Smithsonian
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# Oral history interview with Samuel M. Kootz, 1964 Apr. 13

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## Transcript

### Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Samuel Kootz on April 13, 1964. The interview took place in New York, and was conducted by Dorothy Seckler for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

### Interview

DOROTHY SECKLER: This is Dorothy Seckler doing a recorded interview with Samuel Kootz in New York on April 13, 1964.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: The Gallery was officially opened in 1945 although it was in existence from 1944 when we began to subsidize Robert Motherwell and William Baziotes. The first show that we had in 1945 was that of Leger. The reason we opened with a Leger show was because I wanted to tell people immediately that we were an international gallery interested in quality, and although our dominant interest was to be in showing the abstract expressionist movement, completely new at that time, I yet wanted to show men of comparable interest in Europe. We opened at 15 East 57th and stayed there through the spring of 1948. In the spring of '48, something happened as the result of a show we had in January of '47 when we had gone to Paris to pick up a show by Picasso, and did so well with that and a couple of succeeding trips to Picasso that he suggested that my wife and I give up the public gallery and take an apartment in New York where we could show his work and also an apartment in Paris where we'd be for six months of the year, and he was to give me the names of the European collectors. This probably was so enticing to become the world agent for Picasso that we deliberately gave up the Gallery and took an apartment at 470 Park Avenue. And the whole apartment, of course, was covered by Picasso paintings. We gave this up in not too Long a time for a very curious incident. We found that as a private dealer anyone who had a big dinner party and who had nothing to do with his guests would think it would be perfectly all right to bring them over to our apartment and spend the evening discussing Picasso. So that we had very little private life. In addition to that, one of my biggest customers was Stephen Clark who had already purchased six or seven paintings from me by Picasso. And I had just received a wonderful picture by Picasso that was subsequently sold. And I wrote Mr. Clark thinking this would be just up his alley. On Saturday morning, I was sitting in the living room unshaved, my hair uncombed, in pajamas and a robe, drinking coffee and reading the morning paper when the doorbell rang. We had always suggested to the building that someone must be announced, and consequently when I went to the door, I thought it was probably one of the employees of the building. But there was Mr. Clark all dandified, dressed to the hilt. He could not have been more embarrassed nor could I have been more embarrassed, and he couldn't get out fast enough. This was a picture that I knew he would have purchased under any other circumstances. When my wife awoke at ten o'clock, I told her I had news for her; we were going back into a public gallery where anybody could enter and leave as he sees fit with no desire to give a greeting or to purchase a picture, but that we were free. At 5:30 the gallery would be closed, and we had our private life back again.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's a very interesting story. But before we forget, of course, I'd like to go back to the gallery that you had opened in the meantime and the group that you had there that you had begun with earlier.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: We began, as I said, with Motherwell and Baziotes in 1944. We then took on after that Byron Browne and Carl Holty and Adolph Gottlieb. It wasn't until 1947 that we took on Hofmann.

DOROTHY SECKLER: As far as that original group is concerned, Mr. Kootz, what was the quality they shared that attracted you to their work? You told me that it was a selection, not something that happened by chance or circumstance.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: The important thing that motivated my taking the various men was the highly subjective expression that the men were giving, the sort of thing that led to the, oh, introspection and almost automatism, in a way, of a number of the better abstract expressionist painters. The fact that two of the men, Brown and Holty, were not taken back into the gallery when I reopened again in 1949 was not any derogation of these men's ability. I felt that time that Browne could not shake off the Picasso influence. And it seemed to me that I wanted men who were more on their own, more subjective, more personal. Holty at that time had almost the same problem. He had always been a highly objective painter, and it wasn't until the last couple of years, 1960 or thereabouts, that his work has developed in an entirely different manner, not abstraction motivated so much by geometric qualities that he had in his prior painting, but into a more lyrical state that became more subjective in what he had to say. I might also inject here that although my first show was Leger, my second show was Fritz Glarner, who of course was a strong adherent of Mondrian's painting. At one time, we thought that we would take on Glarner. But this exposure to his painting militated against it, and we felt that this was not the direction we wanted to go in. This was objective, highly objective direction, and we wanted to go in a more

subjective direction.

DOROTHY SECKLER: In order to understand the particular significance that this more subjective attitude had for you, I wonder if we might go back to the period of the '20's when you were first coming to New York and meeting artists. Fill in the background there a little bit.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I first began to look at painting when I was at the University of Virginia. I used to come for weekends to New York and visit two galleries that seemed to me to be promoting painting that was a little in advance of what else was being shown in New York. That was the Stieglitz Gallery and the Charles Daniel Gallery. Stieglitz was showing Dove, Marin, Demuth, O'Keeffe, Hartley, Weber. And Daniel was showing Peter Blume, Dickinson, Kuniyoshi, and a number of other men who at that time were striving to be a little more personal, a little more ambitious in getting out of the Puritan strain of American painting. Daniel seemed to me to be conducting a more liberal gallery in that he would give younger men a greater chance to show. Stieglitz took a group of men and stayed with them. It seemed to me that in spite of what everybody has idealized that particular gallery for, that Stieglitz, actually, being an enormous personality himself, really did no good for the artist. Poor Hartley was trying to get $4.00 a week to live on at that period. Dove was being supported by an occasional purchase by Duncan Phillips. And this went on all through the group. I remember my antagonism when someone would come in to ask about buying a Marin watercolor, and Stieglitz would try to find out whether he was entitled to own a Marin watercolor, or whether he could spend enough to support Marin for one year in order to own that watercolor. This seems to me to be in violent opposition to a correct gallery attitude which is to keep the man alive and not interpose any objections to the purchase of a picture. Anyhow, in that period, in my first book which came out in '29 or '30, I mentioned Peter Blume as being possibly my one hope for being a major artist in American painting. I think he did some very fine things when he was showing at Daniel. He then got several Guggenheims, and, living in Rome, he came back, it seemed to me, a frighteningly classical artist. And in my book of 1943, I expressed my great disappointment at this development.

DOROTHY SECKLER: What other artists did you discuss in that early book? What was the name of the book? Of course, we ought to get into the record.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Yes. All of the men that I mentioned as being in those particular galleries were discussed at great length. And, of course, in a later book, in the 1943 book, I also then had to take into account what was in existence at the time. The people with whom I was most urgently connected and interested in at this time were not even discussed in my book which came out in 1943. This book was completed I think in 1941. So that this whole abstract expressionist movement, in which I had my dominant interest and which came about in connection with the advent into New York of the Surrealists dominated by Breton, Ernest and others, seemed to me that they unloosed something in New York that came about as not exploration but almost a finding by the New York men. In other words, the thing that I commented on in my book of 1943, the Surrealist idea which in Dali and di Chirico depended more or less in displacement, in other words, in disorientation of objects placed in unusual space was not the thing that Masson and Ernest and others gave to the Americans. It was a matter more of feeding from the unconscious, of accepting automatism, and in that sense becoming quite literally more subjective, more depicting the exploits of the personal being, of everything that is attached to him, possibly unknowingly and unwillingly, but coming to the fore in this kind of painting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. I'm glad you brought up your book. The one you're speaking of now is New Frontiers.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: New Frontiers in American Painting.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Which came out in 1943. And I think it's very interesting you touched on the key issue, certainly that is the one of automatism which was at that time perhaps just beginning to be realized by the artists as an important basis for their expression. I wondered if you'd like to recall some of the discussions that must have gone on among the artists in your group at that time as far as their adherence to various aspects of surrealism or perhaps in some cases a rejection of it or a feeling of surrealism as a divergent attraction in relation to Cubism.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: The man closest to surrealism in the gallery was Baziotes. Bill, of course, existed almost in a dream world as far as his painting was concerned. And all his paintings exercised a kind of fantasy of objects, of animals, of people that had no real existence. The other men in the gallery operated on a much more intellectual basis. Even Gottlieb, who, with Rothko and Newman, had done a great deal in thinking about the myth and primitivism being depicted almost from the unconscious too, were intellectualizing to a large extent. Baziotes, of course, wasn't. The general feeling that I had, whether it was from the men in my own gallery or the men who were also instrumental in the movement -- Pollock, de Kooning, Rothko, and other men -- was that this opened a new avenue of painting. It unleashed a possibility for untrammeled subject matter, or for no subject matter at all. In other words, what came into being was a desire to construct the painting not from a sketch but as a direct action in the painting itself. Most of this particular idea of action painting derives particularly from Hofmann who rarely ever thought of a sketch in relation to a painting but went to the canvas, attacked it right

from the beginning as a direct expression of what he wanted to say. Incidentally, to go back for a moment to the matter of the myth that in the middle '40's was being much discussed by Gottlieb, Rothko and Barnett Newman. Newman was the literary spokesman of the trio. He had not as yet had his very important first one man show. And in a certain sense, Barney was the literary spokesman as well for the Betty Parsons Gallery and did a great deal in helping Betty to select artists for that gallery. This quality of the myth that these particular three men were so interested in evolved not so much from the matter of going to primitive sources and reproducing those sources as a qualification of that myth; it depended more on the idea that certain primitive impulses, whether of images, whether of thoughts, existed which could come to the fore in paintings if the particular artist permitted that part of his thinking or feeling to show itself in painting. And I think that what these particular men did at that stage was arresting and possibly of some importance particularly in the pictographs of Gottlieb which in a compartmentalized manner showed the various images that occurred to him from the unconscious.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Would you say that those images in the case of Gottlieb were arrived at spontaneously?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Completely. I don't think any of these images came from books or historical treatises with which he may have been acquainted in reading. They were invented. And I think spontaneous invention.

DOROTHY SECKLER: What years are we speaking of now?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Oh, primarily the years of about 1943 to about the time that Gottlieb stopped doing the pictograph, which was around 1950, 1951.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Now at this time, Hofmann had not yet joined your gallery? Is that correct?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: No, Hofmann didn't join until 1947.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Did he bring a new influence into the group as a whole?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I'm a little wary about saying what particular influence Hofmann may have exerted on the gallery itself. I am quite dubious that he had any influence at all on the men we were then handling. These particular men were highly personalized individuals who had already arrived at some distinct statement as to where they were going. Motherwell had already started his Spanish Elegies, Baziotes was already doing the Fantasies that occupied him so strenuously, Gottlieb with the myth and pictograph. No, I don't think Hofmann influenced the men. And primarily the reason why I accepted Hofmann in the Gallery was that he was so markedly different from anyone else in the Gallery. My intention was not to have a group of men all of whom were working in the same idiom, making the same statements and consequently being separated only by names. I wanted each man to have a personality, each man to be an entirely different person from the other painters in the Gallery and consequently have a statement to make that was individual and personal in that sense. Hofmann's contribution was not in his assistance to the men in my own gallery. It was in the force that the gave other younger men Leslie, Mike Goldberg, Grace Hartigan, all of these people who were coming up, to tell them that there was a plausibility in painting that existed from the actual inception of working on the canvas and to allow the image to grow out of the painting on that canvas. And also, where he wants to show the actual quality of painting in paint itself by the dash, the impasto, the brush stroke that he put on the canvas which was the whole anticipatory gesture of the action school.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You mentioned before that Hofmann had actually used a drip method, an all over drip method as early as '43, was it?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: 1940, the first picture that Hofmann made of that type that had an all over drip linear effect. It wasn't a large picture, about 10" by 14", something like that, which was reshown in about 1955 or '56 in our Gallery when I allowed Clement Greenberg to have a show for two weeks of early paintings of Hofmann. This was one of the paintings that he showed. It might be interesting as an historical fact that this painting had been available at a hundred -

END OF TAPE ONE

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mr. Kootz, when we finished our last tape, you had been at the point of discussing a small painting that Hans Hofmann had made around 1940, a drip painting that was shown again in an exhibition at your Gallery selected by Clement Greenberg. Let's go on with that.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: That picture, seemed to me, antedated everything that Pollock began in 1947. It had the drip, it had the all over linear pattern and for many years could have been purchased for $150. When it was shown with other early pictures in the Gallery selected by Greenberg, none of the pictures, presumably, were for sale. But when Alfred Barr of the Museum of Modern Art saw this particular picture, it became so important to him historically that he immediately wanted the picture to show the ancestry of Pollock. I told him at the time that Hofmann did not have it for sale, but when I suggested to Hofmann that Barr wanted it he immediately put a

price on it of $5,000, which of course Mr. Barr was flabbergasted at, but later secured Peter Rubel who put up that amount of money to purchase the picture with the idea of presenting it at some future time to the Modern Museum for its records. Hofmann, of course, in that period, was doing many of the drip pictures which were also shown in this particular exhibit showing of Ecstasy, of Fantasia, any number of pictures of '42, '43 that had this same linearity, this same conscious quality of the drip. Which, of course, Pollock was acquainted with. The importance of Hofmann, it seems to me, drives not only from the teaching of freedom, of spontaneity, of automatism, but the two great things he taught were the respect for the two dimensionality of the canvas and the idea of color as form. This presented an entirely new concept to the American painter because instead of making his forms and then coloring them, the actual color itself defined the form, made the form, and it seems to me here that these, perhaps with the desire to be free, were the main things that Hofmann taught the American painter.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Splendid. That's a very interesting story about the painting. This reminds me of another question that I meant to ask you before, and that is about the bargains that were available to the perceptive buyer in the period of the '40's and even as late as the early '50's. I wonder if you would like to recall others that might go into the record?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Yes. Paintings certainly in the middle '40's right through the early '50's were reprehensibly cheap. There was no attempt on the part of the artist to do really large canvases as a rule. The 36 x 48" canvas was more or less the top that the artist aspired to for a number of years. It was only later when he saw that the spontaneity of his gesture dictated a larger canvas that he began to do the huge canvas that we now accept as the rule from the artist. However, the prices that existed in the '40's were particularly bad. I remember selling one of the best de Koonings I know, a large black picture out of the show that I had called "Black Or White" in 1949 or 1950, I'm not sure which, for $700, a picture that today probably at this valuation would be closer to $25,000 to $30,000. And this was a picture that probably was around 40 x 50", or 40 x 60". Most of the smaller canvases were accepted by very young collectors who would be willing to pay $100 to $300 for a canvas. The larger collectors never began to come into the picture until the pictures themselves became larger and more expensive.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Would you care to mention some of those younger collectors who were buying at that time?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Dick Baker was one of the first of the younger collectors to buy. People like Ben Heller were not even aware of what was going on at that time. He came into the picture after everything was well established. Scull the same way. All these collectors who today have amassed big collections at very fancy prices were not in the picture at the time. Although I must say that the Modern Museum was one of the first to accept people like Motherwell, Gottlieb, Baziotes, people that we were handling at that time. Barr was an enthusiast for those particular three men and conveyed this enthusiasm to people like Burden or Nelson Rockefeller, and others of the Modern Museum group of trustees. And we found that in the late '40's, we had pictures by these men well represented in such collections. The younger collectors, who bought for the $100 to $300 basis, I frankly don't remember because they've disappeared. They've never become confirmed collectors in the main.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes. Dick Baker, of course, has.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Yes, Dick Baker has.

DOROTHY SECKLER: He's doing some work for the Archives.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Yes. That's wonderful.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I wondered if we have left out some comments that you might have wanted to include in their period of the well, the forties when you after you had opened your first gallery? What the situation was as far as representation of the advanced group of Americans in other galleries.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: There was none at that time. Betty Parsons was the only other gallery showing any of the advanced group. How she existed, I don't know. I think she had a number of people who were helping her along. Quite frankly, we could not have existed unless I had had Picasso shows. Picasso paid continuously for the period of the first ten years of the Gallery's existence. If we had to exist on the sales of our American men, we would have absolutely been dead at the end of those ten years.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Yes.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: But the sales of Picasso, who was enormously impressed when I first saw him when I showed him photographs of all my American men and told him frankly that I was subsidizing these men and that I wanted his pictures as a means of helping me to run the Gallery the same Cezanne paid for his upbringing by Paris galleries, which appealed to him enormously. And he gave me pictures to sell.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's very interesting.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: The curious part of it is to talk about how bad the American paintings were going at that time. I mentioned to you that Kline was sitting in my office when I was at 600 Madison Avenue where I went right after leaving 470 Park Avenue to become a public gallery again, Franz was sitting in the office and said that neither he nor de Kooning could sell their pictures and that if I would buy these pictures and help them to get along they both wanted to join the Gallery. And unfortunately at that time, I had my own problems in supporting my own artists, and I had to refuse to my great discomfort because these are two men that I admire among the best men in American painting. And the odd part of it is that in the fall of that same year, 1955, the first real upsurge of buying took place in American painting. I'm not talking about sporadic pictures here or there. I'm talking about a concerted acceptance of the various top men in the movement occurred in the fall of 1955. And from there on, it has been no particular struggle for any of the good men to exist because we sell enough of their pictures to have them make a very respectable income every year without any assistance from us.

DOROTHY SECKLER: How do you account for that particular the timing of that upsurge? What was happening?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Lord knows, I couldn't tell you. I have no concept as to what -

DOROTHY SECKLER: This was before the first Museum of Modern Art big show.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Was it?

DOROTHY SECKLER: Was It? I'm not sure.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I don't remember.

DOROTHY SECKLER: I was wondering whether that could be -

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I do know that strangely enough, that particular period, whether more money had come into being, or whether constant familiarity with these people had taken away the distrust that might have existed about their work, whatever reason it was, suddenly there was an accumulation of buyers. And from that point on, there was no difficulty for any of the particular men reaching a climax, for instance, in 1963; during the year 1963, we were able to sell $200,000 of Hofmann alone.

DOROTHY SECKLER: You had mentioned before that just before this period of prosperity that there had been a difficulty as far as balancing your American with your French painters.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Well, one of the things that I always felt was that the major buyer in American painting, not painting by Americans specifically but paintings was the American with money who had been in the habit of buying the French Impressionists, the Post Impressionists, the Cubists, and so forth; the important thing to me was how to enlist these people in buying Americans. One way I felt it could be accomplished was to take men from France who I thought had equal capabilities with the Americans I was handling. And in 1949, I made my first discovery of Soulages and Mathieu and bought my first pictures by those men. In 1953, I decided to put them under contract to the Gallery because I felt that these men were individualists in France, probably the most individual men I knew there, who could by their very French being attract my French customers who by coming to the Gallery would be led into my American buying. This actually proved a fact, although Mr. Motherwell and Mr. Gottlieb promptly left the Gallery because they thought that I was paying too much attention to French painting. What actually evolved was that the very customers who were interested in Soulages and Mathieu then became my primary customers for my American men.

DOROTHY SECKLER: That's very interesting. Yes. (Machine turned off.) So far we've been discussing painters. I know, of course, that you also had a number of sculptors in your gallery. Would you like to go back and fill in the times at which you were joined by these sculptors?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Of course. One of the first men we had taken on was David Hare in 1947. And as well in 1951, I was at a show at the Whitney Museum and saw a sculpture by a man named Lassaw and was quite curious. I went to the desk to find out who he was and where he lived, and as I walked out of the Museum, a man came running up to me and said, "I understand you were asking about my sculpture and about me." It was Lassaw, who then invited me to his studio the next day, and I was so enthusiastic about his work that we immediately took him on. He has become, of course, one of the really successful sculptors in American art. And later, of course, we took on Herbert Ferber.

DOROTHY SECKLER: What were the qualities in the work of Hare (let's take Hare first and then let's have Lassaw) that made you feel that they would fit into your group and belong with it?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: Hare particularly because he was quite close to the surrealist concept of immediacy in

sculpture and of creating forms that, I should say, had certain possibilities of metamorphosis. He would have in a figure, for instance, a whole side that looked like a foot but actually became a hand and the whole development of the body had a sort of metamorphosis in the creation that made you feel that this was a new kind of thinking about sculpture. Lassaw interested me from a different concept. All of his sculpture was made in bronze in a curious way. He would draw his sculpture in a certain sense with thin steel wire and then melt on that wire inch by inch bronze rods to create the kind of forms that he wanted. It was at the start a fairly linear type of sculpture which has developed, of course, now to where he uses big copper forms in conjunction with theses melted forms in order to get a more massive quality. Incidentally, one of the interesting things that came out of having these sculptors was my decision that architecture in America had absolutely abandoned the use of the artist to help him in murals or sculpture or anything that was an embellishment or addition to his building. As a consequence, in 1949, I had a big show devoted to the artist and architecture and invited such men as Marcel Breuer, Walter Gropius, Philip Johnson, Wiener, and Sert, who were together at that time, and Kiesler. These five people gave five problems to my artists. We then made miniatures, models to go with the models that the architects supplied. And from that we were probably the first gallery to initiate really large commissions for our artists in assistance with the work of the architect. That is so even today. The latest development is two fantastic thirteen, five by twenty nine foot aluminum murals which Bernard Rosenthal has just done for Alcoa in Century City in Los Angeles. Lassaw has just completed a sculpture for the Hilton Hotel. And a large external piece was done by Pavia. Our acquaintance with architects has progressed so that quite frequently we are called into a picture before the building has progressed by architects such as Lescaze and Kelly and Gruzen and others and asked whether we have anything to offer them or suggest to them as to where sculpture or murals can be used. This is excellent for some of the men. Others among my artists prefer not to do this kind of thing preferring to work as painters on easel paintings and not to attempt any architectural commissions. But, I do think we persuaded enough architects to the validity of the modern painters' and sculptors' performances with them that now this movement has spread out quite widely. And although we may have to, and have had to refuse many, many commissions, I'm very happy to say that I think we've progressed to such an extent that the artist now is not an unnatural brother of the architect.

DOROTHY SECKLER: We had been speaking before about collectors that had come into your gallery particularly in the year 1955 and had been welcoming the American painters into their collections. I wondered if you wanted to talk a little bit now about the role of the collector particularly as it has changed perhaps in the years since 1955.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I don't think the role of the collector has ever changed. The collector -- presumably they are creative collectors and they are laggard [phon.sp.] art collectors and they are collectors who collect for money or investment. No collector can collect something until it has come into being, and as a consequence, I feel that the collector has exerted no influence at all on any of the artists. When the statement is made, as you made it a moment ago, in talking that the collectors may have brought the Pop Art movement into being because it is cheap and you can buy it at its start, there's no question that many people, and I know several collectors who have bought Pop Art who completely muffed the whole abstract expressionist movement and are frightened to death that by missing this movement they may have again missed something important. This has a great deal to say about the mentality of a collector but very little to say about whether a collector can influence an artist. Merely purchasing a man's painting cannot change or in any way influence the direction of that painter. It's a wonderful accommodation to the man's living condition for the painter. But this is the only thing the collector can do: buy the pictures, talk about what he has. Certainly, he can't in any way direct the course of that man's painting or the making of his sculpture, nor can he in any way assist except in the vanity of having that man in his collection. Other people who respect that man's judgement, that collector's judgement, might be influenced also to buy that artist purely for that reason.

DOROTHY SECKLER: This is an interesting subject that has other aspects, too. A number of critics have been very much concerned with the present prosperity of leading artists and have wondered if the artist, knowing that his work has an audience and that everything that he does receives immediate publicity, if this very different climate is affecting the integrity of the artist. Is there anything that you would like to -- I assume that you think not in view of what you said, but perhaps you would like to enlarge that point of view.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I feel very strongly on that because in my own gallery I'm conscious of the fact that Hofmann is continuously in a state of flux and in change and in creating new ideas for himself. Marca-Relli has abruptly made a change into an entirely new material, aluminum, regardless of whether collectors would appreciate it or not. The new paintings of James Brooks are almost non-abstract expressionist, what we would call post abstract expressionist for the show that we'll have this coming fall. All of my artists seem to be on the move, and if they were to stand still, maybe they would have an even better audience because what they have been doing is validly accepted, large amounts of money are being paid for it, and when they make this move, it's quite obvious that it has no relation to whether it will be received amiably by collectors, and certainly not whether Mr. Canaday or Miss Genauer will approve of it.

DOROTHY SECKLER: No. Harold Rosenberg has suggested that the artist now has an additional difficulty of

knowing that he has this vanguard audience ever looking for novelty and that he has to learn to accommodate himself to this.

SAMUEL KOOTZ: This is one of the things I was discussing with you off the record a short while ago. My feeling is that we are in an era in which communications are so rapid and so explicit, whether by television or cable or any other means, that for the artist who travels along for two or three years, developing an idea is almost crucified when he shows that development more than two or three years running. I cite particularly the example of Adolph Gottlieb whose series of so called blast paintings are certainly the pinnacle of this particular man's creativity. Now he has been in this area for about four years, and every year I see a vast improvement, a vast differentiation from the previous years. But yet already I hear collectors saying he's doing the same thing too long. This is ridiculous. Remember I mentioned that Matisse once said that an artist is born with one idea, and he develops that idea during his entire lifetime. Today if an idea isn't changed every two years, the artist is condemned for being old hat. The man isn't really hasty. We ask too much of the man to feed us novelty. And novelty has nothing to do with good painting or good sculpture. The development of an idea, the development of an entire point of view and its continuous prolongation and, I should say, eventual resolution is the one thing we should look forward to from an artist, not how quickly his ideas will change.

DOROTHY SECKLER: Mr. Kootz, looking back on the years, let's say about to the time when you were doing your show of the group, the Intrasubjectives, and when your group was first formulating a kind of outlook to which they subscribed in various personal ways, and then thinking about the various developments of the past decade or more, what would be your evaluation of the directions that were then set? Do you think they have been validated by time? That they've been to some extent corrected and changed?

SAMUEL KOOTZ: I think they've been validated naturally. I think the same artists that we showed in that show if shown today would have been shown to have been the most original of the abstract expressionists who were working at that period in 1949. I also think that if those works were shown in conjunction with the present day works by the same men you might find a fantastic progression in what those men have said. This is the thing that impresses me most about the field of abstract expressionist painting and sculpture. Depending, as it does, upon the individual, upon the subjective and automatic and personal qualities of the that man, the painting can be no better than the artist. If he is a superior kind of a person in his thinking, in his feelings, his sensations, the paintings are going to be better, the sculpture is going to be better. Each year as that man does more and more experiments, more and more investigations into his reasons for painting and the quality of his painting, new things are coming out. The fact that any number of camp followers of abstract expressionism are no longer in existence or have shifted to Pop Art, or have dropped out of the picture completely is no indication that abstract expressionism is dead. The artist dies if he has nothing to say. If he has a continuity in his statement, call it by one label or another label, no movement is better than the individuals within it. When Cubism came into being, it evolved around two people, Picasso and Braque. There were lesser people, many of whom, like Juan Gris, who made a certain reputation, but those were the two leaders, and from there on, from Cubism on, those two men maintained a certain high level of invention and productivity. The same with the men who -

END OF INTERVIEW

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