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Oral history interview with Emily Tremaine, 1973 January 24

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Emily Hall Tremaine on January 24, 1973. The interview took place in New York City, 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.

Interview

[00:00:06.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's the 24th of January, 1973, Paul Cummings talking to Mrs. Burton Tremaine in her apartment in New York City. How did you come to start collecting? Did you have an interest in art? Had you studied it? Was there a family interest in your—

[00:00:22.98]

EMILY TREMAINE: I think I'm a magpie to start with, [they laugh] and I've always collected since I was able to pick up objects. And my mother was somewhat interested in the arts. She'd gone to the—it's the—

[00:00:42.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Art Student's League?

[00:00:43.01]

EMILY TREMAINE: —Art Student's League, and she went to boarding school in New York at the turn of the century—Miss Annie Brown's—where she roomed with a lady whose name I've forgotten but became Mrs. William Glackens, and through that association, she was a little bit in advance of her time and her taste. And then I had a—my aunt was also equally or even more interested than my mother, so—

[00:01:24.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was her name?

[00:01:25.85]

EMILY TREMAINE: Mrs. Carrie Etnier, and her son is a somewhat painter, Stephen Etnier. And then through the Etnier branch of the family, a marriage cousin was Chick Austin, who was the director of the Wadsworth Athenaeum. And there's no blood relationship between us, but there was a very close friendship between us. And I think, actually, Chick had more influence on me, and got my direction more than anyone, and enthusiasm, and he opened my eyes more than anyone. And I think I actually bought—I always bought pictures from the time I was a child, just prints, or whatever, but I think I really began to see and want to own abstract painting in the '30s. And I bought the first one, which was a 1927 Braque I bought in the middle '30s, I think about '36, '37. And then very shortly, I was no longer interested in my earlier collections.

[00:02:47.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were the earlier things you bought that you—

[00:02:49.45]

EMILY TREMAINE: As I look back on them, I should've held on to them because there was a good deal of Art Deco, Art Nouveau.

[00:02:55.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Uh-huh [affirmative].

[00:02:56.46]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I can't remember exactly what they were, but as I see the things on exhibit now, like Ertés and things, I had been enchanted with those as a child, and then grew out of them very quickly. And I'm afraid I haven't grown back into them again. [They laugh.] It's interesting in this cycle that things move a little more quickly now. It becomes history.

[00:03:19.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know. Well, that's book publishing, and art dealing, and everything else. New, new, new all the time.

[00:03:27.24]

EMILY TREMAINE: You were a publisher, weren't you?

[00:03:29.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was a dealer at one point.

[00:03:30.93]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, you were? Where were you?

[00:03:33.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Years ago. Around the corner, at a gallery called Louis Alexander, about 10 years ago.

[00:03:38.91]

EMILY TREMAINE: I don't think I know that gallery.

[00:03:40.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it didn't last long. But did you study art in school? Was there any—

[00:03:49.26]

EMILY TREMAINE: About like anybody who went to school did. I liked it better than any of that, and literature were my favorite subjects. But I didn't take—but when we lived in Paris during—we went over there after World War I. I think we went over about 1919, or something like that, and Mother decided that we could learn French more quickly if we didn't go to school, but had tutors.

[00:04:18.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:04:18.54]

EMILY TREMAINE: And in choosing tutors, she would also choose art teachers. They'd take us around Paris, and teach us art along with the language.

[00:04:29.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

[00:04:29.73]

EMILY TREMAINE: So she had one woman from the Beaux-Arts, who was a wonderful person, and we spent every afternoon with her, either at the Gallery Luxembourg or the Louvre, or whatever, and smaller galleries. She was a very intelligent woman. And I think that in that year or two, I probably picked up more maybe than I would have in a regular course.

[00:04:52.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —a regular school, yeah.

[00:04:53.61]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. I got a fairly good sense of quality and history, and I really had very little formal education. My mother liked to travel, and we just went to school when we lived someplace. I think I went 20 schools, probably.

[00:05:13.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Where all did you travel at that point?

[00:05:16.20]

EMILY TREMAINE: Just every place. My parents were older, and they—I think my sister and I got in their way, and so they'd just take us with them. And we'd have—If they wanted to spend the winter in Egypt, we'd go to Egypt. If there was a school in Egypt, okay. If there wasn't, they'd get a tutor for us, you see. [Laughs.]

[00:05:34.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

[00:05:35.13]

EMILY TREMAINE: So we really had a catch-as-catch-can education, and when we got into the boarding school age, I went to Ms. Madeira's, and I went to the Santa Barbara Girls School, and I went to one in San Francisco, and didn't graduate from any of them. Then I got into the University of California, and sort of—if I could make up credits, and I stayed there 'til I married at the early age of 18. And that was about it.

[00:06:03.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow. But you traveled a great deal already by the time you were—

[00:06:06.85]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes. Then I married a man who traveled a great deal. He was killed in the '30s, but the 10 years I was married to him, he was—his father had been a German, actually, the first officer killed in the First World War. And his mother still lived in Europe, so we were over there constantly with her. And so I really never settled down very much.

[00:06:36.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a lot of traveling, you know.

[00:06:38.02]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah.

[00:06:38.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's been a constant. And you still do travel, don't you?

[00:06:41.31]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, all the time, yeah.

[00:06:43.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I often wonder if that's a great American activity, traveling.

[00:06:47.52]

EMILY TREMAINE: It seems to have become that, yes. It's—

[00:06:51.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —constant, yeah, getting a plane to where you want to go. Well, that's interesting. If you were in California, what kind of art did you see in California? Was there anything to see?

[00:07:03.45]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not a great deal, but I lived in Santa Barbara. And there was a young man collecting at that time—he's still there—called Wright Ludington, and he had, I thought, very exciting pictures. I look back on them now. They're terribly well-behaved, and not that exciting, but they're good pictures, yes—some marvelous early Picassos. And every time I went to his house, I was enriched, and my eyes were opened more.

[00:07:36.45]

And then at that time in San Francisco, there was a woman—I forgot—her name was Grace Morley, who directed the Museum of San Francisco. And she put on some very good shows, when you think that was way back in the '30s. She had a Rouault, and Modigliani, and Juan Gris. And I would always go up there. Although it was 300 miles away, I'd always go up for her shows, but that was the only place on the coast that I knew of that seemed to be trying to say something new.

[00:08:12.82]

And then, of course, I did come to New York, but actually, as I started being deeply interested in abstract painting in the early—no, the middle '30s, then we ran into World War II. And I think I came to New York twice during those years, but at that time I did meet Léger, did have some enriching experiences, but I really wasn't—

[00:08:53.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where were you living then?

[00:08:54.73]

EMILY TREMAINE: Santa Barbara.

[00:08:55.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Santa Barbara?

[00:08:56.37]

EMILY TREMAINE: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:08:57.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But all through the war?

[00:08:58.89]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, all the war years I was in Santa Barbara.

[00:09:02.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Boy, you really moved a lot. [Laughs.] Well, how did you develop an interest in abstract painting? Because that was a rare activity in those days.

[00:09:14.43]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, as I say, I think that it was through what I was learning from Chick Austin when I would see him, which wasn't too frequently in those days, or what he had gotten me interested in before I went— Well, I think if I hadn't known Chick, I wouldn't have known Wright. You see, Chick introduced me—Chick had the first Picasso show in America. I've forgotten the date, but it was quite early. And he would explain to me why, and although it may have been a short meeting, it was in my mind. And then I would see the Picassos at Wright Ludington's, and I'd say, "Oh, yes, this is—you see?" And then my interest—so then

when Wright—there used to be a dealer out there called Dalzell Hatfield, and he would come up to show Wright pictures.

[00:10:11.87]

And occasionally, Wright would phone and say, "Hatfield is coming over. Would you like to be here?" And I would, and after a little bit, I decided I was really going to be very brave and buy a picture, which was this Braque. And I remember—although Mother really was, I thought, very advanced in her taste, when I got the Braque home, I thought, I don't think Mother—I don't know what she'd think about this. So I was living—I was married, and had my own house, so I didn't say anything about the picture to her. And she didn't come to see me too often. But one day, she did drop in. She saw this thing. She said, "What's that?" And I said, "Well, that's a picture that I bought recently, and I find it very interesting." And she said, "How much did you pay for that picture?" And I said, "Well, just don't talk about that." You know. [Paul laughs.] In those days, it was quite a price. And finally, I told her, and she said, "Well, thank heavens your father left you your money in trust." [Paul laughs.] Well, and I look back on it now. General Electric couldn't have been as good a thing.

[00:11:30.23]

But then when I was going—when I went to New York the next time, she said, "Would you loan me that crazy picture you bought? I want to look at it some more." So I sent it over to her house, and when I got back, she said, "I don't want to let that picture go." She said, "It is really marvelous." [Paul laughs.] So she did—she was bright enough to come along. It took her a little time. Then after that, she was really quite sympathetic. The only thing that—in those days, I didn't get to New York very much, and I did go to Mexico a couple of times. So I bought quite a few Mexican things— a Mérida, and Tamayo, and I've forgotten who. But I got bored with them, and I gave them to the Santa Barbara Museum and the Phoenix Museum. But it kept me looking during the war years, and—

[00:12:29.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, one thing that interests me, just thinking about Chick Austin—because he did all those Surrealist activities, the Surrealist show—

[00:12:37.56]

EMILY TREMAINE: That's right. Yeah.

[00:12:37.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —and the Gertrude Stein opera, and all of those things. Did you ever discuss Surrealism with him?

[00:12:46.65]

EMILY TREMAINE: I can't remember specifically. We must have discussed it, because I remember he was the first to speak to me about Berman and Charlie Chaplin. And he had a great dramatic thing that was moving him, which I didn't have nearly as strongly as Chick. I could appreciate it, and I loved his sense of poetry. And I loved to be with him when he was doing a performance, but I never had this—I was always much more architectonic in my tastes, more direct. I didn't have that screwy—

[00:13:22.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kind of a romantic.

[00:13:23.69]

EMILY TREMAINE: —poetry thing, romantic, to the degree that Chick had it, occasionally a little bit, but I never really was taken by the Surrealists. But Chick was the first one that backed up my feeling of Mondrian, which you wouldn't think, with his Surrealist thing, that he would see Mondrian as excitingly as I did. And I saw my first Mondrian in a show that Sidney Janis sent around just about the end of the war. It'd be like 1943 or '[4]4 he circulated —

[00:14:00.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All the abstract and Surrealist art.

[00:14:02.13]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. And that show came to Santa Barbara, and I lived in the museum while that show was there. And up on the second floor, in a room that wasn't terribly available, was this Mondrian, and I think I ran up those stairs 50 times to see whether I really—what I saw was still there. And my cousin, Stephen Etnier, was there, and I said, "Stephen, look at this. It's marvelous." And he said, "Oh, that's just a trick. It's just hypnotic visual trick. It's ridiculous."

[00:14:36.09]

And then when I came east the next time, I went up to Hartford, and over Chick's desk was a beautiful Mondrian. And I said, "Well, Chick, that doesn't seem like you." And he said, "That picture is having a very radical effect on my life." He said, "I'm going to stop being a director." He said, "Where does Western art go from here?" And I said, "Yeah, that is maybe the question, but isn't it marvelous, this vision it's opening?" And he said, "Yes, it's really terrific." But then I think I went west, and then I came east again. And at that point, Mondrian died. It must have been about '44.

[00:15:23.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: '44, yeah.

[00:15:25.88]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I was in the Dudensing Gallery one day, and Valentine said, "Do you want to see really the most exciting thing you've ever seen?" He brought out this "Victory Boogie Woogie," and I will never forget the impact. I don't think anything has ever hit me as hard as that. And I said, "Oh, how much is that?" And he said, "It's not for sale." He said, "I'm going to—I've got my own ideas about this."

I called Chick right away, and I said, "Chick, you come down here. I've seen a picture where every door that Mondrian closed has just opened again." I said, "There's just a whole century of inspiration and art and ideas and vision in this thing." I said, "I've just seen it a little bit, but it's there." So when he was down, he saw it, I said to him, "Isn't it true? He's just opened every door."

So then, of course, I got in my mind I wanted that picture more than anything in the world, and I keep trying to talk to Valentine Dudensing, and he said, "Nobody appreciates Mondrian today. I couldn't get over $1,000 for this picture today. But someday, I'll be able to sell it for enough money to get out of this business. I don't like being a dealer." And he said, "I'm going to buy a chateau in France, and I know where the chateau is. And as soon as this picture brings that to me, that's what I'm going to do."

So I came home, and told Burton the story, and Burton said, "Well, how much is the chateau?" And I said, "Oh, gee, I didn't ask. I suppose Petit Trianon or something." And he said, "No, ask him. You seem to want this more than anything." So I got down again and said, "How much is your chateau?" And he told me, and I thought, gee, that's an awful lot for a Mondrian, but it's not very much for a chateau. [Paul laughs]

So I told Burton, and Burton said, "All right, if you really like it that much, you go down, write out the check, and tell him he has to cash the check within two or three hours, or the deal's off." "Because," he said, "I know that man. He'll call up every other collector in New York and auction that picture." So I went down. And it was a rainy day, and he had his scarf on. He was miserable. And I said, "If you're really serious about your chateau in France, here's the check, but it has to be cashed—" I think this was about 3 o'clock—"before 5 o'clock this evening."

[00:18:06.36]

He called his wife, and he said, "Baby, Emily's got this check here. Do you want it?" And she said, "Oh, take it, Val." And when I got home, Burton said, "They're not going out of business any more than you're going to stop collecting. Val's got it in his blood." But you know, in a month, they were out of here, and they got their chateau. And I called on them in the

Dordogne a few years later. They didn't even have an objet trouve in the place. They had nothing. And they had cows, and they had vineyards. [Paul laughs.] And that's where they both stayed until they died.

[00:18:44.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's fantastic.

[00:18:45.34]

EMILY TREMAINE: And they had what they wanted, and I got what I wanted.

[00:18:48.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how do you like living with that painting?

[00:18:51.60]

EMILY TREMAINE: It's still fantastic. I think it does not belong here; it belongs in public domain. And every time I walk in the door, I'm covered with guilt, and I just haven't been able to part with it. I will. I'll make myself, because it—I did have it for 17 years at the Modern Museum. I used to go down and look at it occasionally, but that was one reason I withdrew it. There were several reasons I withdrew it, but one was that so often I was there, and it wasn't on exhibit. And one or two artists told me that they had difficulty seeing it, and they were favoring their own picture. And I wasn't committing myself to where—it was in the back of my mind that it would go to them. It seemed the logical place. But I wasn't about to die, and I wasn't going to commit myself until I saw things. And I'm glad today I haven't committed myself, and I'm not 100 percent committed to the National Gallery either.

I feel now that Carter's at the moment is doing the best job, and is in less trouble than any other museum, and I think his ideas, if he carries them through as he's outlined them to me, will be very important. He's a young man, and he should be able to carry them through. And they are building a very fine extension down there. And if that all comes out as planned, I think it might be a very good place for the "Victory." I think Mondrian would have wanted it to stay in New York, and if I could find a place in New York that I thought was—that made it the right sense—

[00:20:44.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You're not happy with the New York Museum.

[00:20:46.31]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, I'm not. I'm not at all. In fact, I'm very disappointed in them. I used to love the Modern. I was always very fond of Alfred. I knew he was extreme as he could be, but I loved being with him. But Alfred was always jealous of his own collection, as you know, and as much as he knew how great that "Victory" was, until he had his name on it, he was going to show the "Broadway" and downgrade this picture— and that's one of the things that annoyed me, that he couldn't be more objective, because if I felt that the "Broadway" was a better picture, I'd be the first one to say, "Well, the 'Broadway' was the best, but this is interesting." But it's no question that this is it. This was everything that Mondrian ever thought, or—unfortunately, if he'd lived another week or two, we'd have had it right up to—but even so, the struggle there is important.

[00:21:51.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Oh, that's fantastic. Well, that was, what, your first really major, major acquisition?

[00:21:59.25]

EMILY TREMAINE: I would guess so. I'm not quite sure how these pictures arrived—

[00:22:07.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The sequence.

[00:22:09.99]

EMILY TREMAINE: —chronologically, but being the most major thing we own, obviously, it's our most major acquisition. [They laugh.]

[00:22:17.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, it's curious, because where did where did you go from there? What kinds of things were you interested in, and what were you looking at, at that time?

[00:22:31.23]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, one major catalyst in the thing was the fact that my husband's business was commercial and industrial lighting. And during the war years, this fluorescent lighting came in. And they were converted to do war work, and they were lighting airplane plants. I think in one they did something like 17 miles of continuous lighting in one airplane plant, stuff like that. But it switched him so that he saw that as soon as the war work was over, he would have to—his client would become the architect. It had to be art planned into the building, and you didn't go out and buy light—

[00:23:23.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —and put it up. Yeah.

[00:23:23.85]

EMILY TREMAINE: —and put it up. You designed it. And they had some engineers that created a thing they called "ceilings unlimited," which sounds corny now, but in those days, it was the right idea for what they were doing. And they were trying to show the architect that they were flexible enough to work directly for the architect. And one night, Burton said, "How is the best way to get the eye of the architect, the attention?" And I said, "Well, I don't know, but whenever I'm around museums, I certainly meet a lot of architects. And whenever I talk to one at dinner, they're very interested in art, and I do know that men like Corbusier and Mondrian himself was very much involved with the architects. And I think if you—" of course, a little bit selfish interest here too—"if you would put an exhibition together that would be oriented toward architecture, I think it would attract—the architect would get to know your name."

So he's always very courageous, much more courageous than I am, and he said, "Go ahead." He said, "We would ordinarily put 12 ads in *Fortune*. I'll give you what the 12 ads would cost the company to do it your way, and you take that money and—" Well, it seemed like quite a lot of money at the time in a way, and of course, pictures were not all that expensive in those days. But as I got into it, I just kept pleading for more money. [Paul laughs.] And I wasn't getting very much more. But we—and I got Russell Hitchcock to help me. He was teaching over at Wesleyan at the time. And Russ and I would come down here, and we'd discuss whether we could—sometimes I'd see a picture I loved terrifically, and yet you could hardly force it into architecture. But Russell would say, "Well, yes, you see, if you think of it in this way, why, it would be of interest to the architect." And he being an architect, I feel that we—

[00:25:44.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was your idea in looking at a particular work? How would you conceive of it relating to architecture within the terms of the exhibition?

[00:25:56.80]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, because—well, like Mondrian, then I would go—I'd have someone go and get all the photographs of the Dutch architecture of that period that was influenced by Mondrian, and I'd take the photographs, and blow them up so they'd be shown with the—

[00:26:17.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

[00:26:18.20]

EMILY TREMAINE: —picture, and how there was a direct relationship. Of course, that was very easy with Mondrian and Corbusier, and you'll see in the *Painting Toward Architecture* book how we use the actual architecture and the photographs with the pictures that we felt had had a strong influence. And the idea being that during two world wars, when building was curtailed, the painter became the influence on the architect, rather than the other way around. And Alfred Barr wrote the foreword of the book, and Russell wrote something in it. And it really—the reception was just tremendous.

[00:27:06.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did this travel around the country?

[00:27:08.60]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, for about two years, I think. And just yesterday, as I was telling you, I found some of these press clippings. That might interest you.

[00:27:21.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah.

[00:27:23.26]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I was just mailing it to a friend of mine in Boston, and I opened the letter.

[Reading:] *For a company that has gathered pictures whose common factor is high quality rather than any similarity of the 'isms,' the merely noisy superficially modernistic picture that has been left out. If the Museum of Modern Art, in choosing its own permanent collection, had screened the acquisitions as rigorously, its crusade for contemporary art would have been more effective, arts and architecture.* And the—

[00:28:06.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It goes on and on.

[00:28:07.84]

EMILY TREMAINE: On and on and on, pages of these things, and always speaking of the quality, and that it had—that there had never been a compromise made to tie it to industry. It was a natural thing, and it said something here.

[00:28:31.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, as you went around and looked at things, did you have a particular idea beforehand, or did the painting suggest where the exhibition could go as you looked at them?

[00:28:44.86]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, I had a very clear idea that painting had been a strong influence on architecture. I never would have suggested it. And then, of course, I was looking for paintings that definitely backed up the idea, and the more I would look, the more I would see relations that I hadn't seen before that I'm sure other architects had seen. But until I was thinking of it myself, I didn't see it. And now I sometimes—in going around, I think that may be my interest in what's going on today, because you see a prophetic vision, especially if you train yourself to see it. You almost see what's coming through the artist.

[00:29:31.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:29:31.60]

EMILY TREMAINE: And that's why I haven't been interested very much in ever reaching back, although occasionally I'm offered something that's very tempting. Right now I've been offered an El Lissitzky that tempts me very much. But I say no. That was—you digested that.

You missed the picture. Stay with your time. Stay with what's happening today. That's the thing that's important. Lissitzky was important, but he's no longer. That's been digested. And it would only just be sheer aesthetic, and perhaps a little nostalgia that makes me want to own it. So I just said—just last night, I said, no, I'm not going to get seduced by that picture. I'd rather keep looking with what's going on today.

[00:30:27.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, you've always had that kind of idea, haven't you, of looking and looking and—

[00:30:33.01]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes.

[00:30:33.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —taking the next step as it comes.

[00:30:36.07]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, I've always been very curious.

[00:30:39.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, was there an influence on that idea from Mr. Austin, or is that developed on your own or—

[00:30:51.34]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, the architecture was completely mine. The day he asked me, "How do you—how do you track the architect, that was completely—" And then I called Chick very—I said, "Chick, I've just given Burton an idea. Is it any good?" And he said, "Oh, I think it's great, and come over, and we'll have Russell Hitchcock to lunch," who was just there in the next town. So it just grew very quickly from that.

[00:31:18.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific. Well, how did you like putting together an exhibition, which you hadn't done before?

[00:31:24.26]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, it was lots of fun. That was wonderful. I was right in my—I had a good excuse to be right where I wanted to be.

[00:31:31.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, now, all the things you bought were what—belonged to the company, then?

[00:31:36.04]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, it was a little bit of both, because I had quite a few pictures, and one of my come-ons was "Well, now, look, we've got a good start with what I have, and I'll loan you everything I have." And the "Victory" was expensive for those days, and I bought it. And I also wanted to own it. I didn't want it to get into the company.

[00:31:58.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

[00:31:59.14]

EMILY TREMAINE: So very often I bought these things with my own money that I had set aside for collecting. Then I had the budget they gave me, a lot of which I also paid Mr. Hitchcock for his work, and I had to do everything. Of course, fortunately, the museums did pay the shipping and the insurance. That was a big help.

[00:32:19.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Yeah.

[00:32:22.21]

EMILY TREMAINE: And at the end—and I never took a salary. And at the end, I said, "Now, what I would really like is when you're through with the pictures, I'd like to have them." And the board gave them to me. I think it was about 1950. And I owned about half anyway, and they gave me what was left. They didn't want them.

[00:32:44.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] So there is no corporate collection.

[00:32:46.52]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, not anymore. I wish there were, and I wish they'd gone on with it. And I think today they wish they'd gone on with it, but they didn't.

[00:32:56.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So many people are collecting now—corporations.

[00:32:59.41]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, but none of them have done it with the complete lack of forcing it into a pattern that the Miller Company did. It was—one of the critics here brought that out. I noticed it last night. [Pause.]

[00:33:20.61]

[Reading:] *The exhibition is primarily intended for architects and designers. It comprises also an exceptional show of historically and artistically important paintings and sculpture.*

[00:33:34.26]

I was always very disappointed in the Container Corporation because they were in a position to do exactly the same in a much bigger way, with a much larger budget, and instead, they just commissioned in different things forced into a pattern. And I don't know of any corporation except the Miller Company that never commissioned a work. They bought what they thought was truly—said what they truly wanted to say, that painting and architecture were—

[00:34:07.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] What kind of reaction did you get from the architects?

[00:34:10.41]

EMILY TREMAINE: Tremendous, just tremendous. The company said they just couldn't have done anything better, that it paid off a hundred to one, anything they expected. They said that not a salesman could go to an architect store that didn't know the Miller Company. And it gave them the prestige of being intelligent, understanding the type of thinking that the architects—

[00:34:42.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it worked from everybody's point of view.

[00:34:44.78]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, yeah.

[00:34:46.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's terrific. Well, did you get a lot of direct response from architects, or

was it—

[00:34:51.32]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. We got letters. Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

[00:34:54.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, good.

[00:34:55.40]

EMILY TREMAINE: But I think more than anything, the salesmen said it made it so easy when they called and said they're representing the Miller Company, that the architect—

[00:35:02.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They knew.

[00:35:02.39]

EMILY TREMAINE: —they always knew what the Miller company was. Some firm made an appraisal on the press, you know, the unpaid publicity. That went into the millions. And what they had budgeted me was just enough to pay for Fortune magazine for a year. And it was a hundred to one what they got back in—you know.

[00:35:28.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic. It's very interesting, because I've worked on a lot of corporate projects where there was art involved, and the returns are phenomenal, really phenomenal, if they do a good job and the thing works well.

[00:35:49.04]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, it is. Of course, the world today, for various reasons, seem to be hungry for art.

[00:35:55.40]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, wow. But there's so much, but so little quality.

[00:35:58.88]

EMILY TREMAINE: That's right. It's all very hard.

[00:36:01.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what went on from then? I mean, you continued your private collecting?

[00:36:06.17]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, after the Miller thing broke up, I—well, as you know, it had been my number-one interest, and just continued to be, and I suppose that I was a little more aware of what was going on, having been so deeply involved during the two or three years we did that work. And I got to know the dealers and the artists, and especially the artists would call me if they had a friend that they thought was interesting. And so it really became my life, and still is.

[00:36:42.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did you find the artists as sponsors of other people in that way? Do you find that they generally gave you good suggestions, or not—

[00:37:00.80]

EMILY TREMAINE: You mean in recommending a friend?

[00:37:03.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:37:05.51]

EMILY TREMAINE: That—

[00:37:06.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —varies.

[00:37:07.28]

EMILY TREMAINE: That varies, yes. Sometimes I think the artists know—especially their own work. I think very often the thing they want you to buy is probably the less interesting thing they ever did, so I sometimes I wonder what they're—not always, of course, but I try not to let the dealer or the artist—when we're talking and thinking of a picture, I try not to listen too much to them. I try to keep what I'm really looking for—awfully hard not to. You know what I mean?

[00:37:41.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, are there particular dealers over the years that you've found that you've dealt more with, that you've been more interested in what they do or—

[00:37:50.04]

EMILY TREMAINE: I suppose. Yes, because I suppose there's certain ones that are—obviously, in my field, I wouldn't—for instance, I like Arne Ekstrom very much, but I don't think I bought more than one thing from him, because he's completely Surrealistic. And so I have—I drop in, I see him, I like to talk to him, but he's not my dealer. And yet somebody like Valentine Dudensing—I was there all the time, and bought lots of things from him. And who are some of the others that—well, of course, Betty Parsons. She and I have been friends over the years, and I have enormous respect for her.

[00:38:35.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long have you known her?

[00:38:37.53]

EMILY TREMAINE: Since before, I guess, she got into dealing, or about that time. She was out in Santa Barbara for a year before she became a dealer.

[00:38:46.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Well, that was in the late '30s, wasn't it?

[00:38:49.47]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, I think something like that. It was just—during the wars, as I remember, she was there for a short time. And I met her at Wright Ludington's. I didn't really know her. And then when—She started her gallery about the time I started this Miller Collection. And I liked her as a person, and I also liked what she was—she had a very, very advanced vision in those days, way more advanced than mine, but I loved to be with her. And I don't know. So really, the dealers were the ones that that were interested in the same things that I was interested in.

[00:39:32.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, what about the more recent dealers, like Janis, say, or Castelli?

[00:39:36.98]

EMILY TREMAINE: I've gotten things from Janis, and I've gotten things from Castelli. I

backed into this Pop thing in a very natural way. And I guess I had something to do with Castelli taking them on because I'd seen the first bunch of soup cans of Andy's. I think it was in a window in California. Or it was in some window, not where you'd expect to see it. I think it was California. And I remember looking at it, and thinking, this is really a comment on our society. This is mass production, and various things. And I laughed at it, and then I got—I think it must have been California, because then I tried to get in touch—and I couldn't remember where I'd seen it, because I'd decided I'd like to own the damn thing and see what it was all about.

[00:40:32.16]

And then I was up at Leo's one day, and Ivan Karp showed me something. And I said, "I think this is the same one I saw," and he said, "Let's go over to his studio." And we went over to Andy's studio, and we both began to see not everything that Andy was thinking, but a great deal. And we obviously could see that they were beginning to look out and comment on our society, instead of in. And I was a little tired of all this angst anyway, and I bought—Burton and I went there together with Ivan, and we bought quite a few things from Andy. And then Ivan said, "Well," he said, "it's funny, but a good many artists that don't really know each other are doing this looking out." And he said, "There's a fellow that's been painting signs down on Broadway, and he's doing fantastic."

He went down and saw Rosenquist, and I said, "Well, this man is looking out, but he's also a Surrealist." And I bought a couple from Rosenquist that day, and of course, these kids were selling them for nothing, because nobody quite knew what was going on. And I remember—then someplace I saw Lichtenstein. I guess through Ivan. And I bought that, "I'm looking into the room, and nobody's in it." And then I met Lichtenstein, and I asked Lichtenstein, Rosenquist, and Andy, and one or two others to come up here for cocktails. And Oldenburg knew Dine, and some of them knew each other. But Lichtenstein and Rosenquist had never met, and Andy had not met some of them. And they didn't really like each other the first day, at all.

[00:42:37.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: There was a little kind of stand-off, yeah.

[00:42:39.51]

EMILY TREMAINE: And they were criticizing each other.

[00:42:42.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting.

[00:42:43.53]

EMILY TREMAINE: But it wasn't more than a month or two. Then they really—each one saw the other ones in the right way, and they—as far as I could find out after that, they were friends. But I remember Rosenquist said, "I don't see why you brought that Lichtenstein. He's got old turkey feather in his eye." And I said, "You're missing the whole point," because, of course, he was more romantic. And then he—and about a week later, I saw him on the street, and he said, "You were right about that man. He's a genius! He's brilliant!" You know.

[00:43:18.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] That's true. Well, it's interesting because Pop had a lot of very realist imagery.

[00:43:24.24]

EMILY TREMAINE: Right. And yet, it was—a lot of it was based on what they'd learned in art school. They had learned from the Cubists and the Constructionists.

[00:43:33.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. So you didn't see a conflict really—

[00:43:35.61]

EMILY TREMAINE: I really didn't.

[00:43:36.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —from your point of view.

[00:43:37.11]

EMILY TREMAINE: And also, to me, it was a great, kind of a fun release. It was—stop being so intellectual, so introspective.

[00:43:45.00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All that Abstract Expressionism.

[00:43:46.25]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. And it was a fun put-on, and it was putting on everything I despised about our own society. And I remember one of the first ones I saw after the soup cans. I was down in the Green Gallery. And it was in June. They were about to close the gallery, and this big "7-Up" was hanging there. And I didn't relate that to the soup cans at all, but I said, "Now, this is very interesting. This is Abstract Expressionism, but this 7-Up is a very interesting comment on our vision." And I said to Bellamy, "Keep that until fall, and I'll come in the first day of fall. And if I still am interested, I'd like to have it." And he said, "Well, maybe you'd like to see the man that painted it. He's very interesting."

He gave me his address on Second Avenue or something. So Burt and I took a taxi, and I gave the wrong address. And we paid the taxi, and the taxi drove off. And wherever I'd given him was in the Bride's District, where they [inaudible] all those clothes. So we walked from there, and came out of the Bride's District and walked—I guess it was up Second Avenue, and there was a mission with a cross and a crown. And there was a little shoeshine boy that had written "15 cents for a shoeshine." And there were some pastry shops. And then we found Oldenburg's. Well, then, of course, it was no problem to see what he'd been doing. Thank heavens we got lost.

And so then I called Bellamy right away and said, "Just keep that 7-Up. I want it." And I bought a couple of other things from Claes that day, and he had this little ray gun store. And that was one of the first quick insights I had. Andy was something. This was different. But then I began to see how it was all kind of—again, that something was really happening. And then it got a little exciting to—you know.

[00:45:59.34]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm interested in what you said about the relief and the contrast from the inward turmoil of the Abstract Expressionists. But you were, before that, had been very involved with the Abstract Expressionism in some of this—

[00:46:21.06]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not deeply involved.

[00:46:22.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, but some de Kooning.

[00:46:23.94]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, certainly de Kooning, and I thought Rothko was absolutely marvelous. I bought the first Rothko—the second Rothko I ever saw. And as a matter of fact, it was interesting, the day I bought that Rothko, because I'd been at Newman's Gallery. I think his name was Newman. He used to have lots of Klees. And I think I'd gone through a pile of Klees like this. And I'd put about 10 aside, and they were all marvelous. And then I went from them to see this show at Betty's, of Rothko. I saw this Rothko, and I thought, gee, I've had it with Klee. I used to think if you bought nothing but Klees, you couldn't go wrong because he said something that everybody had said. And to buy the Rothko and the Klees at the same time—I didn't think I should do that. And I made the choice, and I said, "No, I want the Rothko, forget the Klees," and bought this one that's here. And I still think it's one of the

most glorious things he ever painted. And that—of course, he was known as an Abstract Expressionist, and certainly had the temperament of one but somehow wasn't quite as—

[00:47:42.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The energy. Right, right.

[00:47:43.77]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I think perhaps—and then I went out to Jackson Pollock's one day with Burton, toward the end of the year. It must have been in November, because we went skiing right afterwards. And we were so overcome with what we saw. We could not make a decision. And we said, "Well, now we're going off skiing, but keep this one, and this one, and this one, if you can, you see, and when we get back, we're going to make a decision." And I was sure that, out of the ones we had taken the numbers on, that we would probably take a half a dozen.

[00:48:21.83]

And we went skiing, and then we had to stay over for some reason. And it was winter, and we didn't get back to Long Island. And came spring, and we were walking down the street. And I said, "Burton, we never followed through on that Jackson Pollock. We should go out there." And he said, "Well, let's go and see what Janis has." So we went upstairs, and Janis had two pictures. And I said, "What have you got of Jackson?" He said, "Didn't you see him in the elevator? He just went down. He left these two pictures." I said, "No, I didn't see him," but I said, "I will take the long picture. And I want to go out there in a couple of days, and see these ones that he was holding for us." And he was dead, I guess, in two or three days, and that was his last delivery to Janis. And then, of course, they went into the estate, and nothing was ever done about it. So I only own two Pollocks, this one, and a little tiny one, which is a tragedy, because I loved his work.

[00:49:32.97]

But one of the things that was wrong about—I regret now, is that we both adored skiing. And the minute the war was over, we started to go to Europe every November, December, and we would ski until March, maybe come back for a few weeks, and back again. And obviously, we missed some of the greatest paintings that were ever done, because we were up there on the Gornergrat, [they laugh] breaking our legs. And we'd come into Paris to get a respite, and we'd been on the mountain too long. We'd be hungry for art, and we'd buy things in Paris. And if we'd been here, we never would have touched those Paris pictures.

[00:50:18.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what was it like? Because you did travel, and you saw what was going on in Paris, and you saw what was going on in New York. What was Paris like in—what years would those be?

[00:50:29.62]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, that would have been from 1949 or '50, up until, I think—we haven't been skiing now for about six years, so all those years we were.

[00:50:42.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the mid '60s, about.

[00:50:44.58]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, important times, mid '50s and mid '60s, yeah. We missed an important time here. And I realized that great things were happening here. But I guess your vision is—well, say in buying clothes—you go to Paris, and you buy your clothes there. And they have more of a French look. You get back to America, and you don't even feel as comfortable in them. But if you wear your American clothes in Paris, you're not comfortable in them. And you—and I remember one time I went to Mexico, and bought the most wonderful Mexican fabrics, and came back to California, and you wouldn't wear them at all. So I think there was—

[00:51:32.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They have their own time and place.

[00:51:33.51]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes, and I think there was a little bit of that in Paris, that we were in that environment. The pictures we bought were very good quality, but we had forgotten the excitement of New York. We'd get back to New York, and we would buy them. But we weren't here where it was happening, so we didn't have the great—we missed lots of great opportunities.

[00:51:56.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of things did you get in Paris in those days?

[00:51:58.83]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, I bought a couple of extremely good Soulageses. I bought—I can't even think who those painters were in those days. We bought quite a lot of their stuff—Riopelle.

[00:52:15.01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had Seuphor one point.

[00:52:17.75]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, well, Seuphor has been a friend of ours over the years. We still have quite a few of his little drawings. I think I was the first person that bought his drawings. He said he—I was up talking to him about his Mondrian book. And he'd never been to New York, and he wanted to be brought up to date on the New York period. And this pile of drawings were on his desk, and he was out of the room. And I was looking through them. When he came back, I said, "Who did those?" And he said, "Oh, nothing very important." And I said, "Well, I really like them. Who did them?" And he said, "Well, I have insomnia, and I do them when I can't sleep at night." [Paul laughs.]

[00:52:56.73]

But he said, "I'm a critic and a poet. I'm not a painter." So I said, "Well, you sell me something." "Oh, I'll give them to you." I said, "Oh, no." And then he said—he gave me three or four, and I said, "Well, I will not accept these as a gift. If I were buying these at a gallery, I'd pay so much for a drawing, and you just must take it." So I became his friend.

[00:53:17.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] That's marvelous.

[00:53:17.49]

EMILY TREMAINE: And after that, he decided he would sell, and he went to Denise René, and I still like his things very much. But—

[00:53:26.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Well, one of the things that I just wanted to go back to. You had mentioned the cocktail party with the artists. Have you been very involved with them personally over the years?

[00:53:38.24]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not really, no. I don't think—actually, I'm not terribly—I'm not terribly gregarious. I don't like people in crowds, and I'd much rather have one or two here for a cocktail, or for dinner. But no, I've never been involved with them as you call socially. I think the biggest cocktail party I ever had was the time I thought they should meet each other, and maybe that might have been 20 of them, or 20 in the world that was involved with them. No, I—

[00:54:14.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Ivan Karp? Because we've mentioned him. How have you found—

[00:54:18.46]

EMILY TREMAINE: I like Ivan.

[00:54:19.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —Ivan over the years?

[00:54:19.72]

EMILY TREMAINE: I like Ivan. I think he's bright, and I think he's—he has a great antenna for things. I can't go along—I personally don't want to own his—what does he called them, the Magic Realists?

[00:54:34.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Magic Realism, yeah.

[00:54:34.78]

EMILY TREMAINE: —Realists. I don't want to own them because it turns me off so badly, but everything in this country—I think they're marvelous. They're mordant. They bring it into focus, and in a sense, they are the folk art of America. They're important. There's no question about it. But I just personally have to have things I can live with joy, and I just can't live with them with joy.

[00:55:02.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. What about some of the other people he shows? Because he does have such a variety.

[00:55:06.72]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, occasionally, I see things down there that I think are well done, but I think that today, the kind of things that I—I find that my tendency in collecting is the—I don't know—the understated, the—you know, when you've lived with pictures for 20 or 30 years—and the ones that keep with you, are the ones that, as I analyze them today, are the quiet, architectonic, rather more intellectual than emotional. And when I go down to Ivan's, and I'm attracted to something, they will have those qualities. But today those qualities have been pretty much exhausted, and you feel there's just a rehash, maybe very well done—

[00:56:05.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But not any spirit behind it. Yeah.

[00:56:06.40]

EMILY TREMAINE: They're not saying anything very new, so more or less I I'm too bored to buy them. Once in a while, there'll be some maybe color, or something that I think is very beautiful, and worth living with, but I think to a degree, I've had it. I've had the most beautiful things in the world, and it's hard to keep up that standard. But of course, I'm delighted if I see something that I think—

[00:56:33.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: A new one.

[00:56:34.07]

EMILY TREMAINE: —that might have it.

[00:56:35.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you read a lot of art magazines over the years, and the books and things?

[00:56:41.93]

EMILY TREMAINE: I subscribe to them all, and I find that I do better if I don't read the critics too much.

[00:56:52.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. For what reason?

[00:56:55.44]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, I don't know exactly. Sometimes I feel that they're—that a great many of them are not motivated by what I think is really honest criticism. I think they have other axes they're grinding. And sometimes I think—and I really don't know the wheels within wheels of the art world. I don't know the politics that are going on. And sometimes what they say will confuse me, and I have to get myself straightened out.

[00:57:26.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

[00:57:27.18]

EMILY TREMAINE: I find that if I really work at it myself, and really come to a conclusion—after I've come to a conclusion, then I don't mind reading them, but I hate to read about an artist I'm just beginning to think about.

[00:57:42.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. You prefer the direct contact with the work and—

[00:57:45.84]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, I prefer to make up my own mind. I don't want to feel too—

[00:57:52.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: One thing that we always talk about here with collecting is since you've gathered things for many years—and some of them are very, very valuable—was there ever any idea of the investment value or—

[00:58:09.45]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, there never was.

[00:58:11.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the fact that they might appreciate or—

[00:58:14.16]

EMILY TREMAINE: That never entered my mind, but I must say that it's terribly exciting to me when I pick up a thing and hear that a picture that—oh, well, maybe like—well, any of these Pop artists. I remember when I first bought a picture from Rosenquist, I asked him how much it was, and he said, well, he hadn't sold before, but he thought that if he got so much per square foot—I forgotten how much it was, and this was an 8-foot square, and I paid him $800. I guess you can figure it out, you see. And I think that was a fair price at the time. I was taking a gamble. He was—it gave him opportunity not to have to paint street signs, and to go to his work.

And then when I see today—I don't know what he sells for, but I saw at auction one about that size, and I think went for about $16,000 or something like that. Well, of course, you think, well, gee, my eye was okay; somebody else likes him that much. [Paul laughs.] I think it's a great satisfaction, but I've never—I don't believe I've ever sold a picture. I can't think of any I've ever sold.

[00:59:30.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've given many things to the museums.

[00:59:32.17]

EMILY TREMAINE: I do, when I feel that I've had the joy, and I've exhausted it. Or sometimes by great good luck I'll find a better example, and then I pass it on to where it can—Yes, I do a lot of giving, and occasionally I'll trade.

[00:59:52.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Oh, really?

[00:59:53.11]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, I traded—what was it not too long ago? Oh, that Giacometti—I wanted that very badly. And it was quite expensive, and I didn't think I should pay that much. And the dealer that had it was willing to take two or three pictures, of which I had duplicates, or I had depth. And so I made a trade on that, and I was very happy to get it because it's such an important early one, and not easy to find.

[01:00:22.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now I love some of those early ones he did.

[01:00:24.93]

EMILY TREMAINE: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] They had so much influence.

[01:00:30.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what—you have—your collection is here, and in Connecticut, and—

[01:00:36.82]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, it's scattered around. It's—

[01:00:38.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —scattered. Do you have things in other places?

[01:00:42.38]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, I push them around at museums. The Athenaeum has quite a lot on loan, and the others—we have a Rauschenberg at the Art Institute. And let me see. There are quite a few at the Miller Company in my husband's office, and my stepson's office, and my office, and we have quite a few in our country house. Some here, quite more than I would like, are in storage, and it's just that I don't have time to distribute them. If I had more time, I'd loan them out on long terms to museums.

[01:01:21.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've never exhibited the collection as a group, have you?

[01:01:25.63]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not since the "Painting Toward Architecture." No, I don't think—it'd be too much trouble to get it all together, have to spend the rest of your life at these stores.

[01:01:37.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, well, that's true too. What about what about the giving of things? How do you select the places? Do people ask you for things, or are you interested in particular institutions?

[01:01:48.86]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not particularly, no. Of course, there's some things that—obviously, we buy a great many things. Sometimes they're good enough, but just to encourage the artist, or you're at the studio, and it's—then you just have so much space to show things. And some of the things I give, oh, like to a college, or something what they can use it for study material. Museums wouldn't want to be bothered with little things like that, even to catalog them. But they have a value for certain things. And I think, especially etchings and lithographs and things like that, I give to schools that have art departments, and they do use them for study material.

[01:02:38.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] Do you buy many prints or drawings or things like that—

[01:02:41.51]

EMILY TREMAINE: Um—

[01:02:41.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or not so much?

[01:02:42.23]

EMILY TREMAINE: Not a great many, no. We have some. I just bought a set of those Sol LeWitt etchings I think are fantastic. I just love them. But it'll probably turn out we haven't enough wall space to hang them. That's the big thing. And then if I see some place that I think would be just great, I'll give it to them. And then there's certain museums that—well, the Santa Barbara Museum—I've always had a soft spot in my heart for them. I've given them a good deal. The Phoenix Museum—we have a ranch in Arizona. I've given them all the Mexican and South, that sort of thing. And I usually write to them if I think it'd be of particular interest and say, "Have you ever been interested in this sort of thing?"

[01:03:36.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'd like to go back again to the New York museums, because they've obviously been an interest of yours at one time, and now you've changed your mind about it. What's caused the change?

[01:03:49.72]

BACKGROUND SPEAKER 1: How are you? How are you?

[01:03:50.58]

BACKGROUND SPEAKER 2: Good. I don't know what's been going on.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[01:03:54.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, what's happened to your attitudes about the museum? Because it seems to have changed quite a bit—

[01:04:04.39]

EMILY TREMAINE: I wish I could answer that question. It just seems to me they're so badly managed, they're so badly motivated. I suppose it happens when things have become successful, or grow too big, but when I think of the early days of the museum, the dedication of the first trustees and how they—the lengths they went to to get the things they wanted to own, it was the kind of thinking that leads to great, honest collecting. And then it becomes a social prestige or a commercial—

[Phone rings.]

[01:04:51.90]

I don't know. It's just the same question we asked about why is the Metropolitan and why—I think I can answer one of my objections to the Metropolitan that I just told you, that if they go into the 20th century and don't think enough of it to have one qualified person on the board, and make mistakes that couldn't have been made with one qualified trustee—Tom Hoving is a very brilliant man, but he can't be all things to all men, and he cannot know the 20th century as well as he knows the Cloisters. And I think that kind of—

[01:05:29.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they have Henry Geldzahler, who's supposed to know the 20th century.

[01:05:31.54]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, Henry should know, but there's been a big change in Henry since the first days I knew him.

[01:05:37.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way, would you say?

[01:05:38.95]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, I was very—I was very shocked at the that—at the lack of object—

[Cross talk with background speaker.]

I think most of them have put too much stress on money. You know?

[01:05:51.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] That's what Harold Rosenberg said the other day.

[01:05:53.77]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, did he?

[01:05:54.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's interesting. Yeah.

[01:05:54.93]

EMILY TREMAINE: I think—yeah.

[01:05:55.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He said there's just too much money in it now.

[01:05:57.81]

EMILY TREMAINE: There's too much motivation on just money. The museum was far greater when they were grudging to get money to buy pictures, and then it was important what they bought. They didn't just—

[01:06:09.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They thought more about it.

[01:06:09.96]

EMILY TREMAINE: "—we'll take this, we'll take this."

[01:06:12.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what do you think has changed with Henry, just to finish that?

[01:06:15.66]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh. Well, Henry, I used to say, had the fastest eye in New York. He was fantastic, that boy, and he always picked good quality, great sense of quality. That show just—he was just a disaster. I don't know whether he was a young man in those days—I think he was in his late 20s—and whether success came too fast, whether he was influenced by people that he had overestimated in his youth, had overestimated their—I don't know what it was, but that was a lousy show. And it wasn't objective, and I thought that Henry, above all things was, objective. And you could see all kinds of personal—

[01:07:06.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —things going on. Yeah.

[01:07:07.31]

EMILY TREMAINE: —things going on, and a good trustee would have—

[01:07:12.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —said, "What are you doing?" [Laughs.]

[01:07:13.10]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. Why—a little bit too much of this, or who told you to do that? And it was such an important—it could have been the most important—it could have been the new Armory Show, and it—

[01:07:24.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —didn't.

[01:07:25.37]

EMILY TREMAINE: It did the opposite.

[END OF TRACK AAA_tremai73_9055_m]

[00:00:05.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay, this is side two. Maybe to go back to the general art world, you've lent many things to exhibitions over the years. But you've never used the collection the way some collectors—many collectors—do sometimes, particularly the Sculls, I suppose, of the—

[00:00:32.22]

EMILY TREMAINE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I haven't followed them very closely. I don't know if they ever had a full thing of their collection. I don't think so.

[00:00:39.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think so either. But they've done—you had the Rosenquist at the Metropolitan, which—

[00:00:46.08]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, but that to me was a mistake because, the first place, Rosenquist wasn't that well established to be in the Metropolitan. And those are the things that bother me when a museum will let wheels within wheels—

[00:01:01.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Force something, yeah.

[00:01:02.84]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yes.

[00:01:03.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:01:04.04]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I thought that Olitski sculpture show they had was just all wrong to put in the Met, because so many people depend on museums' approval to direct their collecting. And they have no right to approve of something that they've only seen themselves 24 hours before or something, you know?

[00:01:26.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, it's interesting because so many people think that, well, if the Modern does it this year, maybe the Met will do it in 25 years or something, and expect—

[00:01:37.06]

EMILY TREMAINE: I've always been very, very sorry that they didn't go on with that arrangement where the matured pictures of the Modern went to the Metropolitan, and gave the Modern—kept that motivation of—

[00:01:56.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Being—but I wonder if it's always possible to do that. The Whitney Museum is supposedly involved with doing that, but just with American art. And I'm—

[00:02:08.20]

[Phone rings.]

[00:02:09.37]

The Annual opens today. It will be interesting to see.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:02:12.35]

But have you had any particular interest in the Whitney? Because we haven't mentioned that one really so far.

[00:02:16.89]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, I think it's—yes, they've done a good idea. There should be a museum of American Art. I've always been rather disappointed in their acquisitions. To me, they haven't overall hit the high ones, which they should be, right here in New York where it's happening. And of course, that's a completely personal judgment. Maybe my idea of the best isn't theirs. But I never get the "boom" when I go in there and look at—obviously they do have some fine ones. But they'll compromise. If they don't get the best, they'll take the second best. And if I were a director, I wouldn't. If I missed the best, I'd wait.

[00:03:04.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For something else, yeah, go somewhere else.

[00:03:06.80]

EMILY TREMAINE: Or if I bought something and a better one came along, I'd make every effort to make the switch. But they seem to be perfectly willing to accept second. And it just doesn't impress me very much. So I haven't been very interested in them. And then I think I have another completely personal prejudice, which is a very—terribly prejudice. But I think that when people hang their names on museums, like the Guggenheim and the Whitney, and all around the Middle West and Texas, everybody's perfectly willing to build a museum and put their name on the door, and not put one piece of art in it. And I think, well, if you want to have the Whitney Museum, well, then you—

[00:03:55.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Keep it going.

[00:03:56.39]

EMILY TREMAINE: You keep it going. [Laughs.] And I'd rather give my support to the Modern or the Metropolitan or the National than to some family, you know? Very prejudiced.

[00:04:09.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get interested in the National Gallery?

[00:04:16.78]

EMILY TREMAINE: Um—that's a good question.

[00:04:22.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Is there any—did he find you? Did you get interested in what they were—because they're really not well known for contemporary or American art at all, anyway.

[00:04:31.07]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, no, completely not interested. Their first interest came when they borrowed the Modern Museum pictures, when they were remodeling the Modern. And Johnny Walker woke up to the fact that that's probably why people weren't coming to the National Gallery—they'd never had such an attendance record—and brought it to the attention of his trustees that they should move into the 20th century.

[00:04:58.35]

And that was their first interest, and of course, the Chester Dale collection, up to that point. But certainly, the Chester Dale collection overall is not of National Gallery quality. I'm sure they'll have to weed it out. But I don't really know. Maybe Burton can remember. I've known Johnny Walker a number of years, and of course I think he's one of my best friends, and I like him. And I love to be with him. And I agree with him. And we read the same books, and that sort of thing. And Carter Brown seems to me to be exactly the same type of man. I like his thinking. And he has a marvelous historical background, art historian, which I think is terribly important for anybody that's directing the 20th century collections, to know what came first.

[00:06:03.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened. Yeah.

[00:06:03.54]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah. And I like both of those men. But how I got involved, I can't remember. I know that Johnny told me they wanted to go into the 20th century. And I think about that time I was pretty annoyed with two or three things that had happened up here, and I think maybe largely something like the Geldzahler show. Things like that happening were just disgusting me with the art world in general. And somehow they still seem to have ideals, and staying with them, whether they will or not continue. Maybe being in Washington is their salvation. They're not up here where it's all—

[00:06:48.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. So hot and competitive and all this—

[00:06:50.51]

EMILY TREMAINE: And I think Mr. Mellon tried in every way in drawing up his—whatever runs his museum, his ideas and all, tried to do it in such a way that it wouldn't fall into these traps. He has a small board. And I think the Mellon family, I think, have been marvelous. There, again, it could be the Mellon Museum, but it's the National Gallery. It's always been really altruistic. It isn't—I think maybe that's one of the wrong motivations. Who are they doing it for? Are they really altruistic? Or are they doing it for personal glory? And the motive usually brings the result.

[00:07:40.26]

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

[00:07:41.91]

EMILY TREMAINE: And maybe that's why I—I don't know.

[00:07:45.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. I was going to ask you, in your acquisitions, do you agree with your husband on things? Do you buy them? Does he buy them? Or is—

[00:07:53.28]

EMILY TREMAINE: It's pretty much a collaboration. I have to find them because he's too busy. He just hasn't time to go to the things I go to. But if I find an exhibit that I find is interesting, he makes the time, usually Saturday, or something. And I don't believe we—well, once in a while I'll see something, and buy it like that, or he will, too. Just say, "Oh, I bought something today you'll love," but nothing important. But if it's important, we always do it together and weigh it up. And I don't think there—I don't think we've ever been in any conflict. He's more courageous than I am, much more. I'm much more, "I'm not sure about this," and "oh, well, if you think so, try it."

[00:08:40.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] "Do it." Well, are there pictures or sculptures—because you have both—that you've missed for one reason or another, that you really wish you could have gotten?

[00:08:52.72]

EMILY TREMAINE: Hundreds.

[00:08:53.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hundreds. [Laughs.]

[00:08:54.56]

EMILY TREMAINE: I never walk through a museum—[laughs] where I don't think of the lost opportunities, or what I could have done if I'd had more courage. [Laughs.]

[00:09:03.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah. Well, in contemporary things, you obviously see things appear in museum collections that you might have seen in a gallery.

[00:09:12.46]

EMILY TREMAINE: Oh, private collections, so somebody got there before I did. Oh, sure, it's a world full of those things. I just have to come home and count my blessings and be glad for what I do have. [They laugh.]

[00:09:25.22]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, well, what has collecting done for you in a very personal way over the years? I mean, you've lived with, you know, fabulous things by—

[00:09:41.98]

EMILY TREMAINE: It's just—

[00:09:42.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —great variety.

[00:09:43.41]

EMILY TREMAINE: —an enormous joy to come in this apartment and be so tired I can hardly

drag my feet, and— vitality. It's just pure joy. I love it. But I guess that's enough to ask for anything, isn't it?

[00:10:01.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Do you change the pictures a great deal?

[00:10:03.30]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, only because they're out on loan so much. I think it's a chore to—well, no, then, too, like this one's up here now because I'm studying it. I'm living with it. And I know it's going to be much more beautiful in the country, where I have more space. And it'll go up there eventually. But as I won't be in the country 'til the middle of summer, I'll leave this here where I can think about it some more. And then of course, I only moved that out because I know eventually it'll go back where it—

[00:10:36.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:10:37.33]

EMILY TREMAINE: It was nice to call me back, I was telling him.

[00:10:40.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, are there particular people in the art world who have been important to you, either as friends, or as idea sources, or artists, or dealers?

[00:10:55.45]

EMILY TREMAINE: I think most of my friends are—or a large number of my friends are very interested in art. And I think for that—

[00:11:11.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The effects of people.

[00:11:16.96]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, your friends are usually made through your mutual interests. So a great, great many of my friends are very much interested in the arts. And one great blessing is, it tends to keep you with younger people, at least collecting in this field. My age group are still buying Matisses and things that really—don't exactly bore me, but I've had it.

[00:11:45.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, what do people like that, who buy older things, say when they come and see something that's finished last week, you might say?

[00:11:54.53]

EMILY TREMAINE: Well, most of them hate it.

[00:11:56.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:11:56.48]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, they're turned off. You know, you have a tendency not to like what you don't understand, or to fear what you don't understand, or to reject it rather than to stop and see whether there's anything there worth knowing. And I think there's a good deal—

[00:12:10.49]

[Cross talk.]

[00:12:11.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you think that people—friends and people who come here—are influenced by what they see? Do you see works by these artists appearing in their collections?

[00:12:20.18]

EMILY TREMAINE: The younger people, yes. They see it, and they don't reject it. And they don't get frightened, and they don't get turned off. The young ones are really curious. And they're really sincerely moved by them. I suppose that they're free of prejudice—

[00:12:37.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They don't have a whole history—

[00:12:38.41]

EMILY TREMAINE: —a history, I would say. And I think that the young people today are just marvelous anyway, because they're making their own standards. "Why do I like this? Why do I do that?" And it isn't that their grandfather did it. They don't reject the—look into what their grandfather did, but they make their own value judgments. And they do that with the art. And I really think that, very fortunate for me, that 80 percent of my friends are in the 25-to-35-year age group. And I'm just delighted that the still come over here— [Paul laughs]—because my own age group really, frankly, bore me pretty much—except for three or four of them that are great. I have one friend, 80 years old, that's one of the greatest people I know. She's just as young and vital and—

[00:13:40.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, do you think that living with the works of art have affected your thinking, or your attitudes toward life in a particular way? Or is it not—

[00:13:55.65]

EMILY TREMAINE: I would say it's the other way around. My attitude toward life, and my thinking and my philosophy has influenced the collection, I think. Although, certainly I have found qualities in men like Mondrian that have certainly awakened me to be more aware of certain values. It's probably been a two-way street.

[00:14:21.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Speaking of Mondrian, I heard something I was going to ask you about. And that was you had a copy of it made at one point.

[00:14:28.37]

EMILY TREMAINE: That story got out, and it's— To explain the thing, this is, as you know, in collage. And almost from the day it arrived, these collages began to tremble. And I realized that even losing one might throw the whole thing off that Mondrian was working so—he was so exact. So I called the Kecks, who in those days were the great restorers. And they had that thing for a long time. And they took off each collage, and they wrote to Minnesota Mining and found out what kind of glue to put on. And they did what they thought was the best thing to hold it together. But we were still all very questionable that it—what was going to happen. It would be a disaster—could be a disaster.

[00:15:29.43]

So there was a woman living in the Village who was an art teacher and thought Mondrian was the greatest that ever lived. And she was very scholarly, and very exact. And I said, "You take that picture—" I was going to Europe—and I said, "you make as exact a copy as you can, painting in each collage in paint so that if we ever lose a collage, we can refer to yours and know where to put it back." Well, she got so involved in it that she even hung her studio in white so that the brick building across the street wouldn't—and she kept finding things that I hadn't realized at the time.

[00:16:12.19]

For instance, one day she called me and said, "Do you know there's no white in that picture?" I said no. She said "No, every white is a high attenuation of the opposing color." So if he has a blue area and the white next to it, it's a high attenuation just down to— But she said if you put them together, you'll see that one is a blue-white and one is a yellow-white and one—you see? She said, "I'm sure that's what's making it so plastic, that it has this marvelous breathing quality."

[00:16:43.80]

And then the Kecks also found that there's a finished picture underneath, that apparently Mondrian had finished it and got up in the middle of the night, and got this new idea and put the collage on. Sidney Janis saw it when it was supposedly finished, and Charmion von Wiegand. And then when the Kecks—before I knew that these two people had seen a finished picture, the Kecks called me and said, "Do you know you have a finished picture under here? Every time we take off a piece of collage, there is a painted area."

[00:17:20.77]

And so I called Alfred Barr and gave him that information and said, "I know my answers. I won't touch one piece of collage. But as a scholar, do you think it should be put back into its original, last completed form?" "Oh," he said, "no, if you can preserve that collage, that is the greatest." So then everything I was doing was, in my mind, to preserve what we had. And this copy was made for that reason. Then when she finished it, she said, "Would you let me do something I'm just dying to do, is to make another one as I think it would have been, if Mondrian had lived another week, and taken the collage off, and put it into the clean paint?" I said, "It'll be sort of fascinating to see. It'd be like the unfinished symphony. Let's finish it."

[00:18:16.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:18:17.15]

EMILY TREMAINE: And after all, it's just our own game. We're not doing it for anybody. So she did it, and that's hanging up in my office.

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:18:26.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the second painting really is in your office, right?

[00:18:31.58]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, well, no, the—

[00:18:33.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: The finished one.

[00:18:34.64]

EMILY TREMAINE: No, the collage one, the chart. I call it the chart. That's in my office. And then I put the one that she called "The Interpretation of the "Victory Boogie Woogie."' And it's by Perle Fine. I don't say it's Mondrian. I say it's an interpretation by Perle Fine. And that's up in one of the—I think it's the treasurer's office. He sort of likes Mondrian. And strangely enough, you know, she took every pains on those pictures. She went to Mondrian's studio, got the numbers of his brushes, his paints.

[00:19:10.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it looks different.

[00:19:12.14]

EMILY TREMAINE: It's as flat and dead as a doornail.

[00:19:15.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah?

[00:19:15.72]

EMILY TREMAINE: It's unbelievable.

[00:19:17.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Can't—

[00:19:18.48]

EMILY TREMAINE: What he had, the spirit, it isn't there. That was an interesting experience for me, to see that it wasn't there, because no one could have tried harder. And I wouldn't give that chart up for a million dollars. We'd had to send this picture to the World's Fair in Brussels. And there were two that came off. And we got them back within a couple of hours.

[00:19:41.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, yeah.

[00:19:42.34]

EMILY TREMAINE: Otherwise, it'd be a—

[00:19:44.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Terrific idea, though, to do that.

[00:19:46.56]

EMILY TREMAINE: And then very often, you see, we get requests for the loan of this. Like, Chicago is doing a post-Mondrian show, which I think is a marvelous idea. For instance, Larry Poons told me that he was going to be a composer 'til he saw the "Victory Boogie Woogie" and changed to being a painter, and things. Bridget Riley wrote me from London and said she didn't want to come to New York unless she was sure she could see the "Victory." And so to have a post-Mondrian show, I think is a very interesting thing to do.

[00:20:15.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

[00:20:16.17]

EMILY TREMAINE: But they said that they felt the whole show hinged on having the "Victory" in the show in Chicago. And Orrin Riley said he cannot tell me that it's safe to send it to Chicago, and especially for a limited exhibit. When we sent it to the World's Fair, we thought that New York pictures had not been seen in Europe, and that this would probably be the widest audience for them, and in that general area of Holland. And I think Porter McCray put it on the plane. And Burt and I went to Brussels to see that it got off the plane all right. And we gave it a mother's care, and it still lost two things, so I just had to tell them that we couldn't loan it. But I said, "If you have someplace in your gallery where you can have a study area, I can send you the chart, and you can use it as study material. But I cannot send you the original." And they wrote back and said they had no place for study material. But the Stedelijk took it on that basis once. I couldn't—

[00:21:28.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:21:28.75]

EMILY TREMAINE: Yeah, they put it upstairs someplace where it could be referred to. It's better than nothing, I suppose.

[00:21:37.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Oh, heavens. So well, your plans for the collection, it's ultimately to go to the National Gallery, or at least that's—

[00:21:46.32]

EMILY TREMAINE: At the moment that is it. And I'll tell you how that developed. Maybe this is how I got in touch with them. Maybe this will come back to me. For years, I've been terribly upset with the distribution of pictures. I go into museums and see what's in the basements. And we hear these things in history of—I don't know how many years the Turners were in the basement of the Tate. And had they been up a little bit, would art history have changed a little bit? Would that vision have come into—it just seems wrong to me to bury anything that was ever good enough to buy once, that it should be at least—the things should not be in cellars, in other words, and especially with all these empty museums around the country and around the world.

[00:22:37.66]

And I started—or Burt and I together started to do a foundation where it was—my concept was a little bit like a trust company, that people would die, and leave their pictures to this foundation. And they could say they wanted—maybe like in my case—the "Victory Boogie Woogie" to remain in a qualified museum in New York City, but that the Klee could go to Pasadena and make a pilgrimage point for Klees, because they have a lot of other good ones, and this would enhance it.

[00:23:20.37]

You could make those terms in your trust to the foundation, and it would be carried out like a trust company, administering individual trusts. And then if it got to a point where a museum got a new director that hated Klee, they would come back and follow your second or your third choice, or leave it to the hands of qualified professionals. But that if any of the pictures in the foundation were not hung at least six months of the year, they would be returned.

[00:23:52.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —Come back. Oh, that's interesting.

[00:23:52.99]

EMILY TREMAINE: And it took me years to get—and I'd put a great many of our own pictures and a few of our friends' into it. We were getting a little experience of making it a little more flexible. Then this law passed, you know, making—

[00:24:09.63]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tax.

[00:24:10.65]

EMILY TREMAINE: —a tax thing, so that it would be much better for any donor to give it directly to a museum than to the foundation, because they get a much better tax advantage. And it was a stupid law. But this is how I got with John Walker—yeah, exactly. It's coming back to me. Henry Geldzahler came, and I explained it to him. He said, "Greatest idea that ever happened." I wanted to tell Mister—what's his name? He was director then. He died right about that time.

[00:24:42.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rorimer.

[00:24:42.71]

EMILY TREMAINE: Rorimer. Then I told Charlie Cunningham—oh, lots of directors that I knew. And everyone said, "This is it. This is marvelous. Get to work on it." And every museum I spoke to said, "Oh, yeah, they'd take it over, the Metropolitan." Henry said, "I know we can get them to accept it, and they could administer—" No, this was later. This was after the trust thing, with the foundation. I have to get Burton on the whens and the whys. But

anyway, that's how I got John Walker. And I told Rene d'Harnoncourt that my first thing was that it naturally would go to the Modern Museum, because I was a member of the International Council. I was kind of one of the first people to get working on that.

[00:25:43.69]

And I had been a trustee of the American Federation of Arts. And I resigned because I thought international is much more my interest, and this International Council could be it. And I thought the first show they did was marvelous. And I've worked awfully hard on that the past 15, 18 years. So when this idea of the trust company—I said, this is for the International Council. They will get the things to distribute internationally. We can make international exchanges. We can take a van Gogh from the Kroller-Muller and loan them one of our Mondrians for three or four years, not short loans, but—so this is just going to be the most ecumenical thing that ever happened in arts. And every director, the European directors—particularly—what's his name—Tate came all the way over here to talk about it he liked it so much. And then we—oh, so I told Rene d'Harnoncourt about it. Well, I didn't know at the time that Rene was deaf. Did you know that?

[00:26:48.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:26:49.22]

EMILY TREMAINE: And if he didn't hear something, he would disagree with it rather than say, "I didn't hear you." And I told him this thing. And he probably got a little bit about it. He said, no, he couldn't go into that. It's—I don't know, he was very negative. And he was the only one that was ever negative. So I told Blanchette Rockefeller. And Blanchette said, "Oh, I think it's a great idea. Let me talk to Rene about it." But Blanchette's terribly busy, and she forgets things, and I never heard from him, so—

[00:27:18.44]

Then I went up, and by that time, Tom Hoving was at the Met. Or by that time, I guess I'd decided to go into a foundation that—and then—yeah. So I got the foundation together. Burt must be here to give these details. I'm so disorganized. And John Walker, who liked the idea enormously, became President of the foundation. Tom Hoving went on the board—Ralph Cole and Charlie Cunningham by then had left the Athenaeum. And Sam Wagstaff went on the board. We had some other top directors. And I think they were on the board to administer how these pictures would be distributed in a professional way. So I was the only non-professional on the board. Then the law changed. That was it. And we saw that we couldn't attract any more collections.

[00:28:30.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It wouldn't work. Yeah.

[00:28:31.54]

EMILY TREMAINE: So by that time, Tom Hoving had done a number of things that made me terribly shaky about how he was directing. The Modern had begun to court us again. Rene had died, and Bill Lieberman seemed to think it was a good idea. But every time they'd move in, they had their own ideas of how it had to be changed. And we felt that we had worked it out very, very carefully and that what they were trying to change was to pat their own backs a little harder. And they were the only museum that weren't represented on our board. And so when we had to go over, I thought, well, to attract collections, it has to be a museum of international interest: either the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum, or the National Gallery. And as the Metropolitan and the Museum were in such—

[00:29:32.41]

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

[00:29:32.95]

EMILY TREMAINE: —turmoil. And as I could always talk to John as a very, it seemed to me, objective thinker, I said, "Okay, as of now, I changed my will. If I die tomorrow, the National

Gallery gets it. But you have to stay—you have to keep shaping up. You have to—I have to have proof that when this new building is opened, and the things we've discussed—" And John was about to retire.

[00:30:00.80]

I said, "I like Carter. I have respect for him. But he's very young, and I don't know him. If Carter keeps on the way you have been, okay. But if something happens, or Carter drops dead, I'm perfectly free to change my will until the day I die." So that's the status, and that's how they got it. Yeah, and it was because John was one of the first to really give me a lot of support in the foundation. He was the one who said, "Keep at it, I'll help you. You've got a good idea."

[00:30:37.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, good.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]