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Oral history interview with Marjorie
Phillips, 1974 June 27

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marjorie Phillips on June 27, 1974. The interview took place in Washington, D.C., and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

The sound quality for this interview is poor throughout, leading to an abnormally high number of inaudible words.

Interview

[00:00:04.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Today is June 27, 1974.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

This is Paul Cummings, talking to Marjorie Phillips, in her house on Fox Hill Road in Washington, DC. —Interested in art and something about school. And I noticed you were born in Indiana, but somehow, you went to school in New York. How did all—

[00:00:29.08]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I only stayed two months in Indiana.

[00:00:32.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. [Laughs.]

[00:00:32.74]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We were only visiting. I think my parents were visiting my father's family.

[00:00:39.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:00:42.10]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: They lived in—they were—his family were Hudson River Dutch, and then they moved to Indiana.

[00:00:46.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:00:47.11]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And he had my grandfather, and had a business there. And it just happened. And I suppose I came along a little early. [They laugh.]

[00:00:57.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There you were.

[00:00:58.83]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:00:59.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, because I was wondering, because I noticed you went to school in New York.

[00:01:02.85]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: My father was an electrochemical engineer, and he moved about at that period. He was young, you see. And from there, he went to one of the large firms in New Jersey, and then Niagara Falls, where he established the works of his own.

[00:01:20.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good.

[00:01:21.57]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: The Agriprocessors Company.

[00:01:23.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The which one?

[00:01:24.30]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Agriprocessors Company.

[00:01:26.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Agri—Yeah.

[00:01:26.67]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And he was a well-known inventor. He invented some important—he made some important inventions at the time.

[00:01:36.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good, great, great. So that's how you came to go to school in New York, right?

[00:01:43.53]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. Well, then and we went from Niagara Falls. We went to New York, and he had some work in New York to do. So the family went there, and then we moved up the Hudson to Ossining. I'm glad I've had all these different homes. There's a lot to be said for it.

[00:02:03.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You liked that, moving around?

[00:02:05.29]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I liked it. I don't think you—maybe a child or a young person wouldn't make as many friends, but—

[00:02:12.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It was nice.

[00:02:13.90]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —lived in one home.

[00:02:16.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you went to the Art Students League, later after Miss Fuller's.

[00:02:20.95]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. That was when we moved to Ossining, yes.

[00:02:22.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. How did you decide? Had you drawn as a child, or painted? Were your family interested in the arts?

[00:02:29.63]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, yes, they were. My mother had two of her brothers, actually—I had two uncles who were painters.

[00:02:37.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, the Beals.

[00:02:38.51]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Distinguished, well-known painters, Gifford and Reynolds Beal.

[00:02:42.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:02:42.80]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:02:44.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:02:45.66]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And every summer, we would spend holidays at my grandparents' home, in Newburgh, on mountain. And there'd be this marvelous big studio on the top floor.

[00:02:57.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

[00:02:58.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And the uncles always took a great interest in our childhood drawings.

[00:03:04.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. So—

[00:03:05.50]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And they encouraged us to paint and said, why don't you be illustrators or painters when you grow up? And so that, of course, was wonderful.

[00:03:16.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, marvelous. I often wondered what kind of characters they were, because they've done so many things. And I read some of their letters that are in the archives, and they sound very vital.

[00:03:24.55]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Gifford and Reynolds Beal?

[00:03:25.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes, yeah.

[00:03:29.68]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: They were—Gifford was the youngest, and Reynolds was the oldest. And Reynolds was a little more arbitrary in the way he would talk to you about things, but he had a great sense of humor, and was a charming person. But he was kind of a free spirit, and he used to be a great deal on his—he had a boat, and he used to be at Gloucester and Rockport.

[00:03:57.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

[00:03:59.14]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He traveled. He traveled a great deal, painted sort of quick sketches with lots of spirit and enjoyment, you know.

[00:04:07.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:04:08.69]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Gifford Beal settled down at Newburgh, and married and had children. Reynolds got married much later in life. But he was a dear. I had special affection for Gifford Beal.

[00:04:25.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:04:26.52]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes.

[00:04:27.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what? Why?

[00:04:28.50]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He was so encouraging, always. And afterwards, when I was at the Art Students League, I would sometimes take my things for him to see.

[00:04:37.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Oh, good.

[00:04:38.85]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah, he was always encouraging. Actually, it was through him, in a way, that I met my husband, because they were both members of the Century Club.

[00:04:48.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:04:49.29]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And my husband was having the exhibition before he was able to hang them, in the house in Washington. He loaned important parts of the collection around to different cities, and this was on the Century Club—

[00:05:08.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right, right.

[00:05:09.80]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —in New York. Well, my uncle gave me a card to go in, and I was—we'd been to several things there. We'd been to receptions as children. I went with my mother. So I went in, and—this is all in my book—some member of the Century Club started to ask me a question. And so an elderly man came up. But then it just seemed he appeared out of the blue. He was doing the honors. My husband was there—

[00:05:44.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, marvelous.

[00:05:44.18]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —I mean, my future husband, came over. And we found we were so congenial. We went around and talked about the things, but it was just an informal reception.

[00:05:55.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific, yeah. I always thought that was a marvelous story.

[00:05:58.59]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think it happens in our gallery all the time, the same sort of thing.

[00:06:01.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: People meeting.

[00:06:02.58]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes.

[00:06:04.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great. Well, how long did you go to the Art Students League?

[00:06:09.42]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I went rather sporadically for several years. Of course, I had another sister who was very talented, I guess equally talented, but she didn't keep it up. And we used to take turns—

[00:06:23.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Oh, I see.

[00:06:23.96]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —so that one would be home, a companion for my mother. We wanted one of us at home at Ossining.

[00:06:29.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:06:29.66]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And there were younger children that were there.

[00:06:35.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] family. You'd studied for a while with Kenneth Hayes Miller, right?

[00:06:37.82]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:06:38.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like him as a teacher? What kind of a—

[00:06:40.50]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I liked him because he was encouraging. With me, he wasn't analytical. He let me do pretty much what I wanted. [Inaudible.]

[00:06:54.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Inaudible] What about—

[00:06:54.88]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I learned most from Boardman Robinson.

[00:06:57.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You did?

[00:06:58.11]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:06:58.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:06:59.51]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Because he talked—he really was an illustrator. He wasn't that great of—well, he did do some paintings, didn't he? Murals.

[00:07:06.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, right. Right.

[00:07:10.77]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He talked more about design, and the rhythm, and the underlying qualities of art.

[00:07:21.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's interesting. And Miller was just sort of encouraging, but not so specific?

[00:07:27.02]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. That's right. Sometimes, we'd paint under things, and then—some artists like it, and some don't. [Laughs.]

[00:07:33.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific. How did you like the Art Students League? Did you know many of the students during the time you were there?

[00:07:40.02]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, of course, Gifford Beal was the President, but I didn't see him very often, because he'd be home, working. But during the war, I saw him. He used one of the studios at the school to paint some—they had the war pictures to sell then.

[00:07:56.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right.

[00:08:02.64]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I feel—because I didn't live in New York; I commuted, you see.

[00:08:06.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you went back and forth all the time?

[00:08:08.67]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. There were several I was very fond of, good people, yes.

[00:08:12.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh, good. Good. Do you remember any of them offhand?

[00:08:15.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, the ones that I knew are dead now. There was an Evelyn McDonald I knew. I'm trying to think. Their names escape me just this minute.

[00:08:35.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, you got married, which is really very important here. In what, 1921, right?

[00:08:42.01]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, because that was the year the gallery opened.

[00:08:45.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Everything happened in 1921.

[00:08:46.93]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes. That was a—Of course, the gallery—they had started rebuilding or changing and building a storeroom at the end, at the north end of 1600. So they had started to prepare for the opening of the gallery, but it just chanced that we were married that very year, yes.

[00:09:13.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, it must have been very exciting with all of these things going on, wasn't it?

[00:09:17.28]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, it was, and it was perfectly thrilling. It was wonderful. And we were so congenial.

[00:09:23.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wow, that's wonderful.

[00:09:24.68]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We loved art in the same way.

[00:09:26.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

[00:09:27.47]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was just astonishing how—it doesn't always happen. You can't force it—how closely our tastes fell.

[00:09:38.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why was that, do you think? Because it is such an unusual occurrence.

[00:09:45.08]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I have no—I don't know why.

[00:09:46.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just happened that way.

[00:09:47.36]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It just happened. It was one of those things that just happened.

[00:09:51.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating.

[00:09:52.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I used to visit the galleries a lot in New York, you know, between trains. And I'd be visiting my—I had quite a few—there were quite a few of the family in New York. We were all art-oriented. We all loved it, to go around to the galleries and museums.

[00:10:12.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great. That's fantastic.

[00:10:13.98]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. My mother was very interested.

[00:10:17.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was she a collector, or your parents?

[00:10:20.96]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, but her sister, Mrs. Monks, used to collect quite a bit. She lived in New York, and we used to spend time with her, too. My mother did own paintings, but they were mostly gifts, you know, but she loved them.

[00:10:39.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

[00:10:40.37]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:10:41.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you really spent a whole lifetime with art?

[00:10:43.49]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah, so it really has been I think, since I was seven or eight, I've been drawing and painting.

[00:10:49.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[00:10:51.41]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:10:52.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you came to live in Washington then, right?

[00:10:59.08]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:11:01.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, this is a, again, a new world.

[00:11:04.99]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:11:08.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, and the collection was going.

[00:11:09.60]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it would have been even stranger if we hadn't been so congenial, you see. [Paul laughs.] We had all this wonderful thing to develop. And it was early as 1925, my husband made me an Associate Director. So that we really did—and he always wanted me to go with him when he would go to buy paintings.

[00:11:36.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? I'm very interested in how—did you look at things together and make decisions together?

[00:11:42.57]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, but I always wanted him to make the end decision, because I had painting, and he had that. But he always wanted to know what I really—

[00:11:50.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific.

[00:11:51.87]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And often, I wouldn't say anything if I didn't like it. [Laughs.]

[00:11:58.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Did you agree with him most of the time?

[00:11:59.60]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But it was fun. He very seldom took anyone else, because it sort of broke the—

[00:12:08.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, sure. That's great.

[00:12:09.53]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, I encouraged him, because I thought it was marvelous, what he was doing.

[00:12:13.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What did it mean when you became an Assistant, or Associate Director, I think you were called? Did that mean you really had things to do with the gallery?

[00:12:21.06]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I had charge, for some years, mainly of the print room, so it [inaudible] to keep exhibitions going in those, so that when I became Director later, that had

been wonderful experience, you see, that I had getting to know all the letters—

[00:12:37.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You knew all the processes; right.

[00:12:37.65]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —and getting those exhibitions, and hanging them.

[00:12:41.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, in going through exhibition catalogs and things, I've often noticed the Phillips Collection has been very generous in lending to other museums.

[00:12:51.65]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: My husband was very generous. And we still are, I will say. [They laugh.] My son has the same thing. I mean, you can't do too much, because, after all, it's not a large—no collection or museum is all masterpieces. [Laughs.] There are always a lot of second- and third-rate. And you have to keep most of the masterpieces up.

[00:13:19.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That's true. You've got a lot of gorgeous paintings.

[00:13:23.92]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah, I have a lot, thank you. [Inaudible] collection.

[00:13:28.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like being involved, and in a very real way, with organizing exhibitions?

[00:13:37.38]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I found it intensely interesting, because being a painter, it did take a lot of time. I would otherwise have spent more time painting. But—

[00:13:48.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did you do both? Because you have had numerous exhibitions and lots of things.

[00:13:53.04]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, we didn't have as many as all that.

[00:13:55.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but I mean, you've had quite a few exhibitions of your own.

[00:13:58.07]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: With my son, it changes every month.

[00:13:59.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:14:00.30]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: They change two or three rooms, or one room at least, every single month. He's always moving things around, which I think is wonderful.

[00:14:12.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:14:14.10]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And when my husband started doing it, he did a great deal of that, too.

[00:14:20.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, it's always interested me that you could continue painting and produce as much as you have, plus doing all the museum, or all the collection work. How'd you do it?

[00:14:33.01]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We had a very congenial staff who were great, and I think they all admired what he was doing. He was more or less the old-fashioned type of Director. He was the Director.

[00:14:52.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:14:53.47]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah.

[00:14:54.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good. One thing, though—

[00:14:56.62]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, I think the things are more shared, you know, the responsibility is more shared.

[00:15:04.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was very interested in the idea you had of the unit exhibitions, the unit installation idea.

[00:15:11.63]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes.

[00:15:12.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that evolve? Was that his idea, or was it something that was—

[00:15:15.77]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That was his idea.

[00:15:16.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was?

[00:15:16.91]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And that was mainly because the rooms were small. And I think it looks so well if you can have an artist, one artist—if his works hang well together. It doesn't always happen that they do.

[00:15:30.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:15:31.04]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But now today, I thought that the works of both [inaudible] looked very well together.

[00:15:38.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, I see, I see. Because it was an interesting idea to do things like that.

[00:15:47.97]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And then he had the idea of having it in our home, keeping it in the home, no matter what, which I think has been one of its great strengths, really. It seemed a little that was the expedient thing to do. But on the other hand, I find in reading back, that he always had that idea that it should be in our home.

[00:16:13.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because it's so—

[00:16:14.85]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He even looked around for homes, for houses—

[00:16:17.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:16:18.18]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But you couldn't—but we had lived in that home, you see, and it had been lived in since 1897. His parents— and he was a child; and we lived there with his mother for nine or ten years. So it's very different than buying a perfectly strange house.

[00:16:41.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right. That's true. The times I've been there, one always gets a feeling of going into somebody's house, rather than an institution.

[00:16:50.40]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, of continuity.

[00:16:51.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:16:52.17]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think that has something to do with the very fact that we lived there.

[00:16:58.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's a marvelous idea.

[00:16:59.19]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: So far, it's been nice. It's been good. And in fact, my son was there, lived there as a little baby, and now he's the Director.

[00:17:07.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now he's the Director.

[00:17:08.42]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was so good.

[00:17:09.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

[00:17:09.87]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:17:10.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:17:10.68]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah. My husband always hoped he would be, eventually, Director. But he had to do something of his own first, which he did, *The Washingtonian Magazine*, as you know. And that is doing very well.

[00:17:29.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good.

[00:17:30.78]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And now he has both. He has his hands full, really.

[00:17:34.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fun.

[00:17:35.82]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He has a very good Chief Curator in Richard Friedman. But he spends a lot of time. He's there for the hangings and the changes, and he consults all the time, and he makes the end decisions.

[00:17:52.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did he become the Director now?

[00:17:56.03]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Let me see. I retired in '72. My husband died in '66, and I was Director until '72.

[00:18:08.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You know, one thing I noticed in reading your book was the trips you would take to Europe and things. Were they well planned to see things, or did you go and just kind of move around?

[00:18:21.24]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: The first time, I think we more or less just went just to be in Paris. And that was the 1923 trip, when we bought the Renoir, which we've never since surpassed. [Laughs.] I think that really is one of the good paintings of the world, one of the great ones.

[00:18:41.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was it like the first time you saw that painting?

[00:18:45.18]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, it was just thrilling, absolutely dazzling to us. I know it was to me, and I'm sure—well, I know it was to my husband.

[00:18:57.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a fabulous painting.

[00:18:58.78]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And that we were able to get it, and we there at this psychological moment, just when they were ready to sell.

[00:19:08.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It worked, yeah.

[00:19:08.99]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And then Paul Durand-Ruel—of course, he was the great eye, I think, that started that firm.

[00:19:18.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But did you know many dealers? I mean, did you get friendly with many dealers over the years, or was it not so much—

[00:19:26.99]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was Joseph who sold it to us as, as I remember, that particular picture. Well, we knew Peschard. I don't know if you'd call Stieglitz a dealer, but we knew him. I guess we knew a very pleasant lot. Quite a few.

[00:19:50.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because the Phillips Collection has a lot of artists represented who were in the Stieglitz group. You know, Dove.

[00:20:00.46]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We have all the Stieglitz group.

[00:20:01.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marin, yeah, yeah.

[00:20:03.19]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

[00:20:03.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:20:04.96]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And those were very genuine. My husband had love for those, especially Marin and Dove. They were great favorites. Marin was a great friend. If you read the book, you'll see that.

[00:20:20.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Yeah, yeah. What about other artists like that, besides Marin? Were there others who are close friends?

[00:20:27.30]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, Kanos [ph] was a good friend, very good.

[00:20:33.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you meet him? Because he came into the picture very early, didn't he?

[00:20:40.24]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, my husband, as I remember, had actually tried to buy something of his as far back as 1920, I think. We saw it in the old Daniel gallery.

[00:20:53.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Charles Daniel.

[00:20:54.94]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was a picture—Yes. It was in this last exhibition, "The Lilacs." And I think that they bought it. Then my husband kept in touch with his work, because he'd been interested from the first. So he bought quite a few. And then back in 1930, when we had the school, he asked him to come for six weeks each year and teach, to be a guest teacher.

[00:21:32.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Yeah.

[00:21:33.14]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And I think then, every year, he would buy something, because he'd always see something that he—

[00:21:38.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Liked.

[00:21:39.40]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:21:40.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fascinating. What was the whole purpose of the school? Because I never could really get that straight from what I read about it.

[00:21:47.70]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I don't think we would have had one—he wouldn't have had one just on his own. It was because—of course, I couldn't give the full time that he needed an Associate Director to give. So he got a college classmate who was very interested in art and a very interesting, intellectual person, Law Watkins. And we used to see him in the summer.

[00:22:19.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:22:19.80]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And he was getting out of the coal business, which was the family business. And my husband thought he was going to take a position on the *Chicago Tribune*. I think he said, "Oh, don't do that. I need someone in the gallery. Why don't you come?" And so he did.

[00:22:39.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:22:44.62]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It wasn't, maybe, quite as much as Law Watkins would have liked to do every day. So in the course of training himself for the work, he decided to have an art school, a very good idea—learn by teaching, because, after all, he hadn't been—as a young person.

[00:23:07.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:23:08.17]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it became one of the best schools in this part of the country. I mean, he had people come that were already quite established artists. Great interest.

[00:23:22.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's a very different kind of activity, running a school, isn't it, from a museum?

[00:23:26.70]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, and he had that special way of working with young people, very encouraging and stimulating. Of course, my husband enjoyed him at Yale.

[00:23:37.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:23:39.02]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: They'd been on the Lit together [inaudible] at Yale.

[00:23:44.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fun, yeah, yeah. It's interested me over the years, because looking through the catalog of the collection that was published some years ago, there's so many more works in the collection than one generally thinks of as being there. They're the famous ones you hear about all the time, but there are so many others.

[00:24:09.07]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And if you see, there's a distinct division made there.

[00:24:12.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:24:14.86]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Some of them were bought for what he called the "encouragement collection."

[00:24:20.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:24:20.78]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Some of them were the young people almost from the school. And there were others who were just getting started as artists. And if he saw something that interested him in their work that he thought was promising, then—and then another thing, it was the WPA came along at that time, the works—

[00:24:41.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh right, right.

[00:24:43.25]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: You know, the government. And he was, I think, the head of it here, just under Bruce.

[00:24:53.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:24:53.99]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He was one of Bruce's top people, so that he did buy quite a few things of those artists. You can go visit and see their work. Do it for encouragement. The artists were having a terrible time.

[00:25:11.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, yeah. I often wonder about collections like this, if there's ever any kind of plan of acquisition or artists that one—because it has that subtitle.

[00:25:29.33]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It wasn't said that—he was very on the ball, and he'd have inspirations, and he'd work on them like that.

[00:25:40.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because I know Bonnard became such a great favorite, it seems, at one point.

[00:25:44.39]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. Well, yes, we both had a passion for his work. It was just—so we first say him, and they bought one from the Carnegie Institute. It actually sold first in this country. I do think he's developed as one of the greatest—takes his place as one of the greatest artists.

[00:26:12.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The colors—yeah, yeah. Well, was there ever any plan of acquisition, or was it really just what interested you, and what you felt worked within the general idea of the collection? I mean, because you have—there are all sorts of people that are in it. And I'm just curious, because it is a modern collection. I was just wondering if there was ever any plan at any point, any time?

[00:26:51.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Just to keep an alive collection. I mean, exactly what do you mean by a plan?

[00:27:01.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, in terms of buying European artists, or American artists, or any particular—

[00:27:08.11]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, he was very international. He didn't have any of that prejudice that some artists would have, or some collectors would have.

[00:27:19.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:27:20.28]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That they should be American, or they should be European.

[00:27:22.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because everybody—

[00:27:23.73]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Just, if they were an artist, that was very fine.

[00:27:26.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:27:27.45]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He did probably keep a balance.

[00:27:35.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. You know, it—

[00:27:35.26]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: There are more American artists, of course, in the collection. And, perhaps, on the average, they don't quite come up to the best of the—and so he happened to collect of the Europeans.

[00:27:54.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: One thing that's always interested me is the public reaction. Here was Washington in the 1920s. There was no place else to see contemporary art, really, was there?

[00:28:06.52]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, and Washington thought it had nothing. It had the Phillips Collection, but he didn't publicize the way they do now. And most art lovers in Washington didn't even know they had the Déjeuner. [Laughs.] And they say, of course, in those years, it was a drought. There was nothing in Washington, and he had these wonderful Renoir and Monet, [inaudible], all those.

[00:28:47.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's interesting, because since it wasn't publicized as much as museums now seem to publicize themselves—

[00:29:02.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It's so different now, it is.

[00:29:04.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of attendance? Were there many people that came in the early years, or was it quiet?

[00:29:11.27]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I mean, he didn't make much of opening days. He never served refreshments. I think when Law Watkins came, he used to think more of that, that it would be good to do. He sort of expanded, and had a studio house next to the gallery. And he used to have receptions there, and he used to have [inaudible] orders for sale.

[00:29:44.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it grew and grew and grew?

[00:29:46.31]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:29:47.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:29:47.51]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:29:48.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I suppose it's hard to tell what the public response is to a collection. Do you get letters from people?

[00:30:01.05]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We have a tremendous response right now. I mean, if you go there a weekend, any day in the week nowadays—and I think it's partly because they keep

changing, my son and Friedman— they're changing all the time. And the people love it. You have so many young people.

[00:30:22.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great.

[00:30:22.63]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It's really thrilling.

[00:30:25.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of the first things I remember seeing there was a Rothko room, with Rothkos in it.

[00:30:30.78]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:30:31.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's always been—

[00:30:32.51]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That's delightful. That's there.

[00:30:33.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —an extraordinary experience.

[00:30:34.90]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, well, that's still there.

[00:30:41.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How did you decide to put them like that, just in a room all by themselves?

[00:30:46.51]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It's just that same idea of the unit. If he liked an artist, he wanted not just one example, but several to show the whole artist, to show more of them. He didn't get one of the dark. He didn't like that part as well, the black.

[00:31:04.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, the late black—yeah.

[00:31:05.92]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:31:06.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Very difficult paintings, I think.

[00:31:09.20]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But I think that it would have been nice, maybe, just to have one, but not a whole room.

[00:31:16.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. It's too—

[00:31:19.83]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think the most important loan exhibition that I ever had was the Cézanne exhibition.

[00:31:26.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. That was the anniversary.

[00:31:27.93]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, that was the anniversary, the 50th anniversary.

[00:31:30.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you put all that together? Because that's quite a catalog, quite a show. [Laughs.]

[00:31:35.70]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, it really was. Well, first, I telephoned Mr. Cunningham, and asked if he'd like to come in and share expenses. And then I telephoned Ewald and asked if he'd do the introduction. He said he'd love to. And so it just gradually grew.

[00:31:58.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long did it take you to organize that show? Because it was quite an exhibition.

[00:32:01.98]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Several months.

[00:32:02.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Were you familiar not with Cézanne's work, or did you do lots of research, or read?

[00:32:10.05]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I read quite a bit, and we had Venturi, of course.

[00:32:17.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative], right. And Mr. Ewald.

[00:32:17.28]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: There are quite a few just around here they could borrow, between Washington, and New York, and Boston. And I was able to assemble a great many of them myself. And then Mr. Cunningham did more of the watercolors, and one of the things from the Louvre, though they had promised something from the Louvre. Then we got out of it. We, in the end, got it. And I got one. I got two.

[00:32:46.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. That's a feat, because they're a difficult lender.

[00:32:50.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That's a feat, yes, yes.

[00:32:51.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Particularly for such a distance.

[00:32:55.31]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:32:57.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific.

[00:32:58.93]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That was a thrilling time, it really was.

[00:33:01.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, because it's one of the great Cézanne shows that's been put on in this country.

[00:33:07.10]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: One of the great shows. Of course, the Metropolitan had one, too, in the '50s, and that was a great show.

[00:33:15.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, what response do you get from Washington for an exhibition like that? I mean, with the people, or the press?

[00:33:27.56]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, they could hardly get in the building. They were down the whole block, waiting.

[00:33:32.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? You had lines?

[00:33:33.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, there was a line. Yes.

[00:33:35.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[00:33:35.47]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was a crush, really.

[00:33:37.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

[00:33:38.35]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was very, very—[Laughs.] Great.

[00:33:46.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That must have been very exciting with all of that.

[00:33:48.15]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. It certainly was.

[00:33:50.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific. Just to go back to your own painting again, how were you able to keep up? Did you have special hours for painting? Did you paint every day?

[00:34:03.31]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I usually painted in the morning, yes.

[00:34:06.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So that was the first—

[00:34:07.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And my husband would come home rather late for lunch, which was good, because—

[00:34:15.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It gave you a long while.

[00:34:16.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yeah, and we'd talk over everything about the gallery. He was always very—loved to confide about what he was interested in doing. And so he'd get my opinions, too. And then I would often join him in the afternoon, and go down, or whenever there was an exhibition, I'd go in the morning when they were doing something special.

[00:34:42.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, fun. Did you ever give suggestions as to things for the collection—you know, artists or particular works, or painting or sculpture or things?

[00:34:53.75]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think the first Rothko we got—and I think the exhibition of Giacometti was one I did.

[00:35:02.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. How do you like Giacometti?

[00:35:05.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I like Giacometti. I think he's very, very fascinating, yes.

[00:35:11.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You like sculpture?

[00:35:13.43]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I do, very much. We don't have nearly enough. Well, we didn't at first, but now we have that little sculpture court. We could get more. I like Caro. I like his work very much. We have the small one, which my son purchased.

[00:35:29.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You really keep up with the most modern things, don't you, right up to—

[00:35:33.72]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, well, I do enjoy them so much. And yet, I have a great faith in realism. I think it's as essential to art as the wheel is to mechanics. [They laugh.] I think, really, it's just utterly important.

[00:35:50.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:35:51.90]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it'll come back.

[00:35:55.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, it goes on, like the wheel.

[00:35:58.15]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:35:58.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Round and round and round, yeah.

[00:35:59.94]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That's right. That's the answer.

[00:36:01.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:36:05.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But I love the other two. I love this, much. I love Klee.

[00:36:11.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There's some very nice Klee.

[00:36:13.52]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I love some of the witty things that are done. I think there's an awful lot of excruciatingly bad taste, too.

[00:36:20.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, isn't that always—

[00:36:22.01]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, that's always been a thing, yes.

[00:36:24.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:36:25.04]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: In one form or another, I guess.

[00:36:28.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about something like the National Collection of Fine Arts? Do you visit their exhibitions now and then? Do you see—

[00:36:34.41]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I went up to that Tobey just last—

[00:36:36.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The other day.

[00:36:37.46]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I had a visit there at the special exhibition, yes.

[00:36:39.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you see what goes on, and you keep right up with everything.

[00:36:43.49]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, not everything. I mean, naturally, there's too much.

[00:36:47.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:36:48.64]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: You can't, if you're trying to paint, too.

[00:36:52.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What do you think of I as it's changed, as far as its art activities, over the years?

[00:36:58.75]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I think one of the things is that there's so many dealers here now, so many more dealers.

[00:37:03.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And there were none in the '20s or '30s, were they?

[00:37:05.95]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No. Maybe—

[00:37:06.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maybe one or two.

[00:37:06.91]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, that's just it. Bader, right before.

[00:37:11.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But then there was—

[00:37:14.99]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: [Inaudible] the Jefferson Place. They did a lot in spreading the interest in contemporary. I say contemporary, because I think that realism should be in contemporary, too.

[00:37:38.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure.

[00:37:39.07]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It should be always an experimental [inaudible].

[00:37:46.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, do you find that since there are more people interested in art in Washington, that the collection has a greater attendance, that you have more people, that there's more—

[00:37:58.50]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

[00:37:59.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It just grows?

[00:38:00.10]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Whenever I go there, it just delights and amazes me, especially at

weekends. You kind of just have to wend your way around. It's quite a—

[00:38:12.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do people ever write you letters about having been there?

[00:38:15.20]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

[00:38:15.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:38:16.34]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:38:16.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

[00:38:17.45]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it's just a delight to get them. And unexpected people come up to you, and tell you how they enjoy it, what it has meant to them.

[00:38:25.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific. So it's a very live, ongoing experience.

[00:38:31.67]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: The sale of my book has been such a surprising interest to me. I mean, I'm always being asked to autograph it.

[00:38:38.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific.

[00:38:38.74]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. And that's just fantastic.

[00:38:41.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's great. How do you like being an author? [Laughs.]

[00:38:49.34]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was quite a lot of work. [Laughs.]

[00:38:51.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. It's a long, hard job— putting books together, isn't it?

[00:38:58.19]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I'm awfully glad I did it.

[00:39:00.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah?

[00:39:00.59]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Now I'm awfully glad I did it.

[00:39:03.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think it gave you a different look at all of those years, and all of that activity?

[00:39:08.09]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, but it's nice to have a look back on the early years, re-read it. It didn't change anything now—

[00:39:15.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know.

[00:39:15.54]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —for me.

[00:39:16.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but it just—

[00:39:17.93]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, but it's definitely—

[00:39:19.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —holds it together, in a way.

[00:39:20.66]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —a little record, yes, yes.

[00:39:22.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's marvelous. How many years did the school exist? Was it there for a long time, or not?

[00:39:32.74]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think it was about 15 years in [inaudible], from about '30. And Mr. Watkins died in '45, unfortunately. So it was only his death that stopped it.

[00:39:44.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, because I knew it had gone through the '30s and then—

[00:39:47.94]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. It continued until just after the war, when he became ill.

[00:39:56.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, what were the war years like for the collection in Washington?

[00:40:00.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, in the war years, it functioned magnificently, because we kept up the concerts. We had concerts all the time. And my husband made even more effort to change the exhibitions, and to have special exhibitions. It functioned very well for the city, the people who were stationed here. And there were a good many people in the arts.

[00:40:27.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Oh, it must have been incredible.

[00:40:28.78]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:40:29.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. When did the concerts start? Was that an early idea or did that just —

[00:40:37.81]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: The concerts first started—do you remember Mary Howell and Mrs.—the Wolf Trap Farm?

[00:40:49.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:40:52.05]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I know her name just as well.

[00:40:54.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, I've lost it, too.

[00:40:56.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I hope this is—

[00:40:57.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

[00:40:58.63]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Turn it off for a minute. What do they call it? Candlelight concerts, candlelight series. And they went on for a couple of years, several years. Then Ms. Beer, who was my husband's secretary—then she became in charge of music.

[00:41:23.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:41:27.76]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: She was a great music enthusiast, and knew quite a bit. So she took that over. I don't know why the candlelight concerts didn't continue, because that wasn't my field. So I didn't know. I should remember, but I don't. I don't know why they didn't.

[00:41:52.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think all those things are useful? Because I know they've had lectures there, or all kinds of things like that. Do you think that that attracts more people to the place?

[00:42:04.15]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, yes, certainly. Yes.

[00:42:06.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It goes on and on.

[00:42:08.29]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: You have to have some activity going, and that brings them back and back.

[00:42:12.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. I'm curious about, again, the various artists that you've got to know. Were there others besides people like Marin and Canas [ph], or any that you might have—

[00:42:31.58]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Dove. My husband had a very delightful correspondence with Dove.

[00:42:36.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:42:37.37]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He always was going to come to Washington, but his health—you know, he had heart trouble.

[00:42:43.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:42:44.75]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And so we met him in New York. We liked him tremendously.

[00:42:53.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, that's marvelous.

[00:42:55.44]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. He would always meet the people that were—

[00:43:02.18]

[Dog barking.]

[00:43:02.91]

—the juries, like Matisse and—

[00:43:07.37]

[Dog barking.]

[00:43:08.45]

—and Bonnard. That's how we got to meet him. Saint Gaudens would always bring them to the different cities or the different museums. And we would always stop at our old gallery after that.

[00:43:19.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that is terrific.

[00:43:20.71]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: So that was delightful.

[00:43:22.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you made some other trips to Europe, didn't you, besides that one that we talked about in the '20s?

[00:43:28.19]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, and that was for a specific purpose. Those trips were—my husband was writing a book, the Giorgione book.

[00:43:36.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:43:37.52]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And we were—

[00:43:38.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Going around to look at them.

[00:43:39.89]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He was going around, checking again, and seeing the ones again that he—he had traveled a great deal when he was younger, but then he didn't enjoy it as much later on.

[00:43:50.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:43:51.29]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I guess, probably we weren't quite as anxious to leave the children, either. And his mother wasn't well. So in the end, it was more of a New York-made collection. All the great dealers were there.

[00:44:06.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:44:07.45]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Though we did get some works in Europe.

[00:44:13.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I was often curious why he wrote the book on Giorgione.

[00:44:19.11]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Like Bonnard, he had a passion for Giorgione.

[00:44:21.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:44:22.71]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: From the time he was very young, he liked that, what he called "beauty touched with strangeness." That comes back to me.

[Dog collar rattles.]

[00:44:33.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [To dog:] Hello. Were there other people, art historians, or critics, or people that you knew—museum curators?

[00:44:45.70]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He knew Frank Jewett Mather through the Century Club. They used to see him there all the time. He knew Brown Hill there. He was good friends with Augustus Tack.

[00:45:04.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. What a marvelous painter.

[00:45:06.14]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He was one of the first abstract painters in the country.

[00:45:09.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:45:11.66]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: There's been quite a lot being made of him recently.

[00:45:15.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wasn't there a show in Texas, or someplace not long ago?

[00:45:18.56]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes.

[00:45:18.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:45:19.09]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: At Maryland University.

[00:45:20.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Maryland. Right.

[00:45:22.17]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We always have something hanging.

[00:45:23.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. How did you like those paintings? I always found them to be so different in feeling from—

[00:45:33.20]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: They were slightly Oriental. I think for abstraction, for he was more inspired by the Chinese idioms than by—

[00:45:44.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: By Europeans, yeah.

[00:45:46.28]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, [inaudible].

[00:45:47.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, because when I would go to the—I used to come to Washington more frequently than I do now, for some reason. And I would go to the Phillips, and I would see those. And they always were such a different note.

[00:46:01.58]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I know it. And my husband used to have the big music room downstairs. He used to have those around, and there was even talk of his doing [inaudible]—making a dome ceiling.

[00:46:16.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? That would have been fantastic.

[00:46:18.37]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It would have been. It really would. It would have been terrifically expensive. In a way, it wouldn't have been an art gallery that you could change around.

[00:46:25.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right.

[00:46:28.53]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it turns out that that particular room—goodness knows why—it has almost perfect acoustics.

[00:46:35.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:46:36.13]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It might have changed the acoustics.

[00:46:38.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh, that's interesting, because I've never heard a concert or anything in there. Oh, fantastic.

[00:46:44.63]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, they're still going on, the concerts. Ms. Beer retired just before I did.

[00:46:58.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you still keep very much involved with it?

[00:47:02.23]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, not so awfully much, because I've had so much to do, so much to sort here. And I wanted all the time to paint, a little more time. And then I had an exhibition at the Marlborough Gallery last year in London. So that took quite a lot of time getting things together.

[00:47:24.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a catalog, or anything for that? Because I couldn't find one in New York ever.

[00:47:29.15]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. I think it's right here. She got—

[00:47:32.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Eloise was a guest?

[00:47:32.97]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, I was thinking, I got an honorary degree, you know, last year from Smith. And she got one, too. She was there.

[00:47:41.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:47:42.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And also, another one's wife. Krasner, was it?

[00:47:46.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, Lee Krasner, Pollock's wife, yeah.

[00:47:50.93]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was an artist's year for giving degrees.

[00:47:53.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, good.

[00:47:55.35]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was wonderful.

[00:47:58.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, this is nice. I wonder why I couldn't find one of these in New York.

[00:48:05.74]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I don't think that the introduction is very interesting. I could have gotten a more interesting question. Actually, I thought that the art editor that used to be there was still there.

[00:48:23.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:48:23.90]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I can remember her name, Dorothy Adlow.

[00:48:26.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. No, yeah.

[00:48:27.91]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And it turned out that she wasn't—that this woman was there then, at the time. It's all right.

[00:48:38.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, it's always interested me about your paintings or the flowers and the still lifes and things. Do you set up still lifes like that? And do you use real flowers or artificial flowers and things?

[00:48:53.41]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

[00:48:54.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because so many people now, I've noticed, use artificial flowers, because they go on forever.

[00:49:00.37]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I know. Well, because they hear Cézanne did.

[00:49:02.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

[00:49:06.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It's true. But I always painted from the flowers.

[00:49:13.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's marvelous. What kind of reception did the show receive in London?

[00:49:20.85]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Brilliant. They said a great many people went. We only were there two days, I think, two or three days in London. Then we went on to Paris. At least the opening party.

[00:49:34.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good, good. On the many exhibitions that you organized over the years, how would you decide to do an exhibition of Hamada, or Penalba, or Youngerman, or somebody like that? It's just that you'd seen enough of their work, and you were interested at that point?

[00:49:59.04]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Penalba, I happened to go in—I was in New York, and I just happened to go in the gallery that handled her work, and I saw something I liked very much. And I wanted to have an outdoor exhibition at the court, which I had paved over in memory of my husband, who had established the little court, for showing more sculpture shows. My son has used it quite a bit. We had Calder there.

[00:50:28.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:50:28.64]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: But I'd known Calder since he was this high—

[00:50:31.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:50:32.10]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —and we lived in Ossining, yes.

[00:50:34.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:50:34.95]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And so that was nice. And we had a wonderful [inaudible] show there.

[00:50:40.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:50:44.05]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We don't have enough large sculptures, I mean, as the Museum of Modern Art, you know, to keep it there all the time, but in a way, it's better, because you'd have to get them all out. And then you're going to have a one-man show.

[00:50:59.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:51:00.74]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We have an interesting Italian woman there right now.

[00:51:04.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who is that?

[00:51:05.22]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —that my son got. I forget her name.

[00:51:09.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't know you knew Calder for so many years, though.

[00:51:12.48]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:51:13.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

[00:51:14.91]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: We had known the family. I went to school with his sister.

[00:51:18.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:51:18.60]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:51:19.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fun.

[00:51:20.82]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: She lives out in California.

[00:51:22.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative], right, right.

[00:51:25.98]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was lots of fun.

[00:51:28.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: My goodness, there are lots of artists involved with your life, aren't there?

[00:51:31.24]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, there really are. They don't come to the surface right now, but they—[laughs].

[00:51:35.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, over the years, there were a lot of them.

[00:51:38.86]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. Many great memories. [Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:51:43.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I did want to ask you about Stieglitz, because he seemed to have been very close to your activities, since all of his artists are represented here, many of them

by numerous pieces. Did you spend much time with him in New York ever, see much of him, or write letters?

[00:52:08.59]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, but if had to go up—we were taking the American Place; we took in a dozen other galleries in a day. But he was a great correspondent. He wrote letters to everybody, I guess. [Laughs.]

[00:52:24.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. Incredible.

[00:52:26.40]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:52:27.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then we just got a great stack of them at the Archives.

[00:52:29.48]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, quite a few, yes.

[00:52:32.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They are marvelous.

[00:52:36.76]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And he was very good. He didn't try to influence you at all, as to which you picked or anything like that.

[00:52:42.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he just let you kind of—

[00:52:44.01]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: My husband really was congenial with the artists that he liked. He liked their work. He liked Marin from the first.

[00:52:53.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, he would just let you—

[00:52:53.18]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And then Marin used to come down every year, because his mother lived here, his stepmother. And so sometimes, he'd stay out here with us, and we'd see his work.

[00:53:05.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's really great.

[00:53:06.76]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: So that was nice.

[00:53:08.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Do you see John, his son, ever—Marin's son?

[00:53:11.40]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, I haven't seen him in several years now, but he gave a very nice little Marin in memory of my husband, gave us a little oil.

[00:53:20.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific.

[00:53:21.65]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:53:22.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific. That's nice. Do many people offer you things who are not part of the family, or something?

[00:53:28.88]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Well, not very many, because I think they think of it as quite a personal collection—but here and there. There's an Aline Fruhauf here. Do you know her?

[00:53:43.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, no.

[00:53:44.66]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: She was a little [inaudible], she was. She was at the League when I was there.

[00:53:51.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that's kind of nice.

[00:53:54.21]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, it is nice.

[00:53:56.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It brings things together.

[00:53:57.81]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes. Sometimes, people like to—if they're going to be—for instance, if they're in the diplomatic core, they're going to be away for several years. They ask us if we'd like a thing well enough to show it or store it. We could choose.

[00:54:15.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's nice. So they lend you things, then, for a while?

[00:54:17.67]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: So that's nice, yes. We have a Monet up right now from a friend.

[00:54:23.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, that's nice.

[00:54:24.09]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: From Australia.

[00:54:24.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, my goodness. So that means you get different things in?

[00:54:29.01]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, but not too often. Now and then.

[00:54:34.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a very nice gesture, though.

[00:54:35.65]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:54:36.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it means they must have appreciated the collection over the years.

[00:54:40.07]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: That's right. It is nice, yes.

[00:54:44.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fabulous.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

I was just curious if you've been able to ascertain any different influences, since—well, say in the 1960s, when they had the Gallery of Modern Art that was here, which was located not too far from—

[00:55:06.06]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: To what, discern any influence that it—

[00:55:08.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, yeah. Yeah. In Washington, generally. I mean, did you notice a change in art people here or the public?

[00:55:21.49]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Personally, I think the change would have come about anyway. Things developed just naturally.

[00:55:28.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:55:33.84]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think the dealers have something to do with it.

[00:55:36.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:55:37.32]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: [Inaudible] and what the museums show.

[00:55:41.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:55:45.11]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I'm sure it had its mark. I mean, just as each museum did.

[00:55:53.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because I always think of the Phillips as having been here for so long, being the modern—

[00:56:03.45]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. I think they may have been a little too self-conscious to me.

[00:56:06.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:56:07.30]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Maybe I shouldn't say "too" but a little self-conscious in thinking that—

[00:56:15.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting, because it's very similar to what Mrs. Breeskin had to say.

[00:56:19.61]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Did she say that, too?

[00:56:20.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. It's a very similar observation.

[00:56:23.54]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, isn't that interesting?

[00:56:25.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:56:26.03]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes.

[00:56:27.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that's fascinating.

[00:56:30.04]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Whereas my husband's was genuinely built on his love of the thing. It was just a necessity with it. Whereas this was a little more of a showplace.

[00:56:43.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah. Right, right.

[00:56:44.88]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Whereas he didn't think of that. He thought of it as something to share, and give and for others to enjoy it the way he did.

[00:56:55.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:56:58.16]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And he wasn't trying to teach or implant anything.

[00:57:01.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:57:02.49]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It never was that.

[00:57:04.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was just there, and if you wanted to go and see it, you could do it?

[00:57:08.06]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes. And he was there, and we'd go around, and enjoy talking and enjoy what the others said, too.

[00:57:15.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:57:16.87]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It wasn't a docent thing, you know. It wasn't—[laughs].

[00:57:21.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he wrote a great deal.

[00:57:22.68]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He wrote a great deal. He was a real critic.

[00:57:26.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:57:27.75]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He was a constructive critic.

[00:57:31.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did he like that, do you know? Would you talk about things he was writing, or would he just say, well, I've written this or that?

[00:57:39.59]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: No, I think he loved to talk about what he writing, yes.

[00:57:42.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:57:45.06]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes. He would repeat it and then—

[00:57:47.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Keep it all moving along.

[00:57:49.03]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, oh yes.

[00:57:50.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the energy.

[00:57:51.07]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: It was all part of him. The fact that I was the painter, that got him close to that. In the summers especially, I used to like to drive out and do landscapes. He loved to go on those expeditions. Sometimes, he'd read, and sometimes he'd make little notes

himself. And sometimes, he'd walk.

[00:58:15.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific. Because he drew and painted at one time, didn't he, a little bit?

[00:58:18.90]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: He did, yes.

[00:58:19.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. When you painted outdoors, did you do actual painting, or did you make drawings and then paint in the studio?

[00:58:29.08]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Both, both. In the early years, almost entirely outdoors, but then I got doing a long overmantle shape. I enjoyed that shape, and then you just couldn't—

[00:58:43.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was difficult to handle.

[00:58:44.49]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: —get it out of the car. So then I would make color sketches and the drawings.

[00:58:49.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then come back in the studio and—

[00:58:51.65]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, in the studio.

[00:58:52.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific. Do you still work that way, or don't you paint outdoors so much?

[00:58:57.67]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I don't paint outdoors as much as I used to. I could. This summer, I think Washington is going to be hot now. It's going to be—[inaudible] [Laughs.]

[00:59:11.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you like painting out of doors when you do have time?

[00:59:15.70]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: I think, as compared to the studio, the light blanches a little bit. The light can blanch the canvas, and you can't see quite as well.

[00:59:30.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: As in a controlled studio light.

[00:59:32.73]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes. Not that I see perfectly [laughs] even in any light.

[00:59:38.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] But there are those little subtleties that make all the difference.

[00:59:44.62]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, yes. That's right.

[00:59:45.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific. Okay, Well, that's—

[00:59:50.72]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: A wonderful kind of a life it's been, being close to art and what a difference it can make. It makes all the difference in the world, whether you're—to me, whether I have a chance to paint, or enjoy paintings. It has a great significance for me, just as they did for my husband.

[01:00:13.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you have enough time to paint a great deal?

[01:00:17.76]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Never as much as I want to.

[01:00:19.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There's always more to do.

[01:00:20.94]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Because people—there are always—that you also like and want to see, and—

[01:00:25.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[01:00:25.71]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: And there's always—I find my correspondence almost as great as it was when I was at the gallery.

[01:00:32.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? So it keeps up.

[01:00:34.59]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Yes, it keeps up.

[01:00:36.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's terrific. Great, great. Okay. Well, that's—

[01:00:41.68]

MARJORIE PHILLIPS: Have you ever painted, yourself?

[01:00:43.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have I—

[END OF TRACK AAA_philli74_8114_m]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

