mean to me it's an A. E. Housman, as I say, or a Byron, or even a Swinburne, you know, or nothing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's kind of a taste for great lyricism.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I mean as far as I'm concerned T. S. Eliot is not a great poet in my opinion (that's just an opinion). I mean he doesn't move me. The great poets of the past move me. And it has nothing to do with the fact that they're in the past. Edna St. Vincent Millay in some of her things was a great poetess, probably was a great poetess. In my opinion there are even no Edna St. Vincent Millays in the 20th century. What I'm getting around to in a rather long-winded way is to say that I think the same thing unfortunately is applied to painting to a great extent. I keep going back to Dali as an example of a great painter. Although I do have reservations about Dali. I mean I don't think Dali is probably a Monet or a Constable, certainly not a Turner, I don't think he's a Winslow Homer. But at the same time I still think he is one of the great painters of history. I think he will go down as a great painter. I think he has done a tremendous amount of second-rate stuff. And so did Dickens. Nobody wrote more second-rate stuff than Charles Dickens. And I mean I think there's an analogy there in that sense.

We live in a much more commercial age even than the one that Dickens lived in, you know, where it pays off to do second-rate stuff. Getting back to music, unfortunately, I think this applies to music, I think if Leonard Bernstein spent his time composing he might have been a really great composer; it's quite likely. But he didn't, or hasn't so far. But as far as Dali goes I think the last ten years he's devoted himself assiduously to doing great paintings and I think he's accomplished that. I think the Tuna Fish Fishers is one of the greatest paintings in history - the one that he did over in Port Legat in the last two or three years. It has been sold to a Frenchman. I've tried to buy it. I think he paid probably around $125,000; he wants a million and a half for it. But unfortunately I just don't think that the so-called great artists of the 20th century are great artists. I think Marc Chagall is not a great artist. I think Max Ernst is one of the better ones but I still don't think he's great in the sense of a Monet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think is lacking? - moral confrontation on their part?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I don't know. I would like to make a point: I think that none of them have come to grips with the 20th century to begin with. I think to some extent Dali has. But even Dali has only skirted around it. For example, the entire modern scene, you know, with the criss cross of wires and wireless and communications and streets and fast-moving planes and automobiles, with the factories and the smoke. When you travel through Covington, Virginia, for instance, a most fantastic complex of a paper mill with clouds of smoke and all the air pollution, you know, this has not been touched except in a very mechanical way, in my opinion, by someone like Sheeler. But I think enormous things could be done. And instead of simply what I feel is a kind of escapism and going to abstract art I would like to see artists with great talent involving themselves deeply with the realities of the 20th century. I wrote something about this in the last chapter of my book Art or Anarchy which I called "The Visual Explosion."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I would like to get a little more chronology behind all of the ideas so we can try and fit them in when the different things happen.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, what happened was I wrote a sort of diatribe against a lot of contemporary literature, in my article "Has God Been Insulted Here?" I think the next one I wrote at the time I came back to New York from California and decided to build a museum here which was probably in the late fifties; I wrote "The Public be Damned" which was an article that I had published in the newspapers here which was kind of a spontaneous outburst against things which particularly had been happening in the visual arts with the emphasis on painting. And then of course after that I had one or two other articles which I had written and I integrated them all into the book. And what I would like to do with the book in tact is to work over it considerably and try to reach the public to a greater extent. One thing I might do is to break it down into a question and answer format because it's very hard for the public to digest philosophy and even harder for them to digest the philosophy of art. And I think by breaking it down into questions and answers such as: what is abstract expressionism? Was Courbet a psychopath? And things of this sort, which are very specific and down to earth. In fact I found out by running through by book very quickly in, say, a few hours that the whole book breaks down automatically into about seventy or eighty answers to questions which became very obvious. And this is what I'd like to do with some reworking, some re-arranging of the book to improve the chronology of it. But getting deeper, my main concern.... You know, Tom Wolfe once wrote an article about me calling me "The Luther of Columbus Circle." But it was an interesting article. You really should read that. Now if you're really interested in knowing what makes me tick you should read that. My secretary could get a copy if you wanted it. It's in that candy-colored whatever it was called - do you remember that first book - The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: That's the one I think it was. I don't know. Anyway, he had one about a racing driver in it. I think it was his first book. But it's a very straight, extremely well-written, quite long. He expresses a lot of things about me far better than I could do it myself. But my main concern has been: how should people think in the 20th century to make things work? That's what I'm concerned about now. And I don't think they know today very well. Religion seems to have become less and less effective. Certainly psychiatry alone has not been the answer to very much. Even psychiatrists are inclined to admit that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That's beginning to lose its fashionable aspect.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Right. I think something like scientology has its points but obviously it's vulgarly commercial and could never be taken seriously. But I have a strong feeling that it's that kind of philosophy if it were instituted on the right level, you know, that might accomplish something. I feel that the great tragedy of life as it is evolving, and will certainly continue the way it will continue to exist probably for all time on this planet is that the extremism of people who wish to rebel on the one hand and the dogma of those who want to make money on the other hand unfortunately end up using the same method of loud vulgarity. And vulgarity appeals to the extreme left-wingers because it's destructive. Vulgarity appeals to the commercial interests because it catches on and makes money. And I think you see this constantly. Take an artist like Franz Kline, for

instance, who was struggling along as a fairly second-rate artist for a long time. Maybe he was a good artist - I don't know. But he never made it with traditional methods. Suddenly he or his dealer or somebody finds out that if he paints dirty bare canvases and puts a few black streaks on them, presumably inspired by Japanese art (somebody said, which I think is a copout), but suddenly this becomes a status symbol. It's easily recognized. It's cheap and easy to do. The moment it starts getting recognized it's like a product, it's like Palmolive soap or it's like Marilyn Monroe. When millions of dollars are spent on putting her face all over the world by her studio everybody believes it. Franz Kline is a great artist. All you have to do is bang, bang, bang. And, you know, Franz Kline made a comment himself, "My biggest problem is checking with my tax man to see how many paintings I'm supposed to turn out a year."

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was at the end I think, after a couple of years.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: That's the 20th century. And the dealer likes it because it's commercial. The critics pick it up because it's destructive of art. I mean how in the world can a guy who's really sincere like Liszt who finally went insane for the last ten years of his life, who was a great creative genius, how can he do that kind of work today and have it ignored. Somebody else puts a Franz Kline up there and everybody says, "Oh. You've got a Franz Kline. What's this?" They know what it is now. Because it's a Blakelock, they would know today it's a Blakelock. I'm sure there are Blakelocks around some place today, probably.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, there are lots of them. Sure.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: But they are totally ignored. And Franz Kline is famous. As an example. But you see, I think this happens right down the line. And I think many of these artists who I've mentioned make it because they fulfill a commercial need and if they add destructive elements, like Picasso pretending to be a communist, then they get in with the critics, some of the critics, as well who want to be liberal.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't seem to be interested in what critics have to say very much?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: How do you mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the value of art criticism, for example, is rather low in your estimation?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, that isn't true. I mean I'm not really....All I can see is someone like Picasso made an absolute hero of. And as long as art critics will do that - I wouldn't say that I would attack critics in general. But I do attack art critics who in my opinion frequently have a totally false sense of values and present it to the public for reasons, as I've said, to promote vulgarity, to promote something that's going to sell, and to promote something that's extreme to the point of being destructive. And I think Picasso is such a prime example of this. I mean if you follow the history of Picasso - to begin with, Picasso was almost totally unknown himself when he was in his fifties after the second World War. I mean he had anything but an admirable life. I wrote about this in the article. He never fought in either war. He was painting during the war, you know. An example of the difference between a great person and cheap person in my opinion, is Margaret Mitchell who never did a bit of writing during the war and was in hospitals all the time taking care of wounded men during the whole Second World War. She was too much of a human being to be concerned about whether she wrote another Gone with the Wind or not. She was concerned that men were dying. Do you know what I mean? Like Byron died in Greece. He didn't care about writing at that point. He cared about fighting for Greece which was more important than any writing he did no matter how great. To me this is the sign of a great person. And someone who paints away during the middle of a war and million of Jews dying - I mean Picasso and then to declare he's a Communist, all this crap, you know. To me this is a sign of a mediocre personality. And to be made a hero like Michelangelo or Rembrandt and so on! And as far as the work itself goes I mean it's crap. I mean I think there are a few things that have been good - the Blue Period. The answer to that of course is that there is no great artist in history, unless you want to accept Picasso, that has ever done his great work by the time - no great painter in history who has done his great work by the time he's twenty-five and done only a very few isolated things and lived into his eighties. Not one. Every goddamn example you could pick - Rembrandt, Winslow Homer, Constable, all the great artists, the artists that have got guts, and that are developing and growing as people - you know what I mean - as relating to the scene about them. They learn, they know more about it, they get closer, they get involved with it. And sometimes in their latter days they tend to fade out to some extent, sometimes because, as in the case of Monet and Degas, I think they became half blind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the idea of founding the Museum come about? Why did you want to found a Museum?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, I can tell you very specifically and frequently the reasons that cause something end up by not being very important, and I think that was the case with this Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, in the sense that I think the Museum itself was a means to an end originally. But

it finally became I think a great end in itself, you know. In other words, now I'm glad that I built it. I think it's a beautiful building. It's a wonderful instrument for showing paintings. And I think you can do all kinds of things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were the means and the ends though when it - ?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, the original reason was that I became so incensed at one point at the crap that was exhibited as good art that I wanted to have an exhibition out in California - in fact, I asked the Los Angeles County Museum, they turned it down - showing representative examples of good public taste. And I don't think it should be just the general public, but something which represented the more intelligent level of the general public versus the critics. I mean this is something that I was very uptight about at that time, you know, and very concerned about. And originally I wanted to build a museum where I could do this kind of thing, you see, where I'd have some base of operations. As I said, originally I wanted to do it out in L.A., but it fell through. Then I finally decided that the only place to do anything like that was in New York City. Because it's like building a great theater out in Oklahoma. No matter how great the physical building is, the important thing is that you don't have the people there, you don't have the attention. So that's why I decided. I looked around for about a year or more to find a site. I finally found this site. I thought because it was free standing it was great. It was a central location. I got the site. And I had trouble. For two years the shoe store, one of the biggest chains in America, refused to get out because they wanted to save like $10,000 or something; they wouldn't move out for two years. Because they'd received a letter two days later or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I mean that shows you. That's the commercial interests, you know. They couldn't care less. Then we had trouble with the subways going under. I mean there's solid rock under there. Then we had trouble with strikes. So the whole thing took about five years to build.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you pick the architect?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, that's a funny sequence of events. There was a little guy - I'm sorry I don't remember his name but we could look it up if you wanted to know - who was doing a - I think he was getting his Ph.D. maybe at M.I.T. and he wanted to do it on the projected museum that I was planning to build. And I hadn't yet selected an architect. So he came up with a kind of Rube Goldberg idea perhaps inspired by the Guggenheim that I thought was quite interesting. So I kept looking around for an architect. At this time, of course, Edward Stone was not that well known. It was just before he had completed the building in New Delhi, you know, which was perhaps one of his most famous things. So I went to see Stone. And I got the bright idea of having Stone and this - I don't remember whether he's Japanese or Chinese, I'll have to find out - I think he was Japanese - of having them work together. And of course I was very, very lucky because the Chinese guy walked out in a rage after two or three months of working in Stone's office (because he had no other place to work). And I guess there was a tendency with Stone and all his people working there to put him down to some extent. But I think also he was an immature little guy or he would have jumped at the opportunity and kissed Stone's ass, you know, if he'd been really smart. But he thought he was the big genius. So it was better for me. I ended up with Stone. That's what happened. I always got along beautifully with Ed. We worked together very well. I brought in a man named Coleman for two weeks who wrote the book about museums. I was very, very lucky to have Winslow Ames as my first director. He quit before the Museum opened because I think he was rather frightened at the idea of it actually opening. He loved to work behind the scenes. He was essentially a scholar, a great expert on drawings. A very nice person. I have great admiration for him. But I had some wonderful people. We all worked as a team. But I did have a lot to do with the interiors; the whole thing, in fact, the layout, the design and everything. For instance, Stone designed the interior with five floors instead of four. The top floor was a balcony overlooking the ... Let's say we're talking about the five exhibition floors. The fifth floor was a balcony overlooking the fourth. And one of the other floors had a great hole in the middle of the floor (we had a piece of sculpture coming up through two floors). Both of those things were eliminated just from a practical matter of space, hanging space. Probably Ed Stone had never built a museum before and wasn't particularly concerned about the space to hang paintings. Of course I was well acquainted with the Museum of Modern Art where the ceilings are only around eleven feet high. I thought this was definitely too low. I felt that looking at a painting - there's an analogy between looking at a painting and sitting in a theater looking at a play. The size of the stage and the dimensions and the distances are all an absolute thing depending upon the size of a human being and how far he can see and how far he can hear, and all this, you know. The same thing applies to the visual, to looking at paintings. You can see a large painting here but if the ceiling is only this high you're going to be very conscious of the lighting and the ceiling and everything. If you go another two feet higher you're not conscious of it. You understand what I mean?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. Right.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: So it's much more beautiful to get the thirteen feet than to get the eleven. I felt it was terribly important. So instead of having five stories I changed it to four to get those extra two feet. Now the other

way I got a lot more space. Are you familiar with my museum? Have you been in it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: So you know that the lounge which is on the eighth floor where you walk right out of the elevator into a whole big room, this is the way he had every floor; every floor was like that originally.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Yes. So I felt there was a lack of intimacy. I didn't like people seeing an elevator which I think is a kind of modern unattractive thing, you know, people walking out of an elevator. So I decided that there should be a wall. And I broke it up that way. And I also decided that people would go up to the fifth, therefore they would pour out and the opening in that wall that I added was in the middle by the elevators. Then they would walk down. And as they walked down to the fourth floor they would be coming out of openings to the side. In other words, let's say this is the long room; on the fifth floor it opens here; on the fourth floor there's a door here and a door here opposite the stairs; that's why I did it that way; alternated. The third floor, again it comes through here because sometimes they would go to the third floor because we were thinking at that time of having more or less dividing - and we do it anyway sometimes - dividing it into two sections where you'd use the upper two or the lower two so people would go in and come right out there and then they'd walk down, you see. So it breaks it up, gives it a little variety. And either one is attractive. It really doesn't make much difference. There's no particular advantage of one over the other. And then it gave those nice rooms on the side and so forth. And I think the whole thing works very well, don't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: No, I think what Ed Stone got out of this Japanese fellow's idea was to have this staircase that wound down with rungs in the middle intermediary floors, which is very nice because it ties it. The disadvantage of the Guggenheim is that it's not on a level. The disadvantages of floors like the Museum of Modern Art is that there's no connection, there's no integration. In other words, you have to take an elevator or something to go down or you take a back stairs or something to go down. Here you flow which is very charming and very attractive I think. The ideal thing I suppose is something like the Metropolitan where you have such a huge area you can go on one floor. I'm not even sure.... This isn't a bad idea either because you don't seem to have to do so much walking this way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's very interesting. Well, how do you think the Museum has succeeded in doing its projects and its exhibitions?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, I feel very happy about the Museum. I feel that as a building it works very well as an instrument for showing things. I also feel that it's one of the things in my life that I worked quite hard at and tried to give good shows. And I think that if you'll go over the list - in fact not only go over the list of shows but go over the reviews that you'll find that probably three-quarters of our reviews were favorable. We've had a great many good reviews. Maybe it doesn't seem like that but I think that if you went over them you'd find that that is so. And, you know, we're struggling against odds. I had problems with getting a really top notch director. I had Carl Weinhardt for a while. He wasn't too satisfactory. He finally quit. And after that I haven't had any director for the last two or three years. That worked pretty well. It wasn't bad. Internally it worked perfectly. I mean we had no problems internally. The only way it probably didn't work as well was externally. I mean we probably didn't get as much support as if we had people on the outside, you know, bringing in social events and things of this sort. I'm thrilled that I was able to make the deal with Fairleigh Dickinson. This is the best thing that has ever happened to me. First of all, I have the greatest admiration for Mr. Fairleigh Dickinson. He's a wonderful man, a fine man in every way. Everybody has the greatest respect for him and likes him. Which is half the battle. Because he is the final authority. Peter San Martino although he probably doesn't know an enormous amount about painting still is - he and his wife work their heads off there. He has a great track record at Fairleigh Dickinson because he's the one who really built it up to be the eighth largest private university in the country.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is it really that large? That's fantastic.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Almost singlehandedly he did that. And always had it in the black. He's a genius as a businessman or promoter. Now they've got Donald Karshan who I think is going to be very good from all indications. And I think that Peter is going to sort of step into the background to some extent because he's sixty-five and, you know, I don't think he wants to work that hard. The reason I think it's such a good arrangement is that obviously I couldn't support indefinitely a large building like that with almost a million dollars a year cost, or whatever it was, singlehandedly. Getting Fairleigh Dickinson to go into it was the most ideal thing I could think of. First of all, by being a university it gives it enormous prestige right off the bat. What a museum needs more than anything else is prestige because this is the way it gets donations, it gets help, it gets support, it gets cooperation from the governor and the mayor on down; and other museums; everything. And I think perhaps it

ought to be done all over the country. I think it's a marvelous idea. Financially I was lucky because I had set up a trust a number of years ago which at my death has to go to charitable donations with the primary thought of my museum in mind. So that facilitated setting up the arrangement with Fairleigh Dickinson. So at my death this part of it that was supposed to be donated to the museum will go to Fairleigh Dickinson to support the museum. In other words, I was able to utilize money ahead of time before my death to help support it when it really needs it. Of course they also have put a lot of money into it themselves. I think it's just an ideal arrangement. I am vice-chairman of the board of trustees. Mr. Dickinson is chairman. I have a right to appoint a certain percentage of the board of governors, which so far has been a rather nominal organization. In fact, this afternoon we're going to have the first meeting that we've ever had - at least that I know of, that I've ever attended. And I also have the right to put on a certain number of shows a year myself, which I have the primary responsibility for. I've also gotten into something which I think is extremely interesting and I hope to do it on a continuing basis: When I was down in Mexico City a year-and -a-half ago I was standing in the lobby of the Del Prado Hotel down there, a rather dimly lit, uninteresting room. I turned around and I saw a painting which almost made me fall over. It was the great painting by Diego Rivera which is called Sunday Afternoon or something like that. In my opinion this is perhaps the greatest painting of the 20th century. It's 52 or 53 feet long and about 15 feet high. This can never be moved. I think it weights ten tons. But I got the bright idea of having it photographed. And I've had it photographed with the finest photography that's known. It's reduced to 30 feet by about 8 feet, I think it is, so that we could get it into the Museum. This is going to be shown in November. Now I'm hoping to do this with great paintings throughout the world continuously over a period of years I hope. If we could get permission, I'd love to do The Last Supper. We are already doing the Sistine Chapel. This idea arose out of my original idea of Diego Rivera. Last summer when I was over in Europe I ran into a Catholic priest who was in charge of television and radio for the Catholic Church in the United States. He told me about these fantastic transparencies which they had which were acquired in the process of making a television film of the Sistine Chapel at a cost of three-quarters of a million dollars, where they put up 80-foot scaffolding and they photographed the whole Sistine Chapel from a few feet away. And when Life magazine photographed it, they had photographed it from down below. And if you compare the Life magazine pictures and our pictures they're entirely different. In the Life magazine pictures the backgrounds tend to be blue; these tend to be a sort of reddish-brown, which is the real color. The blue is the haze of the dust through which they were photographed. So, in effect, I'm going to have these blown up larger than life size at a cost of around $20,000, which I am paying for myself. (I hope to be reimbursed on it). These will be larger than life size. There will be forty to fifty of them. All the major panels of the Sistine Chapel will be shown. And this will be the first time in history that the Sistine Chapel has ever been seen up close in its real colors from the time Michelangelo painted it. And I'm hoping that this can travel all over the world. And I hope that some of these other things, if we do them, like perhaps The Descent from the Cross or some of the great Goyas in Spain or the great Rembrandts, you know, we could do the same thing. Or paintings from the Hermitage, paintings which could never be moved; or which it would be very, very expensive and difficult to move. Because I think that one of the great arts of the 20th century obviously is photography; well, the greatest new art is photography. And it offers enormous opportunities. There's always been a little bit of snobbism about photography I think in relation to painting. And of course if you talk about taking photographs of paintings probably the first reaction would be, you know, "Please don't."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you been interested in photography for a long time?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, it's not that I have any great interest in photography. It really arises out of my interest in the paintings. But I feel here's a painting, like this great painting of Rivera's which will never be seen outside of Mexico City. And actually I've seen the photographs of the panels already. They're finished and they're over at the Museum. And I'm sure that they're close enough to the original that it takes an expert to tell the difference. You know, after all, this is the age of reproduction; I mean I'm sure that even in opera houses they have loud speakers that help to reproduce the music. And we have it in recordings, and everywhere. Why shouldn't we have it in painting. Not in small, inexpensive, cheap reproductions of Rembrandts. I think this kind of thing has helped to destroy Rembrandt's image and built up Picasso's. But I do think that where it's done with great fidelity both as to size as well as quality, then you can have something unique.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I just hope it catches on and that it will be something that will be done continuously. Another big practical consideration is the insurance. You know if you took one of those paintings that is valued at, say, a million dollars you have terrific insurance wherever you go. And not only the insurance. In this day and age of kids throwing things and damaging paintings; I mean even the other day when we had the Russian paintings we had a bunch of kids go in there and throw paint all over the walls.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really!

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Yes. There was thousands of dollars of damage. You don't want to take chances with these great paintings, these great objects of art. Well, if you can get a Rivera which to all intents and purposes is exactly like the original, except that it isn't the original, who the hell cares whether it's the original. I mean what

is important is what Rivera was trying to communicate visually. And it's all there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. That's interesting.

[Interruption for phone call.]

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: What time is it, by the way?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a quarter of three.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: I have to leave about three I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay. About five more minutes?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Oh, sure. That's all right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what about Show magazine?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Yes. I'm very interested right now in what I'm doing with that.

[Interruption for phone call.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And why a magazine? That's such an enormous undertaking.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Yes. What I'm doing now: we're combining two magazines which I have. First of all, I started, as you know, a number of years ago because I was interested in a magazine of the arts. I feel there's a kind of permanent form of communication in a magazine which appeals to me more than the more ephemeral - although much bigger - mass media such as television and so forth. I feel that if you produce motion pictures the trouble with that is that it's very hard for any individual to have much creative say. It's such a joint effort. Incidentally, I did make a couple of motion pictures at one point. I made one quite good picture, I think; it was called Face to Fact. Half of it was The Secret Sharer by Joseph Conrad, and the other was The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky by Stephen Crane. James Mason was in The Secret Sharer. My wife, Marjorie Steele, and Robert Preston were in The Bride. The picture was a very good example of a critical success. Really, The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky got rave reviews in New York. But, unfortunately, the trouble was that it was the time when they were having the worst kind of trouble with United Artists and RKO and everything. We got very bad distribution at the time. But I think I was a little ahead of the times in the shorts. I was inspired by Somerset Maugham's shorts, you know, his Trio and Quartet and Encore. But I started the magazine Show in 1961 and ended it in 1964. And there's no point in going into that except that I got a lot of experience in the magazine field. And I decided then that there must be a place for primarily a motion picture magazine. Not just the arts. I felt that the thing I had done wrong was talking about the arts in general and I was constantly fluctuating back and forth between the performing arts and the arts. I didn't really know....And if I didn't know, obviously the readers didn't know what our area really encompassed. Now so I decided in Show to put out a magazine which is primarily motion pictures. So at the same time I hired Jack Timmer who had been director of The Hollywood Reporter - editor. He left The Hollywood Reporter. He was in the process of starting a magazine of his own called Entertainment World. So he went ahead with Entertainment World in which I'm involved, and I went ahead with Show; and we finally decided to merge the two. We'll call it Show but we'll keep some of the elements of Entertainment World (which is primarily a trade magazine). And instead of being monthly like Show, or weekly like Entertainment World, it's now going to come out every two weeks, be a bi-weekly. And it will be fifty cents instead of a dollar; it'll be called Show and it will look like Show on the outside except that it won't be perfect binding; it'll be saddle stitch. That's coming out in about two weeks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then every other week?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: And every other week that'll be coming out. And it will be like Show except that it will have a trade element in it. It'll have news in it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of an audience are you aiming at then?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Well, we have most of the motion picture industry. We have about 15,000 subscribers who are directly connected with the movie industry. And we've only had seven cancellations. Which is pretty good. So I think they really have liked it. It's very hard to pinpoint your Show audience. On the one hand, you have a specialty magazine in the sense that this is for people interested in motion pictures. On the other hand, it's a general magazine in that everybody is interested in motion pictures to some extent. So obviously what you do when you're going out for subscriptions from a pragmatic standpoint is to get lists of people from whom you get the most return and the most interest. Now I suppose generally these are people in the arts, in the theater. And one approach we have thought of is to have some more direct contact with the movie houses themselves. Some friends of mine are putting out a small magazine called Filmbill which would be sort of the film counterpart

of Playbill in the legitimate theater. This would be handed out free to people going to movies. And of course if this reached a million people a week - well, I mean if it did - (after all it's given away) - it could be a very good advertising medium for Show. Now whether we're ever going to do anything with that I don't know. I feel that from a practical standpoint we all want to express our ideas. And everybody does whether it's the guy on the street corner in a small town or Henry Luce. We all want to express ourselves in some way. Why is a politician a politician? So that he can express himself; so that he can implement his ideas; so that he can do something. One of the ways that you can express yourself and do something is through a magazine. I like doing it this way very much. Television is ephemeral. Your show might go off the air. You're not really your own boss. You're too dependent upon the audience. This is not true so much with a magazine once it has become successful because you have sort of a going concern once you're made it over that hump. And also a magazine stays around for a long time; it's not over in one hour or one night. Also if you're interested in expressing yourself in any kind of subtle way you can't do it on television. You have to do it in writing really. I suppose you can do it but who's going to do it if you don't do it yourself. And if you're constantly on television you're an egomaniac. You know, somebody else has to express your ideas on television. Which is not the ideal way of doing it - like an actor - right? In a magazine you can have editorials. And interesting sidelight on this is what's happening with newspapers. In one of the magazines recently there was a big article about newspapers. After the demise of all of the New York newspapers most newspapers were beginning to be looked down on. This article said don't believe it;' it's not true. The best answer is to try to buy a newspaper in the United States. You can't buy one; not more than two or three are sold a year in the whole United States. And the reason for this is that they're mostly owned by families, or by people. They may not make a lot of money out of them, but, boy, they hang on to them. They can do enormous things with them. And I think they can do very good things. I think they can be very constructive. And, getting right back to the beginning of our conversation here, this has been one of my beefs: The newspaper can do more than any other medium. I mean there was a wonderful....I think it was Bob Moses....there was a beautiful poem I think by Alexander Pope (I wish I could find it) talking about the press.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Yes. "The worst kind of villain, the greatest god and hero," you know, depending on what they do with it. And it's true. And I mean, my God, the opportunities for The Daily News to do good! But I don't think the Daily News is terribly wrapped up in concern about their social responsibility. I think they're more interested in selling papers. And I think this is unfortunate. As for the Times my personal opinion is that they do a lot of harm. I suppose I'm a little bit somewhat to the right of - as this friend of mine was saying - Attila the Hun; but not quite as bad as his friend H. L. Hunt. You can hardly discuss the arts without discussing the social situation. And I feel that a lot of the trouble, looking at it from one side, I think the reason that the kids have rebelled is that they have been stuck out on a limb by not having declared war. I mean I lived through World War II and I was so goddamned glad to get into uniform and to get out of the United States because they made it miserable for civilians. And I think this is right during war. I don't think that people should be living life as usual, living it up, traveling, spending money, playing the stock market, when kids are dying in Vietnam. And this has never been mentioned. As a matter of fact, Senator Williams was over here and he said he had never heard this idea. And he was very impressed by it. And I said, "Well, dammit, I wish you'd say something about it sometime." I think this is one of the main factors. I think that if everybody was involved in this war a hundred percent, you know, I don't think that you'd see the trouble with the kids the way we do about Vietnam. I mean if they were all Margaret Mitchells at the hospital all day, and things like this - do you know what I mean? You're not going to have the kids - - -

PAUL CUMMINGS: They want to go to Woodstock though.

HUNTINGTON HARTFORD: Right. But they wouldn't care about going to Woodstock if everybody in the United States was involved in the war, believe me. I don't think kids are bad or that they're any worse than they were before. I think it's just that they feel, why should it be us? Why are we the heavies? The adults are having a fine time. No restrictions whatever. On the other side of the picture, I think that two of the most destructive forces have been Earl Warren and the New York Times magazine section. I really believe this And there are probably a lot of other things like this that I haven't observed. But I think that when you constantly encourage a destructive philosophy in some way or other....As an example Earl Warren - there's a picture of one of the Black Panthers with a gun saying "This is the way we're going to solve the problems." Who is the principal speaker? - Earl Warren. This is two days ago I picked up the paper. But how can you constantly - how can you constantly have that philosophy saying violence is essentially sane. Violence is okay. Because we're having all this trouble the only answer is violence. This essentially what Earl Warren has been saying. And it's essentially what the New York Times magazine section has been saying every week over a period of years. It goes to all the universities and to all the young professors. So the young professors, who are like doctors (they can't be fired), say, "Boy, you're right!" In my opinion we are simply reaping the rewards. I don't think it's the kids in either direction. I don't think it's the kids that started the fact that they have to go over to Vietnam alone, you know, with no help from the adults. And I think to build up the kids because the kids are rebelling is a false sense of values. I think they ought to straighten out the adults.

END OF INTERVIEW

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