Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Paul D. Magriel, 1970 Nov. 12-25

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Paul Magriel on November 12, 1970. The interview took place in New York City, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's November 12, 1970 - Paul Cummings talking to Paul Magriel in his apartment. You were born March 12, 1906 - right?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts?

PAUL MAGRIEL: In Massachusetts. I went to school there to a school called Williston Academy and had the traditional very good education. All the New England schools then, as today, are still the best.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tough schools.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not tough but good, solid education. I just couldn't approve of them more. I sent my children to schools in New England. I sent one to Exeter and the other to the same type of school in New Hampshire. I approve of those. I was educated in the general things and then I was sent to --

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were you sent to those schools? Did your family always go there?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I lived in Massachusetts and that is where the Academy was. I don't remember getting interested in art. I was interested in playing a musical instrument. I played the violin. I started playing the violin at the age of five, this was in grade school before I went to prep school, I played it for eight years. At the end of that time, at the age of thirteen, I was the concertmaster of the grade school orchestra, which is a phenomenon that probably doesn't exist today. I don't think that people can afford violins for public schools. Don't forget that this was 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, when I was in grade school. Then I gave up the violin. I was very sensitive to music and I've been interested in music all my life and I have a very good musical ear. And you may know that the violin as an instrument is very, very difficult. If I had taken up the piano instead I would probably be a pianist today. But the violin just scratched too much. I mean you just have to be a damned good artist to be satisfied. Either one of two things could have happened. I could have had a less sensitive ear and gone on and played the violin, or else I could hear it the way it sounded and I knew it was just not good enough, so I gave it up in prep school. Let me see, I got interested in dancing at a very, very early stage in my life. When I was at Williston Academy, Rudolph Valentino, had taken a year off from movie making - he was married then to, I think, Virginia Hudnut, the cosmetics heiress -and she and he were doing a series of tango dances at Smith College. I remember going over there on the streetcar. I think I was the only boy there among two thousand girls. I got very interested in dancing and was always interested in pursuing it as a career.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you come from a cultural background? Was your family interested in art, books and music?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not especially. My father was a businessman. My mother was just a person with no special artistic interests. Do you think that works that way? I know masses of people whose mothers and fathers are just passionately devoted to music -one of my sons is tone deaf, I mean he wouldn't know the difference between Mozart and boogie today - and I'm very musical. But my son just doesn't hear. I think one of the most important things in my life was that in New York in 1933 I met Lincoln Kirstein. He was then editor and publisher of a magazine called Hound and Horn. He was very much interested in the ballet. At that time I had been taking lessons in ballet dancing from a man in Springfield, Massachusetts named Anatole Bourman (B-o-u-r-m-a-n). An interesting man. He was Nijinsky's classmate at the great Imperial School of Ballet in St. Petersburg. Also, they were very close personal friends. The reason that Bourman happened to be a friend of Nijinsky's was because Bourman was Polish and Nijinsky also was a Pole. In those days in St. Petersburg there was an almost categorical rejection of Poles. You know the Russians thought that the Poles were just a second culture and not a distinguished people at all. Anyhow, Bourman became very attached to Nijinsky, and vice versa. They became very, very fast friends, which incidentally led to a book that he had written. And about that time, just before his book came out, Romola Nijinsky, Nijinsky's widow, had walked into Lincoln Kirstein's office and I think Lincoln helped her very much with her book which became a very, very popular book. You know it, don't you? I think it's called Life with Nijinsky or something like that. That's a digression. Anyhow, I met Lincoln Kirstein. Then another friend of mine was working with the Fokine Ballet - Fokine was a great master then - and through a series of circumstances I joined the company for several weeks. They were playing at the Capitol Theatre. There would be

a film - I've forgotten the name of the film - and then a stage show, then the film, then stage show. I mean there would be four or five shows a day. I was an extra in the company. I was dancing one of the eunuchs in Scheherazade. I was dressed in one of those great big box costumes which are fabulous. I did this for a couple of weeks. Then I went on to Washington, D.C. Lincoln Kirstein was getting seriously interested in the dance and was forming a company. He was doing a book called Dance. I went to Washington for him and worked at the Library of Congress for two years and did the first bibliography on dancing. That was a major thing, I mean sort of a thing which is universal --

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which you can't find anywhere today.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, it's expensive. It's $50 or $75 or something like that. It was published in a very small edition by a company which publishes nothing but bibliographies. The Library of Congress was a marvelous source library. I met a Dr. Rodionoff who was an old Imperial Russian balletomane who remember the early days. He was very pleasant. And he helped me make transliterations of the Russian books on ballet which were there and nowhere else and also the rest of it. Anyhow, I got the book published and it was very useful. Lincoln Kirstein published his book Dance and my bibliography came out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You also did a little book on Nijinsky.

PAUL MAGRIEL: That was later on. I'm trying to keep this in some sort of chronology. You see I was interested in dancing. I was interested in the research in dance. I did this bibliography which was a very, very serious thing. I devoted two years of my time to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that published?

PAUL MAGRIEL: In 1936. It was reissued I think in 1966 or something like that. It is still the standard reference book. Many years later I was offered a Rockefeller Foundation grant to do a revised edition. That was in the late 1950s or early 1960s and by that time the literature on the dance had become so vast that it was a committee job so I declined. It still hasn't been done. Like everything else, I suppose one day it can be done. You know how literature piles up. Anyhow, I came back to New York. By then I realized that I was too old to become a professional and also that I was seriously lacking in the capacity to be superior in it. So I worked for Lincoln in a thing called the School of American Ballet. Then the Ballet Society was formed. I took it out on the road as sort of road manager or whatever they call it - advance man or something like that. We went to towns like Syracuse, Pittsburgh and Charlotte, North Carolina. We toured the country. We had a very, very wonderful company. We were doing marvelous ballets: Aaron Copland's Billy the Kid. Eugene Loring created the ballet. We did Virgil Thomson's Filling Station. These were new scores and new decors. It was just a brilliant company. But these were disasters. We had no audience at all. This is 1938 when there was almost no interest in ballet. We used to get as little as twelve people. I remember being in Syracuse and there was no one in the theatre. I called the mayor or one of the city councilmen. I said, "What are we going to do? We have no audience." He said, "I'll get you somebody." I think he sent 300 kids from the poorhouse to fill up some seats. You know it's awfully hard for dancers - the ambience of the dance needs an audience and spontaneous reaction and applause, and the rest of it. That was a very, very unhappy time from Lincoln Kirstein's point of view. He was enormously involved both creatively and financially. He managed those seasons brilliantly. He developed new, young choreographers like Eugene Loring. And he had marvelous people to compose scores - Elliott Carter and others I can't think of offhand. I have all this material on the Ballet Society put away somewhere. It was a very signal, useful, and most important contribution to American culture. Offhand it would be very hard to say which aspect of the arts was more important. I can't think of any literature or music or anything which opened up a whole new aspect of culture on a very, very high level with enormously talented young Americans who had never been used before that way, not only in classic and romantic ballets but with American ballets, such as The Filling Station and Billy the Kid. And much later out of that whole thing stemmed people like Agnes De Mille and all the others. Lincoln Kirsten provided the initial impetus.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had gone to Columbia University at some point?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. That's later, too. You see these are not progressions. At the beginning of 1939 I went to Europe to live for the year. I stayed until October. Unfortunately, the war broke out in August when I was in Paris. I did see the last great July 14 Parade on the Champs d'Elysses, the Bastille Day parade. I was very impressed. There was an imminent feeling of all kinds of impending doom and disaster. Everybody came out. I remember the people who I thought got the most applause were the British grenadiers with their big muskets and the Legion 'Etrangeres. They were enormously appealing. They walked down the Champs d'Elysses with their guns. And the Italians were there with their shovels. I thought that was very odd. Anyhow, that was very impressive. In Europe I bought a library and print collection for Lincoln which became the basis for the Lincoln Center Threatre Arts Collection. Lincoln formed a very large collection. I didn't spend very much money -I don't remember exactly how much - but it was probably one or two thousand dollars. It was just an incredible collection. I was there, I was informed, I was one of the few people interested in that sort of thing. So I formed

this marvelous collection. It was very hard to get back to this country. I got out of Paris and returned here in October I think it was. The war had been going on for a couple of months. In Paris I stayed with George Shaffey. You probably know of him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And his friend, Richard Doux, who is a great scholar. We went to Luxembourg, to a place called Val d'Isere, and stayed there. I thought we were treated very badly. But probably that's usual in wartime. We had great difficulty in booking passage. There just weren't any ships going. We'd go to the steamship companies every day. Finally we got passage on a small ship - I've forgotten the name of it - it was outrageously expensive. It was a washtub. It took us about nine days to cross. We went from Paris to Bordeaux, got on the boat at Bordeaux and came to New York in nine days. I brought back this mass of material that I'd bought. When I showed it to Lincoln he said, "This is marvelous." Then he arranged for me to go to the Museum of Modern Art in 1939 as curator of a thing called the Dance and Theatre Department. Actually, I think it was the first dance archive. Later it became Dance and Theatre Archives. We did beautiful shows which have just gone totally into oblivion. There are no catalogues, there are no visual records, there's no photographic record. But the shows were so beautiful that if they were reconstituted today they would be just absolutely smashing. First of all, the audience would be an informed one. Since 1939 thousands of people have been to the ballet. We did a whole series of shows in 1940. We had a vast amount of material.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't there a checklist or something done of this.

PAUL MAGRIEL: There's a bulletin that was published by Betty Chamberlain of the Museum of Modern Art in 1940 which I gave to Russell Lynes who is doing a history of the Museum of Modern Art. He wanted to know about the part that I played. So I sent this bulletin on to him. But you can get it from the Museum. Anyhow, it's not...the thing that is sad for me is that people then didn't go very much to see those things, and people don't recall. But we did one show called Ballet History Art and Practice, which is a survey of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries with Bebe Berard's thing and Berman's things and Tchelitchew's things and de Chirico's things for the ballet. It was just stunning. I did the bibliography or helped with the theater section of the big Picasso retrospective that Alfred Barr did in 1940. That was an absolutely stunning show. That was one of the great shows. But the dance archives was never, never accepted, never popular. I have a feeling that I was at the Museum of Modern Art under a kind of - well, I feel that if it hadn't been for Lincoln Kirstein's personal prestige and pressure I wouldn't have been there for ten weeks. Because although the work was useful it never was in the strict sense a part of the kind of aesthetic which the Museum of Modern Art was under Alfred Barr. It was never Alfred's aesthetic. It just wasn't. Like he doesn't know Nadelman. He just doesn't. And I mean that's nothing against him and it's nothing against me and nothing against Lincoln Kirstein. It just was not the place. Anyhow, fortuitously we did some marvelous shows. That Ballet History Art and Practice was a great show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were involved only in the dance in the 1930s? Or were there other kinds of activity?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I was involved in the visual aspects of the dance most enormously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sets and costumes and so on?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, that. And I was informed. I probably knew every box sketch that had been made, everything that Alexander Benois had done. I was informed of the six ballets that Picasso had done, where they were done, how they were done. I had seen the maquettes over and over again. I was informed in depth.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you ever have any correspondence with Cyril Beaumont in his little book store?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I knew him. I used to see him in London. Yes. I knew him very well. I remember one period when there was wonderful transition. When I met him first he was so redheaded and then there was the transition of his hair from red, not to gray, but to pink. Which happens very rarely. And I thought it was very, very special. He looked like a little pixie there sitting in the little Charing Cross shop. He was an enormously charming and very sweet man, very dedicated. I have great respect for him. I knew Hascall, too, but not so well. I thought he was just not sort of my thing. Go ahead ask me a question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were involved with contemporary American dance but also interested in the Ballet Russe and all those groups.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, yes. And I saw all the companies. I'd seen the performances in the very early days at St. James's Theatre when there were about twelve people in the audience. The company was superb! The people were young. Rhea Vishinsky was a young girl. Boronova was a young girl. Lichine was a young man doing the most beautiful ballets like Bebe Berard's ballet Cotillion with the Chabrier score and Balanchine's choreography. It was just an eye-opener! And Massine dancing with Danilova in Le Tricorne and Le Beau Danube. It was fantastic. Of course I went all through all the seasons - the Massine Season and the Ballets Russes Season and

all the American Ballet which started next door in a theatre which has since been torn down with Dick Pleasant and Lucia Chase. I went all the time, all the time. So I was informed in depth. I knew a lot of the dancers. One of the dancers was a friend of mine for many, many years. But all through this thing while my background is musical and I was interested in the movement and rhythm of the dance, basically I was always interested in the visual thing. In early 1942 I went into the Army. I think I was the first person drafted from the Museum of Modern Art. I was shipped down to Biloxi, Mississippi. I was fairly old then, I was thirty-six. I didn't think they'd take me. Of course the war was serious and they took everybody.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before we get into that, I'd like to hear some more about the Museum of Modern Art. You were there from - what? - 1939 to 1943?

PAUL MAGRIEL: 1939 to 1942. The shows there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Working within the department.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I worked with Beaumont Newhall. He was very nice. When I was working there I also did some special bibliography, a bibliography of Stravinsky and - I forget - I did a bibliography of African dances and other things. And I worked with Arthur Knight. Arthur Knight, Beaumont Newhall and I were there in that section. I've forgotten how it formed now but I was part of the library, I was the dance library. Arthur Knight was the film library. Beaumont Newhall was the librarian. But I wasn't under his aegis at all, I was a separate, independent thing. My salary came from the Museum of Modern Art but I was not part of the library. I serviced people all around the country, you know, people who heard about the archive. And we established a sort of thing with the Harvard theatrical library which was a very good library then, it had lots of ballet material. And that year I think I did a series of lectures for the College Art Association on classical dance and ballet. I went all around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You must have known the fellow at the Library on 42nd Street -George --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Friedly was a great friend of mine, yes. I did a lecture there, you know, that sort of thing with slides. I had lovely slides and did those lectures. At that time the top people at the museum of Modern Art of course were: Monroe Wheeler, who was prominent; Alfred Barr was absolutely the totally dominating figure; and Dorothy Miller; and there was a big redhead, the public relations girl. I've forgotten her name but she was marvelous. She was there for a long time. A great big redhead. She was a top, top public relations girl. She'd been there for many years. You should know her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sara --

PAUL MAGRIEL: You should know her. This is your scene.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She did a book. I can't remember --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, she's a writer. She did a book. But she was a blockbuster girl. And, oh, I did a marvelous show with John Mealy. I gave John Mealy his first show. He's a photographer who did a whole series of strobic photos. I did an exhibition of those that was very interesting. It was sort of a first exhibition. Then I did a show on American dancers - Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn. At the Isadora Duncan show I had all the Duncan relatives, all the ones that were left. Raymond, who was blind. And all the progeny. And the stepsisters and the step-uncles. And the inheritors and all that. It was a great party that I gave.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was an incredible collection of people.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, it was. And Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn came. I got to know Ted very well because his good friend Burton Mumal was in the military with me at Kiesler Field, Mississippi. Of course with his friend there Ted came down and lived there. And in a curious way we all got to be great friends of the commanding general there. I, by virtue of the fact that Stephen Clark, who was then Chairman of the Board of the Museum of Modern Art wrote to him and said, "Please take care of our Paul." I thought this was so generous. I didn't know that he knew of my existence, I mean I was a person of such inconsequence at the Museum of Modern Art, despite the fact that I may have a special kind of personality, I was of no importance to the Museum. How Stephen Clark came to write a letter like that I'll never know but he did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was the general?

PAUL MAGRIEL: His name was Goulrick. He was a wonderful man. He came from Virginia Military Institute. Anyhow he said to me, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to start an art department." He said, "Just what does that mean?" I said, "Well, here you have 70,000 men. We have all these classification of cards, we can see from the cards who the artists are." So I got together a group of twenty-two people to paint murals and do easel painting and all kinds of things so they wouldn't have to go and shoot and that sort of thing. That was a very interesting part of my career. At that time I published a book called Art and the Soldier. Have you ever seen it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. But I've heard about that.

PAUL MAGRIEL: That was the first book ever published and paid for by the United States Army. I have that book Art and the Soldier. Then from there I went up to Washington. And then came to the New York headquarters of this very special division, special services called D.E.M.L. (Detached Enlisted Men's List). Frank Loesser was in music, Jack Baur was in art, I was in art, Nathaneal Saltonstall was in art. We did a big exhibition at the National Gallery of Art called "Soldier Art," and we published a book "Soldier Art." Bartlett Hayes, who was from Andover, and we split the country in half. Bartlett Hayes and I took the West; Jack Bauer and Jim Soby took the East. Jack was the military and Soby was the civilian, and Hayes and I, we arranged exhibitions of Army art dealing with those special commands. (The country was divided into certain commands). So we did a show in Chicago, Texas, California, that sort of thing. We did the National Gallery of Art exhibition in 1944. Johnny Walker was there. I must say he was not very enthusiastic about it. But everybody was so patriotic. I remember that when I did my book Art and the Soldier, my captain, who was a very enterprising man, sent copies to everybody and got acknowledgements from President Roosevelt, all the generals, the Marine Corps, Admiral King, everybody. It was a command performance. Everybody wrote that, "We are delighted to have Paul Magriel's book Art and the Soldier. It's a splendid morale builder." I think I have photostats of a lot of that. I bores me now, but it used to be amusing then. That was great fun. I think we published about 3,000 copies of the book Art and the Soldier. We sold them right away. They were sold in the service clubs. You know what a service club is like. Where formerly they'd sell only deodorants and toothpaste and birch bark canoes and pillows inscribed with "Love to Mother" and so on, now here was a novelty, a book they could send to their mothers, wives, and sweethearts. It was a best seller in that particular camp there. They made lots of money on it which was used to buy basketballs and so on. A certain percentage of all the money taken in at the service clubs reverts back to the enlisted man. Most of it goes into what they call day rooms. A day room is a leisure room. I fixed up all the leisure rooms. I had a crew consisting of a landscape architect, architects, interior decorators. At one time I had a crew of over twenty-eight people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What camp was this?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Keesler Field, Mississippi. I planted forty-eight magnolia trees. I got 16,000 boxes of geraniums for the -what do you call it? I was an authority - I was eminent - I was master sergeant. My relationship with the commander was so close that I used to go and see him. The lieutenants, the majors and the captains would be there waiting their turn to see him and I used to just walk right in. Because like a very special type of American, the world of culture was new to him. This was after he had been in the service for thirty-eight or forty years and this was a great, great new toy. He asked me to submit designs for new uniforms for the Air Force. We did everything. The money was used for bettering the morale of the soldiers. It was a very useful thing for some of the artists. We had a great number of mural painters, though no distinguished names come to mind. I don't know of any great names that came out of the Army as was the case with the WPA. As you know, that was the background of our American painting expression. As Clement Greenberg said in Partisan Review years ago, the WPA was an enormous force. And, by the way, in rereading what Clement Greenberg wrote in those days, he was really informed and intuitive and sensitive. I don't know what your feelings are about him today. But he was really with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. Very much so.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Like Harold Rosenberg

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But Clement Greenberg especially was tuned in to the scene.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was a little before Harold.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, he was before. But I remember a piece of his from 1949 -that's a hell of a long time ago - in which he was reading the scene correctly. Which the Museum of Modern Art never did. Lee Pollock told me as long ago as last summer that she offered Alfred Barr his choice of any Pollocks and he turned them down including the one that Sidney Janis worked into the deal with Ben Heller which they have now, which cost something like $300,000. So much for hindsight and all the rest of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've mentioned that Stephen Clark had written a letter in your behalf. Did you know him well?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I didn't know him at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of a character was he?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I went to see him several times at his house on 70th Street. He seemed very remote and very

imperious, a gentleman born to money and position and power, authoritarian and all the rest of it. I've never sat down to dinner with him because I didn't know him socially.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't there a time in the late 1930s or 1940s or 1941 when Alfred Barr was fired? What happened?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I don't know the details of it. I think that Stephen Clark was not happy with him on account of a series of incidents. You must have some confirmation of that from other sources. Haven't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I get different stories all the way around.

PAUL MAGRIEL: What story do you get now, the one that you have the most feeling about?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm not sure yet.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Have you heard about the Hirschfeld story? Is that one possibility?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I haven't heard that one.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Hirschfeld is a painter who Sidney Janis discovered. It was a very unhappy show. It really didn't belong. It was awfully primitive. It didn't really belong. I don't know - Sidney had enormous vitality and probably had influence with somebody. Although I don't suggest now that Alfred was influenced. I mean I don't think he could have been. I know Lincoln Kirstein couldn't influence Alfred and Lincoln was much stronger than Sidney then. I think Lincoln and Alfred had a hassle about the Nadelman show then - I don't know. But a lot of things are very funny. For instance, they put together the Tchelitchew show and did it together with Dali - didn't they? So, no, the Dali and Miro show was done together. And Tchelitchew had a separate show? - he couldn't have had a separate show by himself with a separate catalogue - could he? Well, anyhow, he probably did. And Eugene Berman who was a great friend of Soby's, was scheduled to have a show. They just shunted him off and shunted him off until it got too late and he never had a show. Later he told me that just broke his heart. Then Jim Plant of Boston finally did a Berman show. He's very good, I mean not today, but in retrospect. I suppose he merited a show less than Tchelitchew. But that's an aesthetic consideration on which I'm not informed. But about Stephen Clark I can't tell you very much about the Museum.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Soby was there in those days, wasn't he?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Soby was never at the museum of Modern Art in an official position. He never worked there at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he's been in and out.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, he's a great friend of Alfred's and he's been a consultant and he's been on advisory committees and he's been a trustee. Alfred was it. And there just was nobody else. Monroe Wheeler was just then beginning to take over the department of publications. It was a long time later that he took over the exhibitions. I was there only in the years when Alfred was eminent. What year was it that Alfred got demoted? You see I left in 1942 and never came back. And that's twenty-eight years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was around that time. 1941, 1942,1943, somewhere in there. They had a kind of group management for six or eight years and then Rene d'Harnoncourt came in.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. When I was there Rene did some stunning shows. Did he do the Mexican show that year? And the American Indian show that year? - or was that later?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was later. But I can't remember the date though.

PAUL MAGRIEL: It was? Was it later? Was it 1941? Or was it 1943? 1944? Because then I wouldn't have seen it, since I was in the Army then. I don't remember. But Rene did a stunning show that turned everybody around because his ideas of installation then were really something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You remember two especially - the American Indian show and the Mexican show. I remember at the American Indian show they had a Navajo chief come and do sand drawings, I mean paintings. Did you see that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Every day for two or four hours they had the big foyer blocked off and the navajo would do sand

paintings like that. It was just marvelous! Then at the Mexican show Orozco did a big mural in front of everybody. Did you know that? The sand painting was fascinating. It was beautiful watching the blue sand, the red sand, and all that stuff.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tell me some more about the West Coast operations that you were involved with in your Army days.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was only there for three or four days at a time. I just went to Chicago, stayed three or four days, agglomerated the material, which was sent out in advance. All the Army camps submitted all of their drawings, paintings, watercolors, sculptures to this one unit which was at the Art Institute of Chicago. Then Bartlett Hayes and I would disseminate it. I mean we'd go through it and select and edit what we wanted and do the show. Then we went to Dallas, Texas and did all the Army commands there who had sent in all this stuff. We'd pick out what we wanted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were a traveling jury?

PAUL MAGRIEL: We were a traveling jury and hangers and assemblers with the assistance of museum people. I forget who helped us in Chicago. In Dallas I remember that Jerry Bywater helped us. But those shows demonstrated two things to me then, and in retrospect I think I can confirm it: that most people who paint have very, very little talent and they should do something very different and not sculpt or paint. And, two, that there are too many of them doing it. It serves no function unless to please members of their immediate family I would think. I can't remember any single thing that came out of there that had quality or distinction in drawing or sculpture or any medium. I just can't recall any. And I saw masses of them. I did see some marvelous photographs. Those were good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. Why do you think that photographs would be better?

PAUL MAGRIEL: They probably aren't. Probably I know less about the art of photography. But I remember some very, very stunning photographs. Of course I admit that I'm no judge and jury, I don't have any final judgements on anything, and probably some of the paintings, watercolors and sculpture were good. I didn't think so then. And I don't think so now. It's just a question of editing, taking the least worst ones, - the best of what I call a bad lot. I would hate to look at them today. I haven't even flipped the pages of the book Soldier Art in a long time. (My book, which was Art and the Soldier, was local) I can just imagine the banality of it. A Miss Crane did a book on the Wreaths of War about the same time that I did my book in 1943. Do you remember that book? It's mostly drawings which were interesting. I think Life magazine picked them up. And I think Aline Saarinen did a little thing on me for Art News when I was projecting the notion that art was happening in the United States Army. This appeared sometime in 1943. She was working for Frankfurter at Art News at the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened when you came out of the Army?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, I got married in New Orleans. We just traveled. I went to Mexico. I went to England. And, oh, yes, in the Army I got interested in prizefighting. I went to England, Scotland, Wales and assembled a very large group of prints on prizefighting. I did the exhibition called The Ring and The Glove at The Museum of the City of New York in 1947. It was done with my private collection and it was one of the most popular shows ever done there. And the same year I did the book on Nijinsky. Then I did the book on Pavlova. And then the one on Isadora Duncan. That was for Ballet Society.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You did a whole series.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, I did that series.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I have the Nijinsky book.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, have you? They're very expensive now. About forty-five bucks. Do you have the original one with the covers and everything?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You're pretty lucky. They're impossible to get because it was a very small edition.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen the other ones.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You never saw the one on Pavlova or on Duncan? Anyhow, I worked for Ballet Society doing those books.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about your collection? Were the prizefight prints the first collection you formed?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I had formed this marvelous ballet collection in 1939. I went to Europe. I told you about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but that was for Kirstien. The prizefight prints were your own - right?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And that was the beginning of a series of --?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I suppose so. But then immediately after that - oh, I got interested in this thing more and more. I did the first bibliography on boxing, the first and standard reference book published by The New York Public Library. This was the first time an outsider had been invited to an institution as good as the New York Public Library to do a serious bibliography.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that come about?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I knew Mr. Henderson, who was chief of the division and we talked and he thought that I knew what I was talking about. I showed him my bibliography. He said, "We want to publish it." And it was published. Then in the same year, 1948, I did the exhibition of my collection at the New York Public Library and my collection of books on boxing, which is a very, very distinguished collection. It was the first time an outsider had ever been invited to show a private collection with the owner's name in the New York Public Library. That was a serious collection. The boxing prints was a serious collection, too. I think the American Federation of Arts traveled that show. I think that was the first show they traveled for me. Then I started getting seriously interested in collecting paintings. The first paintings I collected were American still-lifes, wasn't it? Were they the first?

PAUL CUMMINGS: They were very early, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Very early, yes, by virtue of the fact that I had -- oh, that came about because I went to Edith Halpert's gallery one time and saw Harnetts for the first time and was very taken with them. I bought several. Edith was very difficult then. This was in 1951 - a long time ago. I'd say, "How much is this one?" She'd say, $1,450." I'd go around and look further. I'd come back and say, "I like that one. How much is it?" She'd say, $2,250." For exactly the same picture. There was no use arguing with her. That was the new price. If you want to buy it okay. She was never a friend but I knew her all those years. We shared certain interests. In those days there weren't very many people interested in Harnett.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do once you liked the Harnetts, you saw all the things, did you decide to develop a collection?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No, I never decided to do anything. These things just happen naturally. I never decide anything at first. If I see something I like, I buy it. For instance, I bought a piece of glass that I like, then I went and bought twenty-five other pieces. Maybe in 1972 if I have a feeling about it I'll do a big glass show. It's not impossible, but possible that somewhere I'll do a big retrospective glass show of French and American art glass. So I don't know - how can you answer a question like that? Do you see what I mean.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm just curious.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I'm just telling you that there's this incipient possibility and I may dump it or I may develop it. This may be the glass show of 1972 - not this, but I mean - well, I don't know how to answer that question. I really don't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious because you've had so many collections. What happened to the collection of still-lifes?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I've had three different still-life collections. I had the great pictures. For instance, today if you were to walk into John D. Rockefeller's apartment at 1 Beekman Place you'll see a great big beautiful table. You walk in, there's nothing here and nothing there and then on this table there's my little picture, my Raphael Peale, which is an absolute gem that I bought in the late 1940s or early 1950s. And the Mellons have my still-lifes. And so have the Rockefellers. The Metropolitan Museum has some. That was the first collection I formed and it has been disassembled. And that was a superior collection. A lot of the stuff in the Randenstein book came from me. The Haberle on the cover of Art News was my picture. Mrs. Norman B. Woolworth, a rich lady in Maine, got twenty-two of my pictures through Wildenstein.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were these collections developed just because they interested you?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, they interested me enormously.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or was it a business?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No, never as a business. The scholarship was dependent upon this peculiar kind of interest I have. I don't know whether it's interest or cupidity or anything like that, but it was never venal and it was never hustling in terms of buying it with a view to selling it then. You know you can't buy these things. What was happening with the still-lifes was that I was getting sharper and sharper, more and more discerning. I mean I had absolute total talent but not Frankenstein, nobody. If I got the best ones for the least at the right time. It was that sort of thing. And it was a fascinating thing that lasted for a long time. When my interest came to an end other people got into it. The stuff was becoming diluted, emasculated, high-priced, over-priced, not interesting to me any more. So I just dumped the whole thing. I mean that's not hard to understand. Let me see what other collections did I form. By the way, I must tell you about that boxing collection. That collection was superior, superb. I had all the great masters. The best examples of the aquatints and mezzotints. I learned about them. Never before or since has such a collection been accumulated or gotten together. Not before or since has there been that good a collection. And my collection of boxing books - there has not been as good a collection of books on boxing as mine before or since. This includes the British Museum. That's the point. And when I exhibited my collection of still-lifes at the Corcoran in 1957 it was just a blockbuster. There has been nothing like it before or since. Today ten museums could not put that show together. It was that good. Do you see what I mean? I mean you can observe this for yourself, this is not just my personal opinion. There was a thoroughness and a completeness and aesthetic validity to the whole thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm just curious because of the fact that you've never become a dealer with an organization or you've never become a museum curator.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I don't like that. I'm like these confrontation people. I don't like to talk about the money part of it at all. I don't like to discuss the things. What I've always liked to do is simply to transfer my holdings to other people and let them do the hustling for me, or whatever polite expression they want, and just pay me for my time and for what I think. That's all. Currently I have those situations prevailing today where I've turned my things over to other people and let them sell them for me. But my interest in it was total, you know, totally twenty-four hours. I would go anywhere to see a picture. And don't forget that a lot of my talent comes from the enormously enterprising dealers, too. People like Victor Spark. Victor has a marvelous eye and I got to him to find things. After all, I don't create the pictures. I edit and select them. But people were there - Victor and other dealers - who made it possible for me. No collector is possible without a dealer. There's no such thing. It's ridiculous to say "isn't there a special kind of collector?" Maybe the Sculls are a special kind of collector - I don't know. But I'm not. I mean the dealers are responsible for what a collector buys and edits. I formed a collection of American watercolors later. And I formed a marvelous collection of Renaissance bronzes. I forget the sequence of events relating to these bronzes: French & Company were moving from 57th Street to their new place uptown. They were liquidating. I just walked in there one day and I saw these Renaissance bronzes for $800, $1,200, $1,600. Well, I just bought them all. I bought about ten pieces. Beautiful bronzes! Beautiful bronzes! One after the other. Two of them were part of the original J.P. Morgan Collection which were published in the big Bota catalogues. I went to Florence to the Bargello and spent weeks and weeks and weeks there where the great collection is, you know, of the Pollaiuolos. Then I went to Modena. Then I went to every Italian city and saw every bronze, every private bronze and every public bronze. In London I went to the Victoria and Albert and spent days and days and days. I went to the Ashmolean to see the Salton Collection of bronzes. I saw all the bronzes. I saw Linsky's bronzes, Untermeyer's bronzes. I saw them all, up to here in bronzes, up to my ass. But you see I did everything thoroughly. When I did the prizefight prints I knew as much about prizefighting - let me tell you this incident, which is not pretentious: Natz Life is an old man who has a magazine called The Ring. I went to see him in the 1940s and chatted with him for a half-hour. Later when I did the exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York I met his assistant. He said to me, "You made Natz Life so sick that he was out ill for a week. He considers himself the eminent authority on the subject and he has never met anybody who knows so much. He just can't stand you and you'll never get back there again." And he put me down. But I don't care about that. Even though I was doing prints of the prize ring I knew all about the other guys. I knew all about Kilrane. I know the sequence of fighters from Kilrane to Sullivan, to Corbett, to Jeffries, to Willard, as far back as you want to go on the scene right up to yesterday. I knew it all. I was informed. I saw the fights. I knew the old guys Crib and Malineau. I did a whole bunch of articles. I did an article on ballet prizefight prints. I did an article on ceramics and the prize ring for a magazine called The Field and Antiques and Studio. Lots of them. All down the drain; all forgotten. If you had gone to the Library of Congress then to find out who was an authority on dance literature and boxing literature you'd find that it was I. No one else. I just knew it all in both fields. In dance literature I have handled every single book on the dance ever published. I spent months at the Bibliotheque de l'Opera and La Scala and the British Museum and the Library of Congress doing this. I don't mean that I just saw a citation, I have physically handled every book. And in the literature of boxing I have physically handled every book. That takes time. And a lot of time has passed by. I'm sixty-five now. But I did it. I was there. I did it by myself. Of course, nothing happened in the sense of - I mean I had the fun of doing it. I'm talking about the groundwork and all that and being totally obscure. I mean I'm serious.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about the fact that you're interested in prints and painting and, you know, a great interest in furniture and the decorative arts, and all these things. You seem to go from one thing to another.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, I think that has to do with the fact that I don't have a family. And you have a relationship. I have an ex-wife who is a good friend of mine. I have two children. One of my sons is a professor who teaches mathematics. Another son is in India somewhere. He plays the banjo. Somebody saw him the other day. He's gone from New Delhi to Nepal. Anyhow, he's a fantastic kid and I admire him very, very much. But I don't know what motivates people. That's a ridiculous question to ask, isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: But in a sense some people stay in line, you keep --

PAUL MAGRIEL: It would bore me to stay in line. You can tell that from how frenetic I am. It would bore the pants off of me to stay in line. The only thing is I've lived with the same person for twelve years so I'm not hopscotch that way at all, by the way. Which is another kind of strange dichotomy of human personality because one would go from hopscotch jump here - and I must have the reputation -I have no way of knowing, no one has any way of knowing - but offhand I would think that up and down Madison Avenue in the whole spectrum of art where I've been on both sides of the Atlantic people say, "He's a pretty nutty kind of guy." And I think probably justifiably. Except that they talk to me about what they want to talk about. I wouldn't be that nutty, would I?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true. I'm curious about the fact that when you would build a collection of objects you also would do the scholarship that went along with it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Why not? I mean what's so ridiculous about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's so unusual. There are very few people who do.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I did the scholarship in depth. I spent hours - I went blind at the British Museum looking for one thing, for certain things. I was looking to identify a Van Meckenam print, 1565. I spent about three weeks on this and when I found it so what? - it was the smallest possible footnote, which has disappeared forever. I just went to see the exhibition that John McKendry did at the Metropolitan Museum of Flowers and Fetes. Well, Fetes is my thing. I did a whole section on Fetes on my bibliography. I compiled the first serious group there. I remember Karl Kup at the New York Public Library, who is a friend of mine - do you know him? - he's a great scholar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, you see, those people who know me well are not - what can I tell you about what happens to somebody? (This is not any kind of a lament, by the way). It's just en passant people say, "Who is he?" "What does he do?" My brother who is a businessman in Springfield, Massachusetts sometimes asks, "What is Paul doing now?" And my brother, you know, who sees me jump from one thing to another, says the same thing. "What the hell is Paul doing now?" There is no simple answer. When people do ask me I say - I don't know - "I'm not doing anything right now." It was great fun. I just reassembled another group of still-life paintings which was great fun. It had been pretty exhausted. I did that just after the Art Nouveau Show - no, between the Art Nouveau Show and that I did a nice collection of forty-five pictures. The Art Nouveau show was great fun. That was a new thing, too, a special thing. And I have some marvelous things of my own. That's a great table, a Magerel table. And that's a great galley piece. And this is the lamp. That's a Magerel screen. And these are the greatest chairs anywhere in the world. These are as good as those in the Musee des Arts Decoratifs. You know what they are? - they're Colonna Chairs. Look at the purity of design. They're just great. And I had fabulous things, a lot of which I've sold. But I've kept my Gruber thing, I've kept my great screen and my great table and my lamp and the rest of it. I researched that pretty thoroughly. And Peggy comes for my show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? What - the Art Nouveau Show?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I mean came and went. I don't think I'm identified with that show. Do you identify me with that show?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I do, sure.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But I'm not identified with that show.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always think of the traveling shows the A.F.A. has done.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, they've done so many of mine. I think five or six. They did my bronzes. I was decorated by the Italians for my boxing show. You know I sent it to Italy. I got a diploma, you know, and the medal thing. That's a long time ago. The A.F.A. did a lot of my shows. They probably do good work, don't they? Do you think the whole function is good? Or not?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes, yes, but a little too kind of lacking in critical acumen I think.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, not sometimes. I think all the time, totally. But in many areas you find --- But the other side is not so perceptive so it all balances out pretty much. But I can tell you that my show called A Hundred Years of

American Realism was an awfully good show. Did you see that show?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That was at Finch, too, wasn't it?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No. The American Federation of Art. It was watercolors and pastels. Oh, that was a beautiful show! You didn't see that show?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. It was a big show?

PAUL MAGRIEL: The show traveled for two years. They did a lovely catalogue for it. Did you see a show of mine called Galaxy of Ladies at Finch College?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's the one.

PAUL MAGRIEL: With the Sargents and the things like that. That was a very pretty show. I had in that show some beautiful Dewings. I sort or reestablished Dewing again as a marvelous pastellist, which he was very good at. That was another Finch show. Then I did my American Drawings which was a very good show. Did you ever see the American drawings show that I did?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. I have the catalogue of that.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Where did you see that one? There are so many catalogues. It was done in Texas, it was done in Norfolk, it was done in New London, it was done in Manchester, it was done in twenty major museums. What catalogue did you have of it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't remember but I do have a catalogue.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Did you see my sculpture show called Five Centuries of European Sculpture? Did you see my great show for the Florentine Relief Fund? Did you see that show?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was at ---?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Birans. You didn't see that one. That was a beautiful show. Jean/Gene? Moore of Tiffany's helped me with that show. That was a beautiful show. It had all the Kress things which had never been seen before, the great Kress majolica, the great bronzes. That was a lovely show. That was a lot of fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You like doing shows? - I mean the whole business of collecting and presenting?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. I like that. I think that if the Metropolitan Museum had engaged me, say, about twenty years ago - in 1950 - to be curator of their American art that I would have brought some fantastic holdings to their permanent collection and done some marvelous shows for them, I mean shows which still haven't been done - great surveys of American painting which I could do. But, you know, they've got their own people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you've never wanted to be in a museum.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I don't ever want to be part of an operation where I have to go to work at ten o'clock, that sort of thing. But I certainly would like to do some guest shows. They're great fun. I mean a lot of people can do them. I can do them one way; somebody else can do them another way. I mean look at the Art Deco Show for the museum of Modern Art - that's my point. What a show I could do! Mrs. Varian has a different aesthetic. That's a show I could do just as good as anybody in the world. You know, if they would give me the commitment to do it with their funds and my moving the walls around and doing the cases and the rest of the thing I could have done one hell of a smashing show! But why would they ask me? They've got their own staff. That's the thing. So I'm out on a limb there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They use the expertise of their staff all the time.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, they don't. But I mean Do a Rubens. Or do another show of Stells, I mean, so what.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've never been very interested in American Painting since 1940 or so, have you?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I've been interested, and I never miss a show. I've seen them all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But you've never collected many of those.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But, I know them all. I've been there. I'm not a doctor or lawyer...I tell you that's all I have time for. When you walked in here I had just come back from the Metropolitan Museum where I saw the Corte's show

for the fourteenth or fifteenth time. I'm not an expert on that but I know if someone hands me something and it amuses me. I do some appraisals for people if it's interesting. I did one yesterday for a man whose mother died who had some very nice Austrian baroque sculpture. I thought it would be fun because I haven't done that for about ten years. I said, "how good is my eye?" Austrian baroque sculpture, you know, which is Eddie Lubin's sort of -- how is Eddie, by the way? Do you ever see him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen him in a year.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He sort of dropped out of the big enterprise. Why did he miss the boat all over?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Money and --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Why didn't he make it though? He was talented. He worked with me in Europe in 1958. I took him around by the hand and taught him the whole bronze scene. Hand-taught, you know; door to door to look and see. We went to the fair in Delft. We went to the Rikjs together, whatever, you know. I thought he was enterprising. I thought he was basically --

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was. But he was married and divorced.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He was terribly disgruntled. Oh, yes, his mother-in-law had affected his life so he basically didn't like people and whatever. He was so young to come a cropper. A lot of my friends are dead, you know. Murray Rolf is a good friend of mine. Did you know him at the gallery? He was a very sweet man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Did you know him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You never talked to him though, did you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, a little, you know.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And Peter Deitsch was a dear friend of mine. I used to play cards with Peter. He was in my poker game.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. He was great poker player.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I've played a lot of poker with a lot of people. When Babs and I go uptown and we're on Madison Avenue and somebody says "Hello" she'll say, "Who is that?" and I'll say, "Oh, a guy I used to play poker with in 19-- at the Mayflower Hotel or the Warnick scene." I've been in more hotel rooms. I've played with more poker players. I've played with actors and television actors. I've played with Walther Matthau, the famous actor now. He used to be in my game.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'd forgotten all about the poker thing.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Why - how do you identify me with poker? How did that come up? Did somebody mention me as a poker player or something? Bob Kulicke probably or someone like that? Because his is a terrible game. Paul Brach and Paul --, we had a lot of terrible games, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was somebody who really is a poker player. I can't think who.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Saul Steinberg?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not in the art world. Maybe someone among the theatre people mentioned it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I did play a lot. I've played twice a week. I used to play high stakes poker. I don't any more. It doesn't interest me. It seems silly to be exchanging nickels and dimes and dollars. But I did have fun doing it. I have fun doing everything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To sort of go back to the collections again, do you think they have an effect on the market?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, yes. I was a catalyst.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For example, it you started buying still-lifes everybody says --

PAUL MAGRIEL: It was very important. When I was buying American drawings everybody was buying American drawings. Today everybody is rushing down to the Old Print Shop and to Knoedler's looking for Eastman

Johnsons. I've been out of them for five years. Before that no one even asked for drawings. The word drawing never came up. Now everybody - dozens of people, the Frasners, the Horwiths and the Spencers, everybody is looking for American drawings. "Where can I find a Kensett drawing?" I'll tell you my feeling about this whole interview - I haven't any secrets - at this stage of my life what secrets would I have. I just must tell you that my notion about what this interview is like is that it's like a personality sketch which impinges on art in a very oblique way. I would think that it would not be very useful to the Archives of American Art. It doesn't seem to me that it would have that kind of relevance to the Archives of American Art except that I'm a very peripheral figure which is vital in certain aspects of art - right? I introduced American drawings over a broad spectrum. My show went to Texas, to Santa Barbara, to Maine, to Norfolk. More people saw American drawings and were aware of American drawings for the first time by virtue of the fact that I had instituted these shows. Also the same is true of American watercolors. Now the strange thing about this thing here, the phenomenon which is fascinating is, why did people wait until the 1950s and 1960s to present these panoramas and spectrums and retrospectives? That's where I'm important, I mean interesting. That's interesting, don't you think? When I did my Renaissance bronzes no one had seen Renaissance bronzes in Syracuse, or at Oklahoma University, or wherever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot of those ended up in Minneapolis, didn't they?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. Tony Clark got a beautiful group of them. The Metropolitan Museum has some of my good things, too, you know. In the Great Masterpieces Show you'll see my thing there. You know that's pretty good to be edited out of the Masterpieces and have a Paul Magriel thing there, don't you think? - a beautiful silver piece by Alessandro Algardi which I found on the Via Babino in Rome; of all places! Imagine being able to buy a document of Algardi in the street in 1958!

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. But you could do that because you knew what it was when you saw it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And how! I couldn't believe it! Everybody else, all the great scholars had been by and had seen it. I bought it though!

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's the thing that makes it different though, the fact that you could go and buy --

PAUL MAGRIEL: I went to the Old Print Shop one day and bought ten Kensett drawings for $100. Kensett! Kensetts! I bought the great Eastman Johnson drawings from Bill Davidson, one of the real pros in American art. He had been in the business for forty years dealing exclusively in American art, an informed expert on Eastman Johnson, Eakins, Homer, and all those. I bought the great Eastman Johnson drawings, ten of them I think for about $300 apiece. The great ones. That was in recent years.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. You were just talking about the effect of your building a collection and its effect on the market. Would this happen while you were building it? Or after you would do an exhibition?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Simultaneously. I mean it would become interesting. People would go to the American Federation of Arts here on 65th Street or Finch College and see the things and say I've got this and I've got this but I don't have any drawings. I must get some drawings. And they'd get some drawings and the track would start, they'd look at Hirschl Adler, "Have you got any drawings?" They'd go to Kennedy and look for drawings. People started to buy drawings. And drawings went up to $500. Eastman John went up to $1,000, $2,000, $3,000. Dewing pastels went to $200, $800, $1,500, $2,500. I stimulate! Stimulate! I was a catalyst there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I was rewarding myself at the same time because when they got up to those prices that was the end of the line for me. I couldn't buy them any more either.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But then you'd sell the collection and start another one.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, I'd sell the collection and use the money to start something else. I sold my Art Nouveau Collection and bought a collection of still-lifes. I don't know - it goes on and on and on. What's the next question?

PAUL CUMMINGS: What has it been like working with museum people across the country? With this many exhibitions you must have endless tales.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, I don't have very many direct contacts because they're always done by somebody else, by some other agency, aren't they? You know, pretty much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. But I mean you travel them.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I never leave town. I did travel in the days when I was in the Army. My idea of a trip now is going down to the Frick or to East Hampton. I did some shows there at the parrish Museum and at the Guild Hall. I mean I've covered that. Wherever I am I'll do it. How many shows have I done now? I've done three shows at the

Parrish Museum. How many more shows can I do there? I did a big show at the Guild Hall. I'm going to do another one in 1972. I said to the lady who's the director there, "I've got a show planned for you in 1972. She said, "What?" I said, "I don't have any idea but I'll have an interesting show for you." She said, "I can't wait! I'm delighted!" And I don't know what it's going to be. Maybe it'll be silver, maybe glass. God! I don't know what it's going to be.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious, though, hasn't the collecting developed a whole business relationship for you?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, I'm very friendly with all the dealers. I have a very good relationship with most dealers. Most dealers are terrible people. Most dealers are hustlers. I don't think they care what they handle. The couldn't care less. I don't want to mention names. I've had things in my possession which are not only third rate but absolutely out and out fakes, which I have turned back onto the market, which certain dealers have handled and have given a full description of, say, a Winslow Homer; which, you know, was no more Winslow Homer than it was Cummings -and they handled them as a Homer. I mean that sort of thing all the time, all the time. Big firms do this. I mean big, important, prestigious firms. They just have enormous --

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you mean they don't know?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Both. But mostly it's because they don't care. They don't want to know. I mean what's the point? If it's $10,000 why should they say it's worth $200? I mean that's not where it's at. After all, the idea of business is to make money. And making money is selling. Selling is selling, you know. Johnny, watch it. I understand that Castelli is a very decent dealer. I know him. Of course that's not my scene. For instance, I saw a man walk into a prominent dealer's with a perfectly beautiful painting by Kensett, a dream picture, a little ravishing seacoast scene, the kind that is most desirable. I just happened to be standing there. The man said, "I want $350 for it." The dealer said, "You're out of your mind." And he just beat that poor guy down and gave him two hundred bucks. It was about a $5,000 painting. That sort of thing is just really venal and terrible. And I'm afraid that that's pretty much where it's at. There are some very enterprising new dealers. I think Gene Thaw is a very distinguished dealer here. He has a great eye, great talent, he does his homework, he's made the right contacts with the new dealers who've come along who are more or less friends of mine. I consider him a great dealer. I consider Ben Heller a great collector.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's becoming a dealer though, isn't he?

PAUL MAGRIEL: He's a dealer now. But I mean what he assembles in that short space of time! That was a beautifully edited collection. He had superb examples of the best Rothko, the best Pollock, the best Gorky. Did you know that? Have you seen him? You've been there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know what he has but I haven't been there.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He should be interviewed. He's a very good guy. He's a very, very knowledgeable guy. And also he has a wonderful concept of -not better than Clem Greenberg - Clem Greenberg is a different kind of guy, he doesn't buy the pictures himself. Don't forget that when I was at the Museum of Modern Art in 1939-1942 I didn't buy a Picasso drawing for $800 from Klaus Perls. No one did. I did buy a marvelous picture in 1946. Rosenberg had a big Braque retrospective - not a retrospective - he had forty-two pictures. I bought a great big 1925 still-life for $3,500. Two years later I sold it for $7,000. That picture has been back on the market for $110,000. So, you know, how brainy am I? How brainy is Dorothy Miller? How brainy is Monroe Wheeler? It all went through their hands. Everybody, the whole staff there, there's no one who is rich. They were there from the beginning. They were there from 1929 on. My point is there's no one there who put away a few things, say, put away a few Picasso drawings of 1925, the classical period, or something like that. Nobody bought the Giacomettis for nothing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Alred Barr seemed to have had a whole theory about the staff buying art, getting art, being involved.

PAUL MAGRIEL: No, not seriously I don't think. You could have bought what you want. I had a girl friend then who was working for Karl Nierendorf. Karl had a big Klee show in 1938. There were Klees from $40 to $400. Nobody bought them. Alfred Barr wouldn't object to somebody going and buying a little Klee watercolor for $120. No one bought them. Who's there? No one is ever there on time?

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's somebody today who's in the same position, don't you think?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, except that it's very difficult. I mean somebody in the same position would have to go out and pay $70,000 for a Frank Stella or $50,000 for a Jasper Johns is hardly in the same position.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, no. Well, that's way ---

PAUL MAGRIEL: You mean there are guys who are incipients today?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Don't you think?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Those are always challenges. They're fascinating challenges. You know what you do. But, God knows, look at the catalogues that Dorothy Miller put out of Fourteen Americans, Twelve Americans, Sixteen Americans. You know drainsville; down the drain - right? Who out of those groups made it? And the ones who she didn't get are up flying - Barney Newman, fifty thousand bucks. It's very interesting that the most informed body of opinion will guess wrong.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe they're so close they can't see it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Who knows? I should have known Braque. I could see that they were marvelous pictures, for Christ's sake! I mean why buy one picture? I had some money then. I bought one picture for $3,500. Why sell it for $7,000? Braque - he's a giant. Right? I'm talking about myself.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You wanted something else.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But other people, you know, a lot of people made money. Victor Ganz made a lot of money. He bought that whole Moroccan series or whatever. Some dealers did very well. I guess the Sculls are very rich. Have you interviewed the Sculls? You're not going to do them, or what? Comme ci comme ca. That's another story, another kind of thing, that's another kind of -- you know, I don't want to use the expression - that's not my scene at all. It's a different thing. I know a lot of private collectors who love their pictures. Like, let me see, how many people like their pictures? I would guess that of two hundred people who have collections maybe three or four love their pictures.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really!

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. The Linskys love their collection. The Wrightsmans - one for the money, two for the show there, you know. Untermeyer loves his stuff. But you have to keep thinking very, very hard. A lot of people like their things but not for the right reason. They like their thing for the hustle. It represents, say, $70,000 -a lot of green stuff.

END OF SIDE 1
SIDE 2

November 25, 1970

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's November 25 - Paul Cummings talking to Paul Magriel - Reel 2.

PAUL MAGRIEL: The still-lifes I think I picked up after I'd worked at the Museum of Modern Art and done some other things. I think my confusion about Modern painting was almost total and I wanted to sort of reestablish an aesthetic and I went into viewing pictures in the sense of getting back close to nature. I found in still-lifes a very, very satisfying aspect of an artist rendering an object or a circumstance with a literalness and a definition and a capacity for creating a magic in the simple elements. That gave me a great, great deal of pleasure. In the welter of the great numbers of pictures that were produced in that genre, I mean one naturally edits and I immediately came to see that people like the Peales were infinitely greater masters than other people who came along. And also what interested me very much about American still-lifes it seemed to me that in this one area they had gotten on to something which they could render with a skill of almost any of the Europeans. I mean the best examples of American still-lifes are almost equal to the great European still-lifes with the possible exception of somebody like Cotin, for instance. You know that great picture that's in San Diego, that squash and things like that. But the regular run of European pictures, still-lifes, outside of a few of the great masters like Octin and William Cobb, the Americans were not only comparable but very, very superior, they did extremely well. In the case of somebody like the Peales they're infinitely superior to the Europeans. And the lesser masters who came along - John F. Francis and George Henry Hall - rendered very, very creditable work. Whereas in the other areas, landscapes and genre pictures, there's just no comparison. I mean you talk about American pictures and you have to put American pictures in quotes because they were never part of the universal spectrum because they were never comparable. If you were to compare a great painting by George Inness with a Courbet you'd see the Inness was not in the same league. And of course the same thing applies to the American impressionists who were much the weakest of the whole body of painters. In comparison with the great French Painters: Monet, Manet and Pissarro, we have Childe Hassam and Theodore Robinson who are just - well I don't mean pitiful but pretty damn weak. But in the field of still-lifes I thought the Americans produced a great body - well, not a great body but a distinguished body of work which was not only still-life painting but still-life American painting because they had an American feel about them. The treatment of the subject was American. The rendering of the composition was American. It never spilled over into a kind of sumptuousness but the best ones always had a very stark simplicity. The Peales would render a single layer of grapes or a small compote in which the apple

was almost a literal apple. This appealed to me enormously. And I just think that that stems out of a kind of lack of great, great knowledge of contemporary painting and I think is an aesthetic shortcoming which I've tried to correct. But I don't think I ever have because today when I go and look at pictures and go to the Marlborough Gallery to see the Rothko show I'm sure I see what I love in them. I think he's a master. And also now I think that I can edit Pollocks, you know, find the better Pollocks and poorer Pollocks and great Pollocks. But I don't think that my visual sensibilities have never been developed in the way, for instance, of Clem Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. Of course there's no way of knowing but I do have the feeling that they can look and edit much faster and better and much more critically than I can. No one is ever sure of this 20th century American art. I think Betty Parsons and Sidney Janis can spot people before I do. I often think sometimes you're beguiled and oftentimes not only beguiled but deluded because there's a whole kind of legend which attends a phenomenon of big names like de Kooning, Pollock, and Kline, and Clyfford Still and the rest of them. My viewing of these people stems from the legend which has been created. I myself didn't discover that these people are great. I found that they were great after they had been superimposed upon my taste. No one knows to what degree one is influenced. Now in literature this is not true. When I read Tolstoy no one had to tell me that he was a great writer. And no one had to tell be that Shakespeare was a great writer. But with painting it's a very, very strange thing. and of course this doesn't affect me only. It affects the whole population of the world. You never know where the legend begins and where you yourself come in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But don't you find that there's a legend about the Peale family or that whole series of painters.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. But we never know anything about them. We know very little about them. There's very little been done in research in the history of American art. There are almost no books yet. And the general surveys were very, very casual, such as the one by Isham and the reviewers. These writers simply brought Eakins and so on into focus and stimulated our interest but in a very peculiar way never stimulated our aesthetic. Those writers never did that. Isham presented the pictures and then we were faced with the fact that Eakins was a very superior artists. But the other thing that interests me very much is the whole business of seeing, how one sees or hears. For instance, I went to see the dancer Pavlova when I was a young man years and years ago. The legend of Pavlova was so great that I'm sure that even if she'd come on stage on crutches I would have thought she was stunning and marvelous. And people now rave about Nureyev and they're sitting in the third row of the balcony and they don't see anything, yet they say, "My God, isn't he fantastic!" And they can't see, they can't see that his plies are not deep, and that his heats are not sharp. But the legend is so absolutely marvelous. That, of course, is a phenomenon which attends modern art to a great extent. People always let on. Even I myself. No one wants to be a part of the idiot herd, you know. So I just said to myself I'm going to reevaluate and reexamine the whole process. So I went to still-life painting and found from that not that I discovered any special truths, but I found things that were sort of interesting to me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's no list of the development of one collection and the next and the next and the next. Do you think there's a relationship between the quality or the idea of what made up, say, the still-life collection, or the bronze collection or even the Art Nouveau collection?

PAUL MAGRIEL: In the still-life collection I was most severe and edited very, very carefully and very, very critically every one I bought. I made some very good contacts very early with dealers who knew that this was my specialty and who brought me in to their place, or had me see pictures that were offered before anyone else had a chance to see them. But I was astonished, amazed, and surprised. One of my good dealer friends was Victor Spark who has enormous knowledge and is a great pioneer in this field. He showed me pictures, many of which I bought. One day he called me and said I've got a very, very interesting picture. I went over and found that it absolutely was just a piece of crap. And a dealer has a strange projection, he always feels and doesn't know, he has discernment but sometimes his discernment is not critical enough because he always feels that in the projection, you know, of another person he can't deny the other person the opportunity of seeing something so he showed me a lot of crappy things too. All dealers do that without knowing. And I don't know whether they really don't know, or they don't know that the person will know, or not knowing, feel that there's a middle ground somewhere. Do you see what I mean by that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Did you find that when you were doing those collections that many of the dealers were truly knowledgeable about what they were selling?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No. Almost none. I think Victor Spark comes to mind because he was the only one that I knew who knew. I thought that the people at, for instance, Knoedler's hardly knew one picture from another except when a big name came along, and they couldn't distinguish one good Peale from another, or the quality of one from another. All painters vary very, very much in quality. A good example is John F. Francis or George Henry Hall or other names that come to mind from that Corcoran show. Severin Roesen who has become very important. And I've passed up all the Severin Roesen's for years because I thought he was a very, very elaborate European painter who'd settled in this country. And I never liked his things until later on. There are some very small pieces that have the exquisiteness of the Peales and the Harnetts, that sort of thing. Harnett of course was very uneven. In some of his late pictures which I bought, those of the 1890s, he was superb. He worked almost

like a jeweler he was so precise and immaculate and created beautiful, beautiful things. I have some of those. And Peto, too, sometimes was a very vulgar painter. I rejected most of those. So I think my discernment developed as I went into it. I spent an awful long time on developing that still-life collection. With the exception of ballet I've never spent as much time on anything as developing that particular area of collecting - the still-life paintings. And I got to be very, very - well, I won't use the word 'astute' but I developed the ability to see pretty well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many paintings did you have finally in that group?

PAUL MAGRIEL: There were sixty pictures, edited pictures, which have gone to very, very good collections: to the Metropolitan Museum, to John D. Rockefeller to the Mellons and various people around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the fancy places.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, fancy and good museum places and things like that today. At the height of the quality of my collection Bob Hale came to see me and I thought that he should have bought a lot of the pictures from me. It would have formed the nucleus of a great collection at the Metropolitan Museum. But of course at that time he was very involved in extending the museum's holdings in modern paintings, in which he did very well, as you know. So I don't blame him for that. I mean it's just one of those things that happened. So I sold a large part of my collection to Wildenstein. And a lady in Maine, Mrs. Norman B. Woolworth, bought a large number of them. And I sold a large body of them to the Kennedy Galleries and they sold them off to various people. It would be impossible right now to reassemble this, or assemble a collection comparable in quality no matter how much money one had. I mean it just doesn't happen. No more than one could assemble a large group of Raphael drawings. You just couldn't do it, not very well. But, I did spend a lot of time on this still-life collection. I'd look at Raphael drawings at the Ashmolean Museum. I looked at bronzes at whatever, I mean I was just never idle - the insularity. I mean if I'm ever there, I mean if I'm collecting French art glass I'd still go to see Rothkos and I'd still go and see Before Corte's (which I've seen five times), and I'd see the Asia House collection of Rockefeller Art over and over again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are superb things there, aren't there?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, just marvelous! So you do develop this discernment, you know, which we all think we have, of course, that's an arrogance or an ego thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The thing that I find interesting is that you've never collected things that are expressionistic in quality.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I don't know what that word means.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, like the German Expressionists.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You mean - who? Kirsch, Nolde, Beckmann?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, like that. Everything has defined form.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Shape, yes. I like definition. That came, I think, because of my confusion at the Museum of Modern Art and I was just sort of upset by that. And I think that because I was not able to comprehend it totally I suppose I went to a finiteness with everything defined. But I do love - well, let me see, well, Japanese prints are definitive, aren't they?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I think Nolde watercolors are marvelous; I've seen some marvelous ones.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean the collections you've put together like the bronzes. That bronze over there is very defined.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, it's defined.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was just thinking about this the other day and I was wondering if it had to do with all your years of being involved with the dance.

PAUL MAGRIEL: It could be. Because you need definition and clarity. And if it's fuzzy and muddy it belongs to the modern dance possibly -- I'm not putting it down. I mean I'm not putting Martha Graham down because she does some marvelous dances. I remember the dance I think she calls it Frontier. I was very, very much moved by that. I don't know what forms an aesthetic. I don't think most people have one. I mean if they like something but, you know, I don't know what that ever means. I mean a man like Lincoln Kirstein who is an enormously

gifted man and is cerebral and informed, and he has a very peculiar visual sensibility, most peculiar I would think. Although I admire him for many things, but I mean the way he looks at pictures and all that I just think he's extraordinary. He did an extraordinary catalogue for Larry Sickman for the Kansas City Museum called The Age of Napoleon. It's one of the most brilliant catalogues - the introduction and the whole treatment of the Napoleonic Era is probably one of the most brilliant essays ever written on the subject of Napoleon. And this is 1970. That's an incredible statement to make. You should read it. It's just absolutely wonderful.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: It has scope, it has information, it has empirical knowledge which relates to the time in a most profound sense. I'm just citing here this one person I happen to know as an example of how people's aesthetics surprise me. The Metropolitan Museum's holdings surprise me very much. I'm staggered by their acquisition policy over the past twenty-five years. I'm just staggered!

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PAUL MAGRIEL: The things that they've let go, the great pictures that have left them. They haven't acquired anything from my point of view. I mean in my lifetime the Caravaggio which I think is sort of skin. And a very dubious Velazquez which probably was done by del Martzo - I don't know that much about Velazquez. And I find the holdings staggering. The great big David of General So-and-So. I mean a so what picture? You know that sort of thing staggers me! So what does an aesthetic mean? What does Rousseau mean? What did Rorimer mean? And the acquisition of bronzes has been most undistinguished, three or four acquisitions they've made in the world. They have done marvelous things in other departments.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think of the enormous prices for French paintings that they've been paying?

PAUL MAGRIEL: They bought that expensive Rembrandt. Then they bought the expensive Manet, the beautiful picture of The Irises. Well, I suppose from the point of view of their audience they thought the audience would simply be delighted with it. Which they are. So I don't fault them on that. What I'm talking about is the great, great, great pictures that over a period of twenty-five years have come and gone. For instance, the Toledo Museum has gotten some of them, Harlow Whitman is a very enterprising man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that as your collections have changed that your taste has changed?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That your interest has changed?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's maintained itself from picture to picture and subject to subject?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No. I could see a bronze in Philadelphia, I mean I could walk through a wall of forty of them and I can spot the good bronzes, you know, three, four, five. And there's no question about it with still-lifes or drawings, that sort of thing. No. I think my taste is not unerring or unfailing but the level is good enough. I mean it can match that of the American curators, the ones that I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about Kirstein. How long have you been involved with him and with his projects and activities?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I started in 1933. That's an awful long time ago. I think I told you about that. I was studying ballet with a man called Bourman who was a classmate of Nijinsky's. When I came to New York, Lincoln Kirstein was doing a book on Nijinsky with Romola Nijinsky. And we became friends and interested in mutual concerns. That's all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then you formed a library for him.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Later on, yes. I went to Paris and spent a whole year - it didn't turn out to be quite a whole year because the war broke out - that was 1939 when I formed the library.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do projects with him after that?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, yes, I worked in the Library of Congress for two whole years doing the bibliography of dance, which was published in 1936.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he was involved with that, too?

PAUL MAGRIEL: He was involved in my bibliography. But he was writing a book on the dance and I sent him my notes and whatever material I could all along. He did a very, very good book called Dance, which was published in 1935. It's still one of the best books on the subject ever written. The facilities there were just superb. The visual thing came a little later. I got to be awfully good at finding visual materials for the Dance. Then I came to the Museum of Modern Art and I did this series of shows which are lost forever. They had never been photographed. I do know that the Museum of Modern Art considered my project there as a very unhappy stepchild dragged in, you know, really dragged in without raison d'etre of any kind. I had the feeling then that Lincoln's influence at the museum of Modern Art with the Board (not with the director) or whoever - Nelson Rockefeller probably (as you know Lincoln is a great friend of Nelson's) had something to do with this. I have never been able to establish this but perhaps Lincoln said to Nelson, "This is my friend. He's talented. He's not in modern art but he's part of what's going on and let's see what develops." And then I think fortuitously or luckily for everyone concerned, the war came along and I left. And the Museum was rid of me. But then they acquired George Hamburg who was quite a different type. I don't know if you've ever interviewed him. He was a serious German, you know, pedant and all the rest of it. I don't know what exhibitions he did because I wasn't here, I was in the service then. When I got out of the Army I didn't want to go back. I decided it would be awkward, Hamburg was there, he needed a job and I didn't. So then I traveled around in Mexico looking at the Orozco murals and the Rivera murals and Siqueiro's things and Nerida's things. You know, whatever there was to see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What I'm trying to find out is the differentiation between collecting things, as you collect, or in dealing in things, because when you decide to dispose of a collection you really don't sell it off piecemeal?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No. I gave my whole collection of bronzes to Eugene Thaw to sell for me - E. V. Thaw. I gave my collection of still-lifes to the Coe Kerr Gallery. I gave another collection to the Kennedy Galleries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that really you don't get involved with selling? It's only the acquisition?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Selling just bores me. I hate the vis-a-vis confrontation of prices and "How much do you want for that?" and that sort of thing. I would make a very poor dealer. I am a very poor dealer because I am not rich and haven't made that much. If I'd kept the things and that sort of thing -- but I'm not a dealer. I don't have the temperament of a dealer or the attitude of a dealer or the style of a dealer or the interest of a dealer. I could never be a Richard Feigen. I can't be slick like that. He's a very slick number. And Gene Thaw who is very talented, he's a prodigious talent. I think each one of us doesn't have this sort of thing. I have no way of knowing my reputation on the street, whether on Madison Avenue people think I'm a fast hustler or dealer or whatever, you never know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody has a different theory.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Everybody has a different theory. Most of the people I go to see when I walk into the gallery smile and are very, very cordial. What they say to their wives at dinner, "An idiot came by," or whatever, or "A bright guy just wasted my time." Who knows? Who can worry about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that the only regret you seem to have is not having been involved with the Metropolitan Museum.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I don't have any regret about that, not a serious regret. I mean I thought it would have been fortuitous for both of us, for the institution and myself because I was young, I had enthusiasm and capacity for total dedication, and integrity, and whatever the other terms are, and what I thought was a very good perspective from the point of view of accumulation or agglomeration or acquisition for the Metropolitan Museum which would serve a very useful function for them for a long time. And this would have been more than just still-lifes. It would have been the whole spectrum of American drawings, American paintings and that whole thing. I was a very vital person. It would have been a most happy marriage. But it just didn't work out, as I said. There was no reason ever to engage me then because Bob Hale was a most distinguished and useful member there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with the American Federation of Arts?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I never got involved with the A.F.A. I mean they just did my shows for me. They traveled most of my shows.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you pick them? Or did they come to you? Or how did that come about?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Let me see now what the circumstances were, and how long ago that was. It was long before Roy Moyer was with the Federation and long before the other guy who is up in Rochester - is he?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Harris Prior?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. Before him. Who was there before that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't remember. Peter Pollack was there at one time.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Peter was there a very short time, that was in and out of the door. That was a mistake all around. I think Roy Neuberger realized that almost immediately - or whoever did. Anyhow, whenever it was in the late 1940s I did the still-life show with them - I forget who the director was. It was a very successful show. I mean the communities where they showed it liked it very much. They had never seen it before. And I did a whole series of shows with the Federation. But I don't think that relationship was anything special and no more than anybody else would have done. And then my drawing show I think I did a lot of it myself. Well, I mean, for instance, a guy called me from the University of Texas and said he'd see the show and could he have it. And the Phoenix Museum had seen the show and could they have it. And Portland, Oregon had seen the show and could they have it. And Buckley at Currier wanted it for the gallery in New Hampshire - what is it? - the Curier Gallery in New Hampshire. That sort of thing. And the Lyman Allyn Museum wanted it. And they did these very nice little catalogues. And Norfolk and that sort of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you gotten very involved with the museum people or the academic world here?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No, I don't know any of them. I don't think they'd give me five minutes of their time. Why would they? They don't spend their time with people. They're too cute for that. They're not giving me their time. Why would they? If they've got five minutes they'd rather write a letter to Carter Brown or someone. Oh, by the way, I heard Carter Brown speak at a luncheon the other day. Did I tell you about that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. You did.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He is most impressive. A most impressive young man. Do you know him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've met him once.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Do you feel that? Or not?

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, at a party with 300 people and you say hello.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, no, but I mean a vis-a-vis confrontation. I mean he's a very knowledgeable man. I think he'll make a marvelous director for that institution. He's most distinguished. Most distinguished! They have marvelous things there. Whether that makes it a great institution I don't know. Whatever that means. I think the Museum of Natural History is a great institution.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Actually I think the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of the American Indian have a much greater influence on American art than people imagine.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I can't imagine how because, after all, no one ever goes there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lots of painters have gone there.

PAUL MAGRIEL: To the American Indian Museum?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I've never seen one. Every time I go there - I bought somebody a kachina doll for Christmas a couple of years ago and no one ever goes there. But you say painters do go there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, lot of painters go there.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, you know that, I wouldn't know that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And I was surprised to find that out. Particularly the painters in the 1940s. Some in the 1930s, but in the 1940s especially. The 1940s was a big decade for that.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, I'm glad you agree because both are funded museums. I think the Museum of Natural History is one of the great treasure troves of the Western World. Of course it is, in many ways, isn't it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, it's terrific. We've talked for just three seconds about the effect of your collection on taste and the market and things like that. Do you have a sense of -- ?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I have a feeling that in many ways I was a catalyst and that if I picked up something I didn't give it an institutional thing but I created stimuli for other people to do the same thing, to look for the same things and I broadened the spectrum of collecting interest in those areas. I seriously think I did that. Especially in the drawing and in the still-lifes, those two areas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you find that after your drawing collection was formed that the market changed? That there was greater interest?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, there was enormous interest. It wasn't sustained for very long. About two years after I disposed of my collection I thought that no one talked about drawings anymore. I mean the range of people I know is not that great but within the milieu of the kind of New York I know it didn't seem to be as vital any more. And then a lot has been done since. Bart Hayes did his book. And John Davis Hatch did the shows. I mean it had done its thing and it sort of settles down. Like who's going to get excited now about a book on the Italian Renaissance? I mean it's been done. And you could go on and pick little things, you could do a book on Kensett, you could do a book on Eastman Johnson, or on Cropsey. But the thing had been done and sort of settled down. I take no credit for it, not only do I not take any credit for it, I get no credit for it either. So it's a standoff. And like you say, what kind of an image do I have on Madison Avenue, you know, what my projection is there - well, it's as varied as people are, from nothing to less than nothing. So that's where it's at. So what?

PAUL CUMMINGS: To get into a whole other area here, - I don't know really how to get into it - has there been any social effect of your collecting?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, I don't know what that word means.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's why I can't phrase it right.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You mean has it helped me to go to dinner parties and things like that? You don't mean that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Well, maybe I'll try it again this way.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Just give me the general idea because I can hear pretty good.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have the collections made sense outside of the art community, do you think? I mean, say, Stuart Preston of the Times writes a nice thing about all the drawings and people read it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, that's natural. He's a reviewer for the Times. Why wouldn't he? I mean there's nothing special about that. No, I don't think that very many things shake the boat like that. I think to really shake the boat is when a guy, a special painter comes along, you know, a Dubuffet or someone like that, that's the kind of thing that shakes the boat. But I don't think that an individual like myself can do any shaking at all. You know, we can't turn things around very much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can open up a way of looking at things.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, you can open up a way of looking at them up to a point. But you're always there. I mean if I open up a way of looking at Renaissance bronzes by virtue of sending my Renaissance bronzes to small museums in Colorado and in Texas, that's fine. But in Houston, Texas there are the great Strauss bronzes on view, and they are in the metropolitan Museum, I mean they're there. Yes, what I did then was I probably introduced to ten thousand or to twenty-five thousand or to fifty thousand people in my lifetime an extension of their original interest in art, and probably people looked at drawings who hadn't done so before, and the same with the bronzes. And certainly people looked at the still-lifes who hadn't done so before. I did that I think, not to a great, great degree but to some appreciable degree. I did something there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have collector friends who use your knowledge and advice? - you know, who call you up and say, "I've got this painting. Will you come and look at it?"

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, yes. On 72nd Street the other day a collector met me and said "I've got a new picture. Would you be interested in seeing it?" I said, "Not particularly, but as a favor to you I'll look at it." He said, "I value your opinion very much whether I should have it or not." I said, "Then as a friend I'll look at it." Yes, I suppose my opinion is more or less respected. Or even a dealer might call me - I've had certain deals with dealers who'd say, "Shall we buy this?" And I've said yes, or no, you should not buy it, that sort of thing. It's just a kind of simple respect, it's nothing special, you know. I don't do that myself very much. I might with certain people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean ask their opinion?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I might about a piece of French cameo glass or something like that. But otherwise I don't, it's not much fun.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You like to have it yourself if you like it?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I like to do it. I don't like to be led around. I mean if it has something else it has nothing to do with me, it has to do with fashion, which is something else. Which is fine. But if it's something I'm looking at I

don't have to be shown even a George Grosz or a Dubuffet. I know as much as you do about Dubuffet or Giacometti.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You said before that you don't like to write.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I have no talent for writing. Writing is a very, very special craft. It's something that takes a great special discipline and great knowledge. I have friends who are writers. Dwight McDonald is a writer. He sits down, he locks himself in a little room and writes. I used to know a guy by the name of Joe Liebling. He was a wonderful writer. I used to see him in a little cubicle at the New Yorker. He'd get in a little box there and start writing. The reason I know Joe Liebling is that we had a mutual interest in prizefighting. He knew a great deal about the 18th century. I did a book on Danny Mendoza, the great English prizefighter in the 18th century. He was very interesting person. He was the first Jew to meet a king and that sort of thing. He became eminent. Anyhow, Joe Liebling was very much an aficionado of the prize ring. So we used to have marvelous sessions of "rap" or "rapping" - to use the new expression. That's what a writer is, you sit down and you write. That takes a discipline and a talent and a great deal of patience.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It takes a sedentary attitude which you don't have. I'm curious because in doing your projects and research there's all this information and data and things.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I put together an enormous notebook on The Nude in American Art which I never wrote up as a whole book. Oh, I was going to do a book once with Elizabeth McCausland. Do you remember her? She was a friend of mine. She wrote pieces for me. We sort of respected each other. She was going to help me, rather we were going to edit together a book on The Nude in American Art. That was twenty years ago. We showed the outline of it to a publisher and they turned it down.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They all blushed, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not blushed, they turned it down, they just thought there was no audience for it. Then about six or seven years ago I wanted to do a book with Brian O'Doherty on the prize ring. He being an Irishman and we got to be friendly and all that. We approached a friend of mine at Scribner's about it and he said it would be an impossible book so we gave that up as a project. So that was the end of my writing, on a large scale if you know all of my knowledge and interest and research.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any reason why you've gone from one area to another? Or is it just a matter of interest? - you know, from drawings to furniture and to glass?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I guess for the same reason that I don't like a nine to five job. Wouldn't that be the same kind of thing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I was never a nine to five man. I just couldn't do it. I worked on my own time at my own special thing. Maybe there's an element of sloth in that - I don't know. Who knows what the total hangups are. I've never been to an analyst, I haven't solicited advice on that subject. But it could be sloth. I don't want to get up that early in the morning or stay that late, or whatever.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any reason why you traveled the exhibitions around? -I mean one collection after another.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. I think I wanted to expose them. And I don't know whether that's vanity or whether it's whatever the word is. I suppose I had a view to exposure of them. They seemed to serve only a partial function sitting in my apartment. Most often I wasn't able to hang more than a third of them and they were sitting in my closets. So why not just show them? I mean that seems like a very simple reason, don't you think?

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting I was talking to one of our retired museum directors the other day and we were discussing the difference in scholarship between museum and university people. And he said that museum people tend less to think in terms of literature and writing but rather in terms of selecting and doing an exhibition and that kind of presentation --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Editing an exhibition, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: -- rather than sitting down and writing a book.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. Well, I would consider myself to belong to that group. I mean if I were commissioned today, say, for a World's Fair to put together an exhibition of American painting I think that I could do a superb job of that. I don't want to write the history of American painting but out of the welter of American pictures of 250 years I could edit a stupendous show. Which has still never been done and I'd love to do that. But of course I'll

never be able to do it. But if the Metropolitan or the National Gallery asked me to do a great show or a show of great Americans --

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's the Bicentennial in a few years.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, whatever. I mean they're not going to ask me anyhow. They have their own people. John Howett is not about to ask me to do his show, or even ask for my help. So that's where that stands. But that sort of thing, yes, I'd be more a museum person than a university person in that respect. The scholarship is incidental to my taste and what I would be considered would be an editor.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think it's interesting you've used the term "editing" in selecting things and I don't know anybody else in the art field who uses the word in that way.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, don't you think it's applicable and pertinent?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, sure. Sure.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And pertinent to my whole experience. Because that's what I do. When I collect I'm consciously editing all the time and you make a choice of various things. Well, you make a choice when you go to a film. Often times there's not much choice but if there are six bad ones you take the best of the six or whatever. I never go to the theater at all because that's not my thing any more. I do go to music all the time because nothing can happen there, the music is there, they can play it a little better or a little worse but it's there. What can you do to Brahms or Bach if you love the music?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you still go to the dance a great deal?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not as much. I like Balanchine's ballets very much always. I think he's a great talent, a great creative man. I like Jerome Robbins very, very much. And I read a lot. I read all the time. I don't read art books that much, by the way. I scan art books.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You look at the pictures.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But as to reading there's just too much going on. I've been rereading Clement Greenberg. Do you know him? He's written some fascinating pieces. I read him very carefully. Let me see, this was in The Partisan Review 1955, a great piece.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, that's the famous essay.

PAUL MAGRIEL: American Type Painting essay. That's reading. I mean there's some 'reading' reading and there's some 'don't bother' reading. You know what I mean? How do you read a book like E.P. Richardson's History of American Paining? You know, you don't read it - "then Cropsey went here, then he picked his nails here," that kind of thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think of the status of American art scholarship?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Why would you ask me?

PAUL CUMMINGS: In the nineteenth century?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, nineteenth century? You mean American scholarship of the 19th century?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. And, the things now being produced about it.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not very much. Not very much has been done yet. I think they're just getting into it. I think the young people, the Barbara Novaks and some new young people, there's a girl at Harvard who came to see me the other day who's doing a book on the nude in American art. I don't know what it's like - it hasn't been done. Another lady who came to see me is doing a book on Thomas Dewing. And somebody is doing a book on Kensett. There's just now this incipient wave of interest in reexamining the whole province. It takes it a long time to jell, for some reason.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It takes fifty years.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And it's extraordinary that in 1970 that there hasn't been an awareness, that there's not a biographical dictionary of American painting which exists today. The one that has been published goes only to 1860. That's extraordinary, you know. Lloyd Goodrich came along and put together three books on Eakins, Homer and I think he did the catalogue on Ryder. But of course the books on Eakins and Homer were big things. He reestablished them - well, they had already been established -those were giants obviously. But all the other

people have fallen by the wayside and no one has written about them. And all the time I'm coming into new pictures, people send me photographs, "who is this guy?" and the name will be Harry Apple or Peter Pumpkin or something, someone I've never heard of and it will turn out that he is pretty good. He comes from Providence. I think Bill Gerdts is doing a whole thing, reexamining the whole business of American still-lifes and I think it will be a good book. He's a very, very serious scholar. Also, he's aesthetically tuned in because he collects himself and he cares about those pictures. But scholarship in American painting is non-existent now. I thought John Baur's book Evolution and Tradition in American Art is very good. Did you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. That was written in 1945 or around that time.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Just after he got out of the Army. I think it was published in 1946. That's a long time ago. Since then he's done the catalogues on Burchfield, you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but nothing like that book.

PAUL MAGRIEL: It was a good book, wasn't it? I mean a serious book with ideas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You can still read it today and it's --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Ideas - don't you think? Nothing like that has come out since. Elliott's book was a terrible book. You know, the Time-Life --

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a Time-Life picture book.

PAUL MAGRIEL: A picture book. And who is it did this book that I don't think too much of at all? - the guy a Yale - Mr Prown. Do you like his book? Have you seen History of American Painting in two volumes, one by Barbara Rose and one by him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't read them, I've looked at them.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Barbara Rose did the modern thing, as you know. Alex Gregory who published them is a friend of mine. He thought that the Barbara Rose part had less quality than the 19th century part. I thought the 19th century part was sort of stereotyped, too, and not very stimulating or original.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very hard to get people to write about art.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, have there ever been in history, good art people? Have there been?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I have to think for a while.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, would you say Berenson was one of the great pioneers? He certainly was a pioneer. What he did was to present the Western World with a codex, didn't he? That was damn important. So that people would be able to sift through and distinguish groups of people - the Umbrian from the Sienese. I mean of course now poor Berenson has come to unhappy days where each year people pare off a few more pages of attributions. Like they do a man called Dr. Boda who was director of the Berlin Museum who did the corpus on Italian Resnaissance bronzes. And that's been stripped down to a bare nothing. I have great admiration and respect for the English scholars, a man like Francis Watson of the Wallace. He's superb in his field. And John Pope-Hennessey is just a giant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think the thing about scholarship is that it should get pared down with each succeeding generation where hopefully one becomes more aware as more material turns up. Don't you think so?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Of course it does, but that again is editing, too, because I mean you become more selective. History sort of does that, too, in a way. I mean history sort of lets the rest fall through. And I think it's a wonderful thing that man, the human spirit survives because of the kind of examination that other generations give to it. Don't you think that our audience today can much more discern the qualities of Watteau than the generation in which Watteau lived? Now I don't know if that's true in the case of Mozart. It may not be. Now that's a very curious kind of thing. And it may not be true in letters either. But in the visual arts, which is a very, very special thing --

PAUL CUMMINGS: It takes longer.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I think the people in Voltaire's time could understand Voltaire and comprehend him in the way we do today. And I think the Mozart audience could understand Mozart just as well. But the picture people then didn't know the Watteaus as well as we know them today. That's a very strange thing. Or even Raphael's contemporaries. Probably they did but I don't think so I think the connoisseurship for Raphael today is as great as it's ever been in history, and greater. That's true with Paul Klee too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but I think it's very difficult to see a painter's work when he's around or even close to his period of activity. I think that --

PAUL MAGRIEL: You think we need distance to see Rothko properly? - that sort of thing? Do you mean we'll be able to see Rothko in the year 2100?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Providing that people every decade or so say, "Okay. We're still interested and we'll keep this."

PAUL MAGRIEL: It has not happened to Picasso. He has sustained his program pretty consistently, hasn't he?

PAUL CUMMINGS: There are a lot of people who are getting bored with Picasso.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Because he's been around a long time. How would you like to hear Stravinsky every day, every day, every day, every day, every day? Or Scheherazade every day? It would come out of your ears. And this old man is ninety years old and he keeps turning them out but he turns out very remarkable stuff. And I think there's a boredom which sets in with the most beautiful caramel sundae, you know, you can only stand three spoonfuls of it and you've had it. I mean you just have had it! I like the Metropolitan Museum because I don't go to the same place each time. The presentation is not very good at the Metropolitan, by the way. I have ideas about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen that new ? . They're very flamboyant I gather.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, it's outside of flamboyant. It's more than that. I think it's a way of seeing. They don't address themselves to the audience properly. There's a very special psychological thing of how you present things. It's a very important thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do they not do that, do you think?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I think it's overdone, too many, too much emphasis on the accoutrements which attend a thing rather than the thing itself - which is what you go to see.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you end up seeing a great display rather than --

PAUL MAGRIEL: I think that intrudes upon your vision and I think it intrudes upon your sensibility and it intrudes upon your pleasure in observing and inhaling and absorbing it, which is the most important thing. The confrontation must be as direct as it possibly can, you know, you vis-a-vis the object or the thing and then you get much more satisfaction and that's I suppose what the artist wanted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The whole thing comes back to connoisseurship which is a funny word - I don't know what you think of the word.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, we all pride ourselves on that, don't we? I mean don't we all pride ourselves on that sort of thing - connoisseurship? It's a very loose term today. I don't know anybody that doesn't have it, do you? There's another strange thing about connoisseurship: There's a new kind of thing in art galleries which is prevalent. Every one of the art dealers if he's only been in business for two years, and mostly those who've been in business two or three years, will give you a lecture on painting before you buy the painting. He'll give you the whole thing, you know, Childe Hassam -Appledorn - how he was there and all that. He just learned it yesterday afternoon. It has no relation to the picture at all. That sort of thing which is sort of a bore for me, but I suppose for the connivance of their clients this is very, very important to hear Klaus Perls tell you about how magical Chagall is. But I can't believe in his sincerity, I can't believe in his passion. I can believe in his passion for selling but I can't believe in his passion vis-a-vis the object itself. I think they all become objects and I think with very, very little discernment. Gene Thaw seems to have great care and discernment about the individual thing which he sells. I mean it seems so to me. I've never seen him sell but he's a kind of person I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you find buying things from dealers? Do they wonder if you're particularly interested in something if it's much better than they think it is?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oftentimes. I remember an experience I had in Knoedler's when Mr Davidson was there. I had been in one afternoon and bought six Eastman Johnson drawings, beautiful sepia drawings. I came back again and said, "Where are the rest of the drawings?" and they told me, "Mr. Davidson said if you were to come here to put the drawings away. You're not to see them." Because, you know, I bought them too cheap. The same thing happened at another place, the Old Print Shop. That happens to me very often.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So your reputation became a problem.

PAUL MAGRIEL: A little part of it, yes. I mean I'm not to have that kind of carte blanche examination of these

things until they've reviewed the prices kind of thing. Edith Halpert did it to me in one afternoon with a Harnett, you know, I made a circle and it was twice as much on the second go around. But I find that that sort of thing is not very serious because I'm not that big a client. It amuses me that this happens to me, a client with not much money. The art dealing racket is a very, very special thing. I think if you speak to people like Richard Feigen and Klaus Perls they could tell you a great deal about it if they wanted to, but I would doubt that they would want to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They usually don't.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I wouldn't think so. I mean after all they're not in business to publish biographies which don't pay off, especially biographies like that that you're doing - editing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Obviously you've had various kinds of influence on taste and what dealers have done, and the fact that when your drawings were going around there was an enormous interest. You'd go into Hirschl & Adler and they were talking about drawings. You'd go another place and they were talking about drawings. It was mainly the public's reaction I think from hearing about your exhibition and then going to their local art dealer and saying, "Hey. Don't you have any drawings?"

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, yes, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And being a good businessman he went out and looked.

PAUL MAGRIEL: It happened to me more than it did to Max Karolik for some reason. He was plowing the same field and it didn't rub off at that time. He was a very enterprising collector but it didn't rub off in the same way. I think I was a little more of a catalyst than he was. A lot of the dealers would object to that by saying he was obviously a very important collector because he spent masses of money. Which I don't. But I did stimulate the market much more than he did. He collected American drawings and no one said anything.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, but he collected earlier drawings, didn't he?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, a certain period - but, you know, mine were in there, too - Kensett Cropsey and others like that. But - I don't know - I just don't want to give anybody the impression that I caused more than a ripple. I didn't cause any kind of a flood tide or anything like that. Didn't the Sculls cause a flood tide personally just singlehandedly?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I think for their social career they did.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I mean for the art career. I don't give a damn about their social career, that's something else. Isn't that paid for? Isn't that a hustle? Couldn't you and I do that if we got a what do you call it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: A publicity girl.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Couldn't I get a publicity person to get me in the press every day and say Paul Magriel was seen eating an ice cream cone on Third Avenue or, you know, or pissing in a corner, I mean whatever. You know publicity. I doesn't matter what just as long as it's there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I think they brought it to the attention of a lot of people who read things like Women's Wear Daily and so on.

PAUL MAGRIEL: That was much later. But I thought they were superb prime movers in the world of Pop. I never thought they were as important as the Castellis were. Was Scull important like Castelli was?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was a dealer in that sense.

PAUL MAGRIEL: But, he was the mover.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Scull started collecting French painting in the late 1940s first, I think.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Did he? I didn't know he collected anything in the forties.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, sure.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Did he? He was living in Great Neck then.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. And then abstract expressionists.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, he did? And he made the circle like Ben Heller. Then he came to the modern.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. And then he came to Pop.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He evolved. But he was the one who bought the most and the fastest, is that what it was? And the best, too?

PAUL CUMMINGS: He generally bought large works.

PAUL MAGRIEL: And the best - huh?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He had a good eye then, didn't he? I mean he had great discernment?

PAUL CUMMINGS: By the time he started collecting Pop he had been collecting for a dozen years.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. And he did have the discernment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PAUL MAGRIEL: So I mean he's a figure of major importance, isn't he?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I think more than people give him credit for.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I was going to say why do people put him down then?

PAUL CUMMINGS: They use it for the social thing. And they do it blatantly.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, but that's nobody's business. That's their problems and their life style. So what the hell? But I'm talking about per se the basic thing that he accomplished. He's a more important collector then than Ben Heller in that respect, isn't he as a collector?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, in a different way, in a different area.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes. But he made more of a ripple. I mean he created a whole new circumstance. Ben's circumstances were established. Is that true?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes-s. and I think also Heller didn't use the collection as mush as --

PAUL MAGRIEL: He used it as much as he liked. He exhibited it at the Museum of Modern Art. And he traveled it. He's very proud of it. I mean he did use it and displayed it. I don't know about the social columns. But he did display it. I think it's just a question that one is much more of an innovator. I respect Ben Heller. I think he's an enormously gifted collector. And I know much less about Scull. I have no way of giving him the kudos he deserves or does not deserve. Not from me, they'd have to come from somebody else, from Ivan Karp or whoever cares.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You don't have very much interest in contemporary art for yourself, do you?

PAUL MAGRIEL: What would I do with it? Suppose I had to buy a new one. I'd put it there and I'd have no more apartment, that would be it. I don't have any pictures any more as you can see. These are my decorations from my glass collection. I think they're arbitrary and it took a great deal of skill to be able to find colors, prints that match my walls. That's a pretty good trick. You go up and down the Avenue and think about this. Just remove these from your mind and see how hard it is to find prints for these walls. Don't you think?

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the walls get this color?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I decided on that color for my Art Nouveau things, that's the Art Nouveau color, purple and lavender was the Art Nouveau thing at the turn of the century. My painter thought I was crazy. He said, "Are you sure you want this color?" I said, "Paint it! Paint it!" I'm glad you said that about the Sculls. I have a special feeling about people when they do something and I don't think they should be put down for the wrong reasons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also, his wife likes the social scene.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I know her. I play tennis with her.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It amuses her. And it amuses him.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Why shouldn't it? From that milieu why shouldn't they be amused? Why shouldn't they have fun? You know, she plays tennis, and I see her at Eastman's, she's a perfectly okay girl. A lot of people say, "Oh, Mrs. Ethel Scull! My God!" I don't know that part of "Ethel Scull, my God" or what troubles or delights she has with her dressmaker.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You never got involved with all those social affairs.

PAUL MAGRIEL: No. No. Why should I? What does that add up to? It adds up to late evenings and nothing much happens, somebody says something, and somebody says something, and somebody says something, and you have your drink and go home.

PAUL CUMMINGS: We touched on some of the collectors you've known briefly before. You said there are four or five who really like their collections.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I think Ben Heller adores his collection. I think he's a great lover of his collection. My friend Jimmy Ruddicone? in the country has a lovely collection of period stuff, he's a collector. Bill Gerdts adores his collection. He wouldn't let a picture go or sell one ever. There's a man I know who collects turn of the century pictures - I can't think of his name. Raymond and Margaret Horwitz, friends of mine, who live at 940 Fifth Avenue, collect American impressionists and they have a lovely collection most beautifully selected. They adore their pictures. They just love their collection. Alice Kaplan, who is not a collector, but has put together a lovely group of things, just adores her thing. I don't know why I make a remark like that. It's awfully hard to tell. I just have the feeling that a lot of people buy things for acquisition or accumulation or dressing up an apartment or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you define somebody who is a collector as opposed to someone who just buys a few things?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No one can define the word collector. That's a very loose term which has nothing to do with anybody today. The only real collector I've ever known or heard about in my lifetime was J. P. Morgan. He was a collector. The Wrightsman's are not collectors. They're agglomerators and they accumulate certain gold boxes and a few pieces of French furniture. Linsky is a collector, he buys lovely things. But the term 'collector' is a very loose one. I don't think Ben Heller is a collector. I mean he accumulated a certain number of pictures. But J. P. Morgan was a serious collector. I think Andrew Mellon was a collector, a mint collector, not because he put money into things but he collected vast, vast things. Kress was a collector from the word go, from the minute he could breathe he was collecting and buying. And of course the Europeans had a great tradition of collecting. There's the great collection like the Dig Doer Collection, the Oscar Beit Collection, the Bischoff --. I used to have the catalogues when I was doing my research on bronzes. That was a fantastic collection. It went on for books and books and books - Dig Doer has six printed volumes, large folio, from Austria, you know, of great things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it's possible to be that kind of collector?

PAUL MAGRIEL: No more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lehman was sort of the last of that kind.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He inherited his father's things, too. And he added to it. But that had a broad spectrum, too. He went in for drawings and a few pictures but it's not - it's a good collection viewed today, but it wasn't an accumulation of hundreds and hundreds of pictures. Like the Dukes of Devonshire. If I use the term 'collecting' I use it in terms of what we mean today, or what Madison Avenue means. Somebody has got twelve pictures and they've got a collection. "Have you seen my collection? I've got five pictures." Or something like that. It's a word that people use - "have you seen my collection? I've got sixteen pieces of English pottery."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Your collection of Anuszkiewicz over there.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, that sort of thing. I don't know any collectors. There must be some. I suppose Paul Sachs was a collector, too, but with a view in mind. And Lessing Rosenwald, of course, is a supreme example of a distinguished American collector. Perhaps after Kress, Widener and Mellon the collector in America. His collection is fantastic. I mean the depth of the collection, the intent of the collection, the knowledge which informed the collection. That was a collector.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you really think you have to have direction and form and idea rather than just accumulating objects?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, yes. It has to have intent and purpose and intellectual stimulation, intellectual curiosity, and it has to be more than a formulation, but it has to be -- let me see that box there, may be there's a catalogue in there which I did - it's very trivial. There's a catalogue here somewhere on collecting -- oh, here's a catalogue of the Isaac Delgado Museum in New Orleans. Read that little thing I wrote about collecting. That's something of what I feel.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In formulating a collection you really seem to have done all your homework before you bought things rather than to buy a great deal and weed out and buy and weed out?

PAUL MAGRIEL: They go together mostly. The preliminary work goes first. Then you develop as you go along. As I say, often some of our purchases are ghastly mistakes. Don't you think that's a good precis of that thing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Are there any other things you think we could talk about, or that you'd like to talk about that should go into this?

PAUL MAGRIEL: I know quite a lot about sports. But we don't want to talk about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. And poker playing.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I used to play in a lot of big poker games. I don't play anymore. Do I have a reputation of being a poker player? Or I just told you that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, some people I know --

PAUL MAGRIEL: Oh, really - "so he plays poker" - that sort of thing?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: No, I don't think so. I just wonder about my lack of enthusiasm for certain places. I used to go to the Museum of Modern Art and enjoyed it very much. I enjoy it less now. And probably that's my shortcoming - I don't know. I think what Bill Lieberman has done with the installation is very good. I think he's reinstalled the Museum beautifully, don't you?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Some of it, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Well, always "some of it," I mean nothing is ever never total. I mean I would change a few things myself. But I don't find the place stimulating any more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How about the Whitney?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or the Guggenheim?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Not at all. The Guggenheim more than the Whitney. The Whitney very, very seldom. I find it a hodgepodge of such confused aesthetics that half the time I don't know what the hell I'm doing there. It's really confusion, almost total confusion that exists there. I think the aesthetic is missing there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you go to museums in Boston and Philadelphia?

PAUL MAGRIEL: All the time. I mean if I'm there I spend all my time in museums. I know them. I know the collection very well in Philadelphia, I mean whatever is my interest I know. I know all the bronzes there. Baltimore I know - the Walters I know. I know the museums very well. I know the European museums. I know key pictures in the Pinoketheca in Munich, in the Kunsthistorische in Vienna. You know, I've been there. I'm not going again but I've been there. In London I've been to the National Gallery over and over again. The Wallace. The Tate. I love the Tate, it's one of the first places I loved. I like Amsterdam, the Rijks. I go to museums a lot. I go almost every day, I mean certainly three times a week. I was at the modern yesterday. I won't go tomorrow because I'm going to eat Thanksgiving turkey. I use the research facilities of the modern quite a lot. I use the Frick and the Metropolitan. They know me and I can get everything. It's very easy if I want certain things. I'm doing a little research on glass right now. It's just sort of a game, I'm amusing myself with this, it's not anything important. After all, I'm not the President of the United States that I have to make decisions. I mean this is my thing, I'm looking at glass. So what? I mean I don't have to run anything or be responsible for anything. But I do find that the United States as a country, you know, not much about the whole world, is just a fascinating new evolution of interest the way that masses and masses and masses of people have swung into this new interest, and with a degree of interest, some with passion, some with avarice, some with casual indifference, some with voyeurism. But it's there. And that is the most extraordinary phenomenon. And I must say that the two people in America responsible for that are Francis Taylor and Alfred Barr. And these two people must be given the accolade for introducing art as a notion which is useful and applicable to people. It was never that before. The Metropolitan Museum used to have fourteen people on Sunday afternoon. And of course Alfred Barr is responsible. Do you agree with that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, very much.

PAUL MAGRIEL: You should know that. And what Dan Rich did in Chicago happened because Alfred Barr did it here. And these poops that come up in Los Angeles and here and there. You know, in this respect Alfred is a giant no one understands. Outside of the mistakes he's made and whatever his personality defects were (which

has nothing to do with it) what he did was to open this incredible, large door for the world, for the world. What he did here made it possible even in Europe - he made museums popular in Europe by what he did here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: True. You know, everybody says here that people in Europe went to museums, but nobody really did.

PAUL MAGRIEL: In Florence the people don't go to museums. You couldn't find five people in Florence who had ever been to the Uffizzi. Alfred opened the door to the world. He'd be surprised to hear me say that. He took me to lunch once. I forget what our conversation was about it was such a long time ago, it was something about the ballet or something, it was trivial. I paid for my own lunch. And I'd been to his house a number of times because a girl friend of mine, Janice Loeb, was a great friend of Daisy Barr (they call her Margo). We used to go there often and play music and rap. Janice and Margo were great, great friends. Janice was a friend of the English group of people. Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury group. Janice was a very bright girl. Did you know her at all?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PAUL MAGRIEL: When I worked at the Museum she was my girl friend. So we used to see them - not Alfred - I was only asked there when Alfred wasn't there. I must tell you that. We used to go to movies together or whatever. I've seen very little of her since. I knew Jim Soby's wife Lena. I thought he was an awfully nice man when I knew him. I thought Monroe Wheeler was a very special type of man, very, very remote, you know, the hangups which were typical of that situation which he inherited and all the rest of it. I knew Jack Baur because we worked very closely together in the Army. We both had the same office on 45th Street. He was a very nice man. And we bought some land together, we both bought land in Mount Kisco where his house is. I owned all that land which I sold to I.M. Pei. My wife and I separated so we didn't build the house in Mount Kisco we had planned. Baur built his house. He is a good friend of mine. I don't see him now. I don't know what art people I do see. I don't see that many at all anymore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you see other kinds of people?

PAUL MAGRIEL: Yes, I see other kinds of people socially. Not that often. My wife was talking to some friends about parties and dances. We never go to parties. We were talking about it the other night, we were talking about "our circle," and her husband said, "You mean our semi-circle." Our circle has become a semi-circle. And that's the way you become more and more - that's also edit and selecting. We have dinner parties for four people or six and we go out to small diner parties. And we go to the Caribbean every winter for a couple of weeks with some rich friends of hers. We have a nice house in the country. We see people and play tennis. She gardens. Lee Pollock is a friend of mine. I like her. I see Gene Thaw. I like them. I see the Kaplans - Alice Kaplan. Do you know Alice at all?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: Have you interviewed her? Of course you must have done her?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PAUL MAGRIEL: She has a beautiful new apartment on 72nd Street and Park. She's done it over. It's just beautiful. She has great taste, has a great flair for arranging a Chinese sculpture here, and an African piece there, a Coromandel screen, a beautiful Tiepolo drawing, you know, the whole thing. She has great taste. And I think Ben Sonnenberg has great taste and style. He has a very special house. You've been to his house?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, I don't know him.

PAUL MAGRIEL: The old Stuyvesant house which is at 19 Gramercy Park. A beautiful, flamboyant house but for him a wonderful image projection. He's a very interesting kind of art person. I like the English art people the most. But they don't have much time. Michael Jaffe and Francis Watson. They're always so busy here. They always have to see the Wrightsman's. After all, and I don't blame them, they give very good meals there. And I always see lots of art people when I go to the Lotos Club luncheons, which is every month or so. I only go to two a year. I went to the Carter Brown one. And I see all the art people, all the dealers all at one time - the Newhouses, Victor hammer, Harold Reed. I don't know Harold Reed. Do you know Harold Reed?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: He asked me to come and see his townhouse. I see them all then. Sam Shore, and Sherwood Press who publishes those books, everybody. They're all cordial and it's very, very pleasant. And after I see them at lunch and we exchange pleasantries that's enough for a while. I don't know Henry Geldzahler. He might be an absolutely fascinating man to spend an evening with. Oh, we know each other, but I mean I don't know him. And the great people I don't see - they're old now - like A. Hyatt Mayor who's really distinguished. I consider him a

top art scholar in America, you know, who more than he? Do you know him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

PAUL MAGRIEL: His range! That's my idea of a scholar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It is extraordinary.

PAUL MAGRIEL: I mean when he does a show, say, of English watercolors and you come to a legend, a piece about Cruikshank, and you've got the whole social history of England. He culls from his vast storehouse of knowledge. Which I used to be able to do on certain things, I can do it less now because my memory is not very good. I used to be able to do that. I remember the first show I did with Lincoln Kirstein, who was fantastic. I laid out all those pictures. Lincoln came around with a pencil and a piece of yellow paper and started writing these legends as fast as he could write. It was just marvelous.

END OF INTERVIEW

Last updated... *September 26, 2002*