Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Ruth and Richard Shack, 1996 December 7-1997 February 8

The digital preservation of this interview received Federal support from the Latino Initiatives Pool, administered by the Smithsonian Latino Center.

Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Interview

BY: This is an interview with Ruth and Richard Shack on December 7, 1996 at the Shacks' home in Miami. The interviewer is Barbara Young. To start with, we'll do a little bit of background information about where you were born and how you got interested in the arts. Start with Ruth?

RUTH: Well, he was actually born a lot before (laughter) I was. We should start with him.

RICHARD: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1926, and was there until I was 15 years old. Then I went off to college.

BY: Was your family involved with art?

RICHARD: No.

BY: As a child did you have art experiencs, were you taken to museums?

RICHARD: Yes, we went to museums very, very actively through school. And there was a marvelous group of teachers in the public schools that I went to who made sure that the school visits that they did evolved around art.

BY: Did you have art classes?

RICHARD: Well, everybody had Art Appreciation, that was a given in the public schools. So you had a basic idea of art appreciation but it really wasn't in depth.

BY: What about music?

RICHARD: Very, very strong in music. There was much more interest in music than in the visual arts, if I remember correctly. We were all sort of required to play an instrument, it was a mandatory thing. My chosen one was clarinet and I went on from there and did play clarinet very actively for a long period of time.

BY: And Ruth?

RUTH: Well, I was born in Brooklyn, as every good Jewish baby was, and moved very quickly out to Long Island, with the family. I grew up in a small town on Long Island, which was a wonderful atmosphere. There was no "art" but my family was in the retail business -- my father owned a paint and wallpaper shop and had an arts supply department which was just wonderful, so I could feel the merchandise and visualize what was going to come out of that. Some pretty famous artists used to come through, as a matter of fact, but they were just customers, we had no idea who they were. My mother was always very, very art oriented as a designer, so I always had an appreciation of color and design and for what you could do with your environment and how you could make it much more beautiful.

BY: What kind of designer was she?

RUTH: She was at first a self-taught decorator. As a person in my dad's shop you would come in and say, "I want to do --" something, and she'd show you how to do it, she'd help you put the pieces together. Then she went to school and studied so that she could become better at it and ended up with some spectacular clients and would do their homes all over the world. She then went to work for a wallpaper house designing wallpaper; worked for Westinghouse and put the first decorated front on a refrigerator, which was quite a breakthrough at that point -- every refrigerator in the world was white, was expected to be white, and there was no question that it was going to be white.

RICHARD: If you remember correctly, it was Gibson --

RUTH: It was Gibson Refrigerators -- Gibson Appliances.

RUTH: She then went on to do public relations for artists and designers. So I always lived with that, although it was never "fine art" and there wasn't that imperative to go to museums and become a part of organized art because we lived remote from it.

BY: Did you meet in Brooklyn? Where did you meet?

RICHARD: I had already gone to college and was in the service and had gotten out of the service and at that point was producing TV shows until 1951 when I was called back into the service. It was during that period, from

‘5l to '53, that somewhere Ruth and I met on a blind date. Our courting was very, very active in the museums and arts kind of situations. We did get married at the end of '53 --

RUTH: That was when I was working in New York. I had several different jobs in Manhattan and it was a very heady experience to be that close to the source of all power, the Museum of Modern Art. I was still living on Long Island, commuting in on the Long Island Railroad --

RICHARD: I was living in New York.

RUTH: -- but I was going past those institutions, knowing about them and now being able to be a part of them. And so that's how we dated.

RICHARD: We went to galleries and museums, what little galleries there were that we were aware of. Then we got married and came down here on our honeymoon and just never left Miami.

BY: Had you been here before-- in the service?

RICHARD: No, Ruth was.

RUTH: My family used to come every January and spend a month in the hotel of the season -- every year there was a new hotel on Miami Beach. My dad would tell us that if he won at the track -- he would play the long shots at Hialeah -- then my brother and I could come down for the last week, and we knew he'd never admit not winning, so we always prepared being here. So for years we'd come down, at the heyday of Miami -- well, I guess the second heyday of Miami Beach. It was a very heady experience. That was in the late 40s.

BY: It was really a very glamorous time at the hotels and the track.

RUTH: Oh, everyone, the women went shopping during the day, sat by the pool; the kids played on the beach, and the men went off to gamble at the track.

BY: And the women wore dresses --

RICHARD: Hats and gloves. And Licoln Road was the place to shop.

RUTH: Oh yes. We would get dressed, go to dinner, and then -- actually it was like a promenade on Lincoln Road because none of the stores were open, so you certainly weren't there to do shopping, you were there to see and be seen.

BY: And in '53 you were married.

RICHARD: Came down to Miami, on our honeymoon. I met somebody in the entertainment industry who knew me from New York, who proceeded to offer me a job. It was a very basic kind of thing, it was a minimal salary, a minimal draw against the salary, and I said, "Sure." And we took a chace and just never went back to New York. That business ended very quick because within a year I was a full partner, and then he died and I ended up owning the agency, and then I sold the agency to the Music Corporation of America and then became part of MCA down here. That lasted until 1962 when MCA was declared a monopoly and had to divest itself from the variety division and then six of us formed a company called Agency for Performing Arts and I ran the office.

BY: This was producing shows?

RICHARD: Producing shows, representing talent. Well, in the early days when it was MCA we handled everybody from Jack Benny, Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, you name it, MCA was the big one, with Tony Bennett and Liberace and Borge and Belafonte. They were all part of MCA. When we formed the new company, APA, the majority of them followed us over and the company was hugely successful. My responsibiity was convention and industrial shows. Which was a brand-new field, and that was a field that I stayed with as long as I was with APA. But during that period a lot of things happened. When Ruth and I first settled down here we made a decision that was an art decision, and that was that we would give each other gifts; they all had to be under $100 because we had no money then. We came down from New York without money.

BY: Were you working at this time, Ruth?

RUTH: When we came to town it was important that both of us work simply because one salary was not going to carry us. We came to make fame and fortune. So I worked for an advertising agency for a very short time and then worked for the same gentleman, that Dick partnered with in running his night clubs. And I had never been in a night club before and I knew I was going to hell every time I came out at seven in the morning when the sun was shining --

RICHARD: These clubs used to open at eleven o'clock at night.

BY: Which clubs were they?

RICHARD: All on 79th Street-- The Vanity Fair, The Brook Lounge, The Black Magic. It was a very interesting time. It was immediatly after the gambling; the gambling ended in '52, we got here in '53, so there was a major transition.

RUTH: It was a wide open town where anything was possible.

BY: And the shows were on the beach with Sinatra and everybody?

RICHARD: No, no, they were in the clubs then, that's when the major clubs were around -- Ciro's, Beachcomber, Latin Quarter. Those were the clubs. The hotels weren't up yet. The Fontainebleau Hotel and Eden Roc Hotel didn't exist then and people came down and then went to the clubs. A quick explanation of what happened when the hotels were built: the hotel owners didn't want the people to leave the hotels, so they put night clubs in the hotels, which killed the night club industry. The same entertainment that prior went to the night clubs now performed in the hotels. So that killed the night club business. Then the people loved Miami that much that they began living in condominiums. Once they lived in condominiums they didn't want to go to the hotels --

RUTH: You're jumping pretty fast ahead there. It's the concept of each hotel wanting to be a resort and wanting to keep the patrons in the facility, and so by doing that they created a series of enclaves. You no longer walked on Lincoln Road because you could go into the (hotel) lobby and mix and mingle with the people there. You didn't have to go to a night club, you had the night club there, you didn't have to go to a delicatessen to get a snack, you had the delicatessen in the basement of the hotel. So what it did was, it turned everything on Miami Beach inward; rather than creating a resort, it created a series of wholly insular islands.

RICHARD: And at the same time, the clubs couldn't maintain their existence, so they ran into all sorts of trouble, and that's Alton Road, Dade Boulevard where nothing exists now as far as entertainment. And then the people moved into condominiums. And then they didn't want to go to the hotels. So there was a major, major transition., but that isn't the art end --

RUTH: No! But the interesting part of this is that the same people who were building hotels then decided that there was more money to be made by building condominiums; because the hotel people were not hoteliers anyway, they saw themselves as investors. So they built the places that now killed the hotels.

RICHARD: While they were doing it they didn't realize it. It became a very, very unique kind of situation. Of course, in the entertainnmnt end of the business there was a very good period as a result of it.

BY: The convention business --

RICHARD: Well, what I was referring to was the framework of the hotels in order to keep the people, they put on bigger and bigger shows. So Deauville would have a command performance for anybody who stayed at any of the hotels that were owned by that syndicate could go to the shows free. And they spent whatever had to be spent to get the major performers into these 3500-seat auditoriums. So there was a very good period for the entertainment business but in the long run the moving over to the condominiums are what killed it. But we were saying before that we came down and we didn't have great resources and we made this idea that it (gifts to each other) had to be $100 and they had to be art. And it was very, very difficult to find the right things. But we stayed with that concept, and one of the very fortunate things was that actually the concept was that we were giving each other gifts, and one of the unique things was that Ruth's parents at the paint and wallpaper store were very gracious to Tatyana Grosman, who was the founder of Universal Limited Art Editions. And her husband was a painter. Maurice Grosman. And Ruth's parents used to give Tatyana the paints and supplies to keep Maurice going as an artist. As a result, in exchange -- at that point Tatyana was doing limited art editions, which were silkscreen copies of, like, Mary Callery, Dufy, Tamayo --

BY: What year is this now?

RICHARD: This is '55? (Ruth confirms) '56, '57, and during that period Ruth's mom used those screens as interior designs, because they were wonderful, magnificant.

RUTH: Tatyana never anticipated that they would be fine art, she never thought they would be mistaken for fine art; she was creating decorative pieces and an income.

BY: Which artists was she working with at that time?

RUTH: Nobody.

BY: Just herself and Maurice?

RICHARD: And she found the ability to silkscreen these marvelous pieces, and they were. And everybody had to have them.

RUTH: Tamayos --

RICHARD: Well, Tamayos, Dufy, Mary Callary. And Ruth's mom was the one that introduced them, like, to Fire Island. Everybody had them. It was automatic that if Roz Burrows designed something, in them would be these LAE's (Limited Art Editions).

BY: And that was your mom.

RUTH: My mother.

BY: Roz Burrows.

RUTH: Yes.

RICHARD: And at that point Tatyana found a lithographic stone. In her front yard, on the wharf. And it was with that lithographic stone that she started going from silk screen to lithography.

BY: Had someone left the stone there?

RICHARD: No, it was there, I don't know how that happened, it's in the books, I really don't know --

BY: Rivers was the first artist that she worked with --

RICHARD: The first artist was Larry Rivers when he did "Stones" with Frank O'Hara.... But that's where it started. And then that same stone was used for a lot of other things which became sort of her mark. But now we can get to where you were going, but what I was saying was that was the first things that we started collecting. Because of this contact, we started collecting anything that Tatyana did, and most of it was under $100.

RUTH: Well, no, not anything. That was the mistake: that we didn't buy everything (all voices at once and laughter) If we'd had any good sense at all, we would have taken every stray nickel and put it into those pieces --

RICHARD: Well, we did, we put a lot --

RUTH: Oh, we went and we looked and we bought only the things that we couldn't live without.

BY: Were those your first purchases, that's when you begin to collect?

RUTH: No, actually we were buying here first, from local artists --

RICHARD: Larry Donovan--

RUTH: Bob Sindelir introduced us to a lot of wonderful people working here in Miami, and that gave us the courage to move on to other artists. But some of those choice pieces we still have. We bought at the very beginning.

RICHARD: Leonard Lehrer, Ruth Lehrer --

BY: In '53 we had no museums, we had very few galleries -- RUTH : We used the galleries as museums. That's why I say Sindelir was among the first. Dorothy Blau was marvelous. Dorothy had things that were far beyond our means, but she was so incredibly patient in educating us, bringing us along, anticipating that some day we may be able to put together some of those dollars. And we did eventually, and bought with her.

RICHARD: Dorothy Blau had tied in with Kootz Gallery in New York. And it was the James David Gallery named after her son on LeJeune that was where we literally got started with her. And in those days we bought things like a Maxine Shattuck, Bill King, Lud Sander. There were a whole group of artists that we never really realized that we would be moving onto. But that was the next step. And then the involvement with Bernard Davis at the Museum of Modern Art just opened our eyes to just about everything that we own.

BY: Where did he come from?

RICHARD: Philadelphia. He was in "the rag business," as he describes it. But Bernard always said that he was everything that we never believed at first and then found out that everything he said was valid.

RUTH: Well, we didn't believe him just because he was the most flamboyant and the most outrageous of characters. I think every morning he woke up deciding what he was going to be and proceeded to live his fiction, or reality; and when we spent time with him you never knew whether it was fiction or reality, It was really quite extraordinary. I'd challenge him, but he helped us to understand things that we never knew were out there.

BY: [overlapping voices] How long did his museum, the Miami Museum of Modern Art exist? Five or six years?

RICHARD: I don't know, five or six years at least. But as Ruth says, part of it was he didn't know what to believe, he would say flamboyantly, "And I bought Zadkine and Soutine to the United States." You would say, "Yes, Bernard." And then when we started going museums and seeing Zadkine and Soutine, that's who brought Zadkine and Soutine to the United States. And no matter whether we went to Chicago, everything was from him.

RUTH: Gift of Bernard Davis.

RICHARD: --gift of Bernard Davis. Then, while we were talking he'd say, "And by the way, I'm also the philatelic adviser to the Vatican." "Yes, Bernard." Then you find out that he really was the adviser on philately to the Vatican. And he would just go on and on like that. But Ruth was referring to, and it makes the charm even better, is that you never knew where he really stood. Our favorite story about that is that every Saturday, or just about every Saturday, we'd go down to the Miami Museum of Modern Art with the kids. He had a couple of dachsies, dachshunds, and the kids used to love to play with them and would go outside, and there was a sculpture garden outside and we'd sit around and talk to Bernard. Well, Bernard had, in addition to doing contemporary art on the ground floor, he had an iconographic area on the second floor, of cathedrals and buildings made out of cigarette foil --

RUTH: The tin foil from the old cigarette wrappers.

RICHARD: And that came (he laughs) from the Vatican. It was done in Italy and it was really an icon, and nuns used to come to see that. Not to see the contemporary, but they knew that it was there. And at one point he had a show of the Grupo del Sur from Argentina and there was one artist in there named Ines Blumenschweig who used to put clay on canvas and the things were enormous, I mean, they were just heavy. And while we were sitting there one Saturday, we hear Bernard talking to some of the nuns and explaining to them that you can always tell a great piece of art by how heavy it is. (laughter) And when he came downstairs, he had a Blumenschweig, and he said, "Now, this is a masterpiece." Because the Blumenschweig weighed a ton with the clay on it, and he came downstairs and we looked at it and said, "But Bernard, how can you say that?" He said, "Because I own the museum" And now you don't know where to put him but he was the most influential of all people in the arts here in those days. People who are still working today, like Jack Hopkins, who's working at the Bakehouse [Art Complex] who lived there and did the framing for Bernard and was resident --

RUTH: Resident artist, he did his own work there as well as help Bernard with the installation and the framing of the works.

BY: Did Bernard exhibit in a house?

RUTH: The Museum was a whole house, a three-story house right on the Bay, just a magnificent facility, which could have used a whole lot of repair.

BY: Did he live in the house?

RUTH: Yes.

BY: It was home and business and framing and museum.

RUTH: Well, the framing was for the museum, you could not bring a piece there to have it framed.

BY: But he was showing people from --

RICHARD: All over the world. And the beauty of Bernard was, he did the best little monographs on artists that he then mailed all over the world, and literally all over the world. And the illusion was that this place was like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. And artists who would never have gotten an opportunity were really given an opportunity through Bernard; he opened the doors for hundreds and hundreds of artists.

RUTH: I think he was probably the first to be showing South American art.

RICHARD: Definitely.

RUTH: You know, the OAS in Washington always spoke about it. But here the canvases were on site and work was being displayed. It was marvelous.

RICHARD: And people like Jose Gomez Sicre used to arrange for shows of Latin American artists at the Miami Museum of Modern Art. In '69 I guess it was, we were invited to judge the Biennial in Cali [Colombia]; Ruth did the ceramics and I did the painting, and when we got down there, artists would come to us and they'd have two issues: one issue was, "Can you get us a show at the Miami Museum of Modern Art?" And we'd say, well, we had no say in it but we would certainly talk to Bernard about it. And the other issue was, "Can you get our paintings back?" Because what would happen with Bernard, he never "kept" them, he just never sent them back. I mean, he never thought that he was retaining them, it never was in his purview.

RUTH: His job was to display them, to show them.

RICHARD: And then, boom! they'd go in a closet and they would stay there. So that became one of the funniest things with the two groups.

RUTH: We never knew whether we were being approached by the wanted-the-paintings-back or wanted-to-have-the-exhibit. But it was so funny to watch it fall into these two patterns.

RICHARD: But everyone adored him, that was the one thing. I mean, they respected him because he gave them an opportunity. And he did: there are a great many artists who never would be where they are now if it weren't for him. I can't think of them, I can't make a list of the names properly, but it was incredible, absolutely incredible.

RUTH: And our personal debt to him is the fact that he was so incredibly patient with us in telling us why these were pieces that we should respect, what is it we are looking at, and putting it all together for us.

BY: So he really helped to create a philosophy of collecting.

RICHARD: Absolutely.

RUTH: Oh he was marvelous. In addition to which, he had incredible insight into First Amendment rights vis-a-vis the arts, and when there was an exhibit at the newly opened Bacardi Building and on the first floor they were going to show art as they continued to do it over the years --

RICHARD: It was a juried exhibition and one of the winners was Duane Hanson. Unknown. And the first piece he did was "The Bloody Motorcyclist," and the Bacardi said, --

RUTH: "No, no, no, we can't show that --"

RICHARD: Boom! Bernard put it in the Museum right in the center and made the statement that nothing cannot be shown here.

BY: And next year, it is at OK Harris.

RICHARD: And that was the beginning of Duane. But that's a good example of an artist who got a beginning with Bernard.

RUTH: But Bernard came at it not in this instance from loving Duane, which he well may have -- I'm not sure he ever met him or knew him -- but out of respect for the artist and the artist's product and its right to be seen. And that, again, was a tremendous education for me.

RICHARD: It's really intriguing, looking back, that he was doing First Amendment rights things and nobody was aware of it. But if he had sat in a group and said, "Well, I'm showing that because I believe in the First Amendment rights," you'd say, "Oh, here comes Bernard again." But he would do the thing without blowing his own horn.

RUTH: But it was a massive confrontation in the community. Remember, the [Miami] Herald covered the fact that it was being shown at his facility and there was much discussion in the community about whether or not this should be seen and whether it was beautiful, and is this now what art is about, things being beautiful.

BY: Who were the art writers at that time, it would have been --

RICHARD: Well, Griff[in] Smith was --

RUTH: No, this was before Griff Smith.

BY: Reno?

RICHARD: No, not Reno, it was a wonderful woman in The Grove -- Nellie Bower [Lillian Dobbs]. She was one,

and the other one, it just seems to slip but then it became Griff Smith.

RUTH: But this was not an art story, this was a news story, and I want to argue with you in perpetuity, I think he knew that this was a First Amendment issue, and I think he really was out there. This was not a mistake and this was not just showing art: this was --

RICHARD: No, I didn't disagree with you on that, my point was that he didn't blow his horn and stand up as a First Amendment person to the paper. He was the owner or director or whatever he was, of the Miami Museum of Modern Art first. Then it fell into the fact that he was doing First Amendment. He didn't go to the paper and say, "I believe in the First Amendment, therefore I'm going to open this place and show Duane Hanson." The fact is that he showed a lot of people that raised eyebrows.

BY: I think he was one of the first people to show Purvis Young's work.

RICHARD: Absolutely. Well, Sandy [Sebastian] Trovato. He was an interesting sistuation.

RUTH: But there was not much controversy about Sandy Trovato. Purvis Young was indeed edge stuff.

RICHARD: Agreed, but what I'm saying about Sandy Trovato is that here was really an advertising artist, a very slick artist, and Bernard was able to find the other end of him, the other element and the abstract end. And I was always impressed with the fact that whatever showed at Miami Museum of Modern Art of Sandy Trovato's was not what he really made money on; he made money in the other kind of art, the very, very slick, metallic material that went into shopping malls. Where he did a great job. But Bernard had the capability of finding the art end of a lot of these people.

BY: Whom else did he show from the community?

RICHARD: Elenora Chambers, Dorothy Gillespie. Jack Hopkins always had a show there.

BY: Dorothy Gillespie was living here at that time?

RICHARD: I guess. But when Latin American artists came over her, they knew that they had an opportunity to show there. That was one of the best boosts that these artists could get, and he would show them, he would just show them. If they lived here, of course they got their pieces back! (laughter) He was absolutely wonderful, and he was just a great help to so many people in the arts down here. And as Ruth said, Dorothy (Blau) was the other one. I was always impressed with the fact that in the early days Gloria Luria was finding young people, and if you look in catalogues many of them got their first showing at the Gloria Luria Gallery, which was literally a part of Luria's stores. But there was another one that was part of a store -- the wife of the owner of Philip Morris Business Machines on Biscayne Boulevard and I cannot remember her name, but she showed excellent art right in the Philip Morris Building, which is now a gas station on 36th and Biscayne.

BY: There wasn't one area that people went to.

RUTH: They tried to do it in The Grove but it became crafts as opposed to art and --

RICHARD: Guys like Larry Donovan had studios on Main Highway, Scornovacca, Jack Hopkins --

RUTH: Larry Donovan's was the first piece we put money into.

RICHARD: That's right.

RUTH: The first artist that we collected; exactly.

RICHARD: ..... surely.

BY: Do you still have it?

RICHARD: Yes. That's the most incredible thing, because we bought it at a clothesline show, I think it was the first Coconut Grove art sale of any kind and we bought it and we were so pleased with it. And we always talk about how do you begin a collection. Well, you begin a collection by taking a nail and a hammer, boom, and putting it up, and that's what we did with this piece. It was a year or two later that we were in Larry Donovan's studio; this piece was about 24 inches by 24 inches --

RUTH: It was a bust.

RICHARD: It was a head, just a head, a print, a woodcut. And we went to Larry Donovan's studio, and there is this piece which is now 24" wide and about four feet long, and we looked at Larry and said, "We have the top,

just the head. What happened?" He said, "That's the one the cat got." (laughter) So he signed it under the head and cut off the bottom, but we now saw the whole thing. And a lot [laughing] happened with that. We began to realize there's a lot going on in art, and you can appreciate the small piece or the bigger piece.

RUTH: Then we bought other Donovan pieces, but from (Robert) Sindelir. And that's really as we got more and more courageous.

RICHARD: But that's another thing that we've done through the whole time that we're here. Even though we've known the artist, we've bought from the dealers, and our feeling is -- and we both feel that way -- is that if the dealers don't exist, than the artists don't exist and there are no collectors, then the whole thing disappears. So we have a tremendous respect for the dealers.

BY: But you also had a tremendous respect for the artists, too. I think you really enjoy the contact.

RUTH: Well, there's a wanting to know the artist and to become more involved with the artist. But when you write the check, there is the support. And that comes from your background: Richard may be in the theatrical business but he's nothing more than a broker, between the facility or the client and the entertainer. The dealer is essentially in the same position.

BY: As a broker. RUTH; Exactly -- a broker between the artist and the collector. And you have to support these brokers; you have to make certain that they are viable.

RICHARD: Because in our business, for years people would go directly to the performer, but they're under management to us, so it would come back to us, but it would irritate us that they went directly to the performer. And even the case where we knew the artist well, in the case of Bob Huff: we knew him, we saw a piece we liked, we could have talked to him. We did not see it in the gallery, we saw it somewhere that it was hanging, Metropolitan or somewhere, it was hanging in an exhibition somewhere. And rather than talking to Bob Huff, we found out that he was represented by Gloria Luria, we went up and bought it from her. But that was what we would do. Because it's fairer to the artist because that all comes through the gallery for the artist, and then everybody participates in it. Saving a couple of dollars really defeats the arts, and we just don't do that.

BY: It's an ethical problem that not everybody is so careful about.

RICHARD: I think Bernard Davis was very, very good that way, but Bernard Davis used to recommend that we talk to the gallery dealers.

BY: Could we go back a little bit to some of the other institutions and things. It seems like when I've gone through some of the literature and talked to different people that the the Lowe [Art Museum, University of Miami] was a center of activity. Probably because of the professors that were there?

RUTH: There was nothing else. It was at the University, which really was the seat of culture in Dade County. And if you wanted to see a musical offering, it was either out at the University of Miami or you went some place else, and the same was for the arts -- the Lowe was the bridge between the community and the arts department at the school. So it was a wonderful way to become a part of the intellectual artists' community in Dade County. And they were very good at showing local artists, locally producing artists, and visiting shows as well.

RICHARD: And a lot of the local artists were the instructors. And at that point, when we got involved, it was the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery. We got involved and got on the board and just kept working with them very, very closely, donating to the Joe and Emily Lowe Art Gallery, and then slowly we got through some very good negotiation, they eliminated the "Joe and Emily" and it became the Lowe Art Gallery. When they finally brought on board Ira Licht, they were able to get it accredited as a museum, and then it became the Lowe Art Museum. During that transition period, there was the formation of Friends of Art, with Sterry Branning and several of the early people.

RUTH: Very early supporters of both the University and the Art Department at the University. They had always worked informally to support the institution, and then brought themselves together as a support group and called themselves Friends --

RICHARD: Friends of Art. And --

BY: Did Motherwell come in through the Friends of Art program? Didn't Motherwell come in to do a lecture or a series of lectures?

RICHARD: I really don't remember. The first purchase that the Friends of Art did that was of any consequence was the year that I was president -- I think that was the third year when I became president. It was the walls. We put all the money that the Friends of Art collected into the building of the walls for the Lowe Museum. The walls

were inadequate. They wouldn't hold the material, you'd hammer a nail and it would go right through. So the first step was to get the walls up. Then the next year, I think the purchase of the David Park was the next major thing. But it kept moving and everyone got very, very involved and knew that they were serious; and they were. The University was a good support system. You always had that problem because it was affiliated with the University that they had to have student shows and faculty shows. And this did not thrill the real art aficionados early on, that this then was not a Museum because at least two months was taken between -- well, two months was taken off because the school was closed during the summer, and then there was a month for the faculty and a month for the students, so it was a little scattered.

RUTH: Well, it's always that tug between the institution and its response to the art department, and then the response to the community and how we opened that up.

RICHARD: Bacardi was showing exhibitions then and doing a very, very good job. Juan Espinosa ..... was showing some really good stuff. (In 1963 Bacardi Imports moved its headquarters to Miami and opened a gallery. Juan Espinosa was gallery director from 1982-1989.) Ruth can take it from there, but she founded the Viva Las Artes Gallery.

RUTH: Well, that's all the way into, '72 and '73.

BY: The Miami Art Center developed sometime...

RUTH: Came out of a group of women who wanted to learn how to paint and wanted to work together.

BY: That must have been the latter part of the ‘60s --

RUTH: Yes. And Arthur Vining Davis donated a building to them, it was an old nursery, and that building became a wonderful visual arts center, which later was turned into Burger King University when the then governance of the Art Center, moved on to become what they had hoped would be a museum by affiliating with the City of Coral Gables.

RICHARD: They moved into the Biltmore.

BY: But the years it was the Art Center --

RICHARD: Were very exciting.

RUTH: Oh, it was such a vibrant institution. There was not only teaching for children, but there were wonderful adult education opportuities. We took some courses there in arts, trying to get our hands dirty and trying to figure out how some of the things that we owned were created.

RICHARD: And found out that they couldn't be created!

RUTH: No: they were impossible, there was no way you could do what had been done.

BY: You were taking printmaking, and drawing?

RICHARD: Oh, I tried, Ruth tried separately, we didn't do it together I guess because [laughing] we thought we'd be co-defeated or something, but I went down with one of our young daughters and we tried to do things and ended up with our --

RUTH: We did a printmaking class together.

RICHARD: We did?

RUTH: Indeed we did. We worried because we were just challenged -

BY: With Shirley Green?

RUTH: Yes. And that's when we realized how difficult and how exacting this work is. And (a) we lacked the talent and (b) we lacked the patience and (c) we lacked the precision. So we decided that we would be the consummate audience and --

BY: But you have had that experience.

RICHARD: I tried drawing for a while and that was a bad mistake.

BY: Did you take from Roberto Martinez?

RICHARD: No, I think I took from Marty Kreloff. Well, whatever I did, it didn't really work. And then it just really embellished our appreciation.

BY: I wonder how many collectors really do that? Put themselves [laughing] through that.

RICHARD: Well, I made one great linoleum cut. That was really a very good thing -- matter of fact it was so good that I used it as a logo on our stationery for many years -- we still have it --

RUTH: He has rested on his laurels!

RICHARD: It wasn't until a little later that I realized I had literally copied a John Klinkenberg. (laughter) But that's exactly what it was -- I had seen it somewhere, (he laughs) but I didn't realize it was that close. He was right there at the University. Yeah, I thought I had done something unique.

BY: The Art Center was where you first began to show your collection?

RICHARD: Well, when Arnold Lehman came in (as Director), he wanted to show that people collect. We talked about it, but it wasn't something that was so imposing that you couldn't do it. So he was thrilled with our collection based on the fact that literally anybody could collect those particular kind of works.

BY: Was that when you realized that you were collectors, had become real collectors?

RICHARD: I think so.

RUTH: Because of working with these institutions -- with the Lowe and with the Metropolitan (the Art Center) and later -- we associated with people who identified themselves as collectors. And then we would come home and look at what we had and say well, that's probably what we're doing. But of course it wasn't the calibre of what we saw in other places. But there was always that feeling that we could not live without these pieces, so we had to have them. We always looked for some kind of continuity, for some reason for this to be a collection, which we thought we would need, and we could never find that commonality in the collection. So it was that give-and-take between yeah, we're collecting, but this is not a collection.

BY: This is something we love to do.

RUTH: Exactly.

RICHARD: As a matter of fact our daughter Barbara describes it better than I can when she says that she would always know to talk about the collection when people came in, she knew all the pieces, but she never knew that Rauschenberg was more important than a Vadia. Because they were next to each other, I mean, it doesn't matter who was there --

RUTH: And we gave equal treatment to them --

RICHARD: Yes. We had a friend at that point who had a collection that was maybe five pieces. They were all Impressionist pieces. END OF THIS SIDE, A of TAPE 1 BEGINNING SIDE B, TAPE 1

RICHARD: (continuing) Well, that collection was ultimately financially worth an awful lot more than ours ever was. But just having five pieces and living with them wasn't what we wanted to do, that wasn't our kind of collecting. Our house was a salon, you know -- we had pieces hanging on the ceiling.

BY: This is the house in North Miami.

RICHARD: Yes.

BY: I did see that house. People had told me about art under the bed and art on the ceiling.

RICHARD: Well, under the bed was hidden, but we literally had, we had Gene Davises on the ceiling, we had Rauschenberg on the ceiling, our daughter Barbara loved bats, we had a bat hanging over her bed.

RUTH: Bontecou never showed as well as she did on the ceiling. (laughter)

RICHARD: We had a Bontecou ''Sixth Stone'' and that was on the ceiling and kids would lie on the floor and make believe it was an Alice in Wonderland kind of thing and they'd fantasize about what was going on in the Bontecou. It was always great and it was a lot of fun. There were no restrictions. And that still exists.

BY: And when you were buying, were you always buying together?

RICHARD: Yes. Well, not at the same time but we always ended up with the same thing by going places.

RUTH: I think the first experience we had was going back to Bernard Davis's home and Trovato had an exhibit. And I went to see this exhibit, fell madly in love with something, and for some reason we were not going together. I found one canvas I adored and I said to Dick, "Go, I think you're going to like what you see." And he came back and he said, "Boy, I saw one that I would just love to have." And we were dancing around each other because we didn't want to reveal which one --

RICHARD: And there were as many as 20 pieces --

RUTH: Oh yes, equally. And it was the exact same piece that we both chose. And that was the first time that we realized how congruent our tastes were. That piece now is at FIU [Florida International University] and was hanging in Chuck Perry's office. He loves blue. This was a predominatly blue painting --

RICHARD: Called "Blue Positive."

RUTH: He saw it at the house, fell in love with it, and we said, "Well it shall be yours." And when he finished his office we gave it to him to hang.I hope it's still in the collection.

BY: How do collectors give things away?

RICHARD: Easy. If they're really collectors. [overlapping voices]

RUTH: ....I always look at them with this "we bought it for a reason, we loved it, we thought at the time we couldn't live without it, and now we're just passing it on." There's something wonderful in being able to do that. It's the same dichotomy you feel when you raise your children to be independent, and then they become independent and say, "Now, wait a minute, I didn't mean that independent." And that's the feeling I always have when pieces go out of the house. It's nice to share.

RICHARD: Yes but you were just saying, the joy of having it, at FIU at that point, there was no museum there, there was no really arts involvement yet, and as result of it we did with that "Blue Positive" as well as -- there was another one that we did with, I don't remember her name --

RUTH: That donation came out of a tremendous respect for Chuck Perry --

RICHARD: Right.

RUTH: -- and what he had achieved. And if that was the way we could say thank you to him for building an institution that has become a major resource in Dade County, then we did it.

RICHARD: And he liked "blue." We had another piece by Anne Kinggard, which was one of those blue sky pieces, and that ended up in his office. But I'm saying with joy because you remember him with joy. ‘'Easy'‘ is maybe not a good word. It is with joy because wew were able to replace. We have never had a hole in the wall because we gave something away. There is always something replacing it in a minute. As a matter of fact there are things waiting to get up on the wall. [laughter]

BY: Waiting in the wings, things leaning against the walls. RUTH; That's OK.

RICHARD: That's part of the installation.

RUTH: It doesn't have to be hanging to be respected.

RICHARD: And that's how our collection works. I really feel very comfortable when we give things. But let's get back to Chuck Perry: as soon as FIU decided that it was off and running, they wanted to start some sort of an arts program and an arts class and Ruth was the one that founded the Viva Las Artes.

RUTH: Yes, and started the arts support group, which has grown to a wonderful facility now, a museum --

BY: What year was this?

RUTH: FIU started it -- it was in either '72 or '73 that we created Viva Las Artes because Chuck was convinced that it would be an international institution, and so we went to a fancy-sounding word. We were able to attract some very interesting people to the institution, to FIU. And of course at the time it was a state university and people were talking about "we pay taxes, that's enough, let them do what they want to do with our tax money." And there were others who I sided with saying, "yes, but if you want the embellishments, if you want the things that taxpayers won't pay for, we have to start that happening." And we were not only able to buy things for the institution, but to become a voice for FIU in building its whole arts facility and programing. So we did a whole lot of advocacy work for the arts.

RICHARD: And there was one room that was given over to exhibition of student work, and then that expanded into the community [which] was beginning to show there for specific .... and a lot of the young artists who are now old artists, were showing then, and a program started of purchase awards. We got behind that and we gave purchase awards, as did a lot of the other people involved in the arts in those days. And those purchase awards ended up with pieces being purchased for the University -- that is, if you gave a $300 or a $400 purchase award, that piece would end up at FIU. So they began accumulating some really, really good stuff; I mean, work that was just wonderful. That gave a lot of people an opportunity to say, "Yes, and I'm exhibiting at FIU."

BY: And you worked with community college galleries also.

RICHARD: Not too much; I can't say that we did.

RUTH: Not really.

BY: Gifts, and --

RICHARD: Yes. Well, we do that anyway.

RUTH: When Bob [Sindelir] took over the gallery we were always supportive of whatever he was doing, but not a real life hands-on involvement --

RICHARD: Lowe, FIU, the Metropolitan. And then when the Metropolitan got in trouble, of course, the next step was North Miami Museum and Art Center.

RUTH: No, no, you're skipping the second Center for Fine Arts.

RICHARD: That's right, that was more important.

BY: Shall we go back and talk about Ruth's activity in the community. Because during this time now you'd become a county commissioner.

RUTH: It was out of my involvement in the arts and PTA and Girl Scouts that gave me the courage to try to do what I had always wanted to do, and that was to be in politics.

RICHARD: Let me interject, though. Prior to your getting into that end of politics, you were very, very active in women's art. Like WAIT [Women Artists It's Time] --

RUTH: That's all part of this.

RICHARD: But that wasn't part of the political aspect --

RUTH: It was a part of the women's movement.

RICHARD: So go back to the women's movement rather than the county commissioner. RUTH; OK, I will do that. What I was saying is that the involvement in the community, through the arts, through the several things that I did in the arts, helped me to live out this goal of being in politics. I grew up wanting to be a politician, but it was in the days when girls or women just couldn't achieve that kind of exposure and they just couldn't be politicians PERIOD. So I became a part, first, of the civil rights movement. We both were when we were here in town early on, from the very beginning of the civil rights movement. We then took those tactics into the women's rights movement and gained another network of people whom I would never have met any other way. Out of that came what Richard just described as the Women Artists Its Time, which was the beginning of the Women's Caucus for the Arts: out of a recognition that women were not being shown in galleries and in museums, and that there were really some very exciting and fertile work being done by women.

BY: Barbara Farrell: was she one of the founding members of that?

RUTH: Yes, absolutely, one of the organizers. And so it was a combination of my interest in politics and organizing and coalition-building and my interest in the arts that brought the two together. And I helped to put together an exhibit of women who were working here in Miami, and that exhibit went to New Orleans to a gallery of people --

RICHARD: And on to Pensacola. Your original WAIT material was based on 3rd Century, if I'm not mistaken.

BY: What is 3rd Century?

RUTH: Well, it was happening at the same time, which was 1974, '75 and '76 and 3rd Century was the organization in town preparing for our bicentennial celebration. My responsibility was as chair of the Education

Committee, so I very, very liberally described "education" as not only classroom but out-of-the-classroom education, adult education, as well, and was able to bring arts in under that umbrella. There was no place where the arts fit, so again I just melded the two together and made certain that the arts were not left out of the bicentennial celebration. And it was out of all of that activity in '74 and '75 preparing for '76 that it became apparent to me that I knew people of means in this community because of my involvement in the arts and serving on arts boards. I knew people at the grassroots because they were in PTA and Girl Scouts, and I was working towards where I wanted to be and that was in politics. When a seat became available on the county commission, I just leapt in like I knew what I was doing and was able to pull it off -- with money from the people in the arts whom I had worked with and from support from people at the grassroots with whom I had worked.

RICHARD: A good example of the visibility was that for years, and years and years, Ruth and I were two of the auctioneers on Channel 2 Public Television Arts Auction, and as a result you really become very visible when you're on there for hour upon hour upon hour. We did some of the funniest auctioning that ever happened but it was a lot of fun.

BY: Working together again?

RICHARD: Right. We bounced back and forth. One had one area and --

RUTH: We started separately but then it became apparent that we did better together, and so they would put us in the same space.

RICHARD: A lot of fun and we got a lot sold.

RUTH: Late at night when people started getting just a little bleary and a little absurd, we would auction by the pound, by the weight, by the frame --

RICHARD: [excited voices overlapping] That became one of the big jokes. I had an argument with one of the managers --

BY: Del Rubin must have been working with you.

RUTH: Oh yes, definitely.

RICHARD: One of the stage managers kept insisting that we auction off a couple of pictures that were just dreadful, and one of them -- and that was why Ruth said ‘'By the pound,''--was a terrible oil of a side of beef. And we auctioned it by the pound, we got the bids up by the pound, and said, hey you go to Publix's make a bid! a public, So we really did have a lot of fun, but the Channel 2 thing made it very visible. And another thing that we were both doing at that point was working with the library. I don't know whether you know about the library? Miami-Dade Public Library. We were very involved with the arts with them -- lending them things and supporting whatever possibility there was to exhibit.

BY: I started in '76. Margarita [Cano] was doing shows prior to that.

RICHARD: Yes. We started with Margarita then. And then when you came in we certainly started working with you. But that was always the fun of knowing that that material we had was being seen publicly, and I think all of that helped Ruth to get a vision in the community that yeah, we're serious about art.

RUTH: These were the days where nothing had ever been done before, so whatever you thought up was something new and exciting, and "let's try it." Sometimes it was done a second time and sometimes it was abandoned very, very quickly. But you know, it was almost going into the back yard and saying, "let's have a party" and all of a sudden you were off doing something and from this came a major exhibit in someplace that you never knew was going to happen. Now we've become just a little stodgy, I think, in having "proper venues for art." I don't think there's such a thing as a proper venue for art, I think any place is a wonderful place to see art.

RICHARD: We lent a whole group of pieces for the opening of what was going to ultimately become the .... YWCA, which is now the Occidental Park Hotel. But we wanted all the artists.

RUTH: Any place there were walls was an appropriate place to put art.

BY: At that time there were very few walls that were dedicated to art.

RICHARD: True.

RUTH: And at the same time, Jack Orr had come back from Hawaii, had seen something that just blew him away, and he said, "We shall have it too," and he instituted the Art- in- Public- Places program, which was fairly

radical, and controversial in Miami. This was '74, maybe even earlier, because I wasn't yet on the Commission and served on the first board of the now-called Trust [of Art in Public Places].

RICHARD: That must be well before '74 -- in '70 or '71, it had to be that early.

RUTH: Well, I'm not sure -- YOUNG; We can look it up.

RICHARD: The early 70s. (1973)

RUTH: That's safe. This was not without controversy, again. First, from the users here. The first building that I was involved in doing was the Fire Station up in North Miami Beach, and Bill Ward did a wonderful sculpture and he was savvy enough to come up with an absolutely marvelous map of Dade County. The firefighters are saying "who needs it" and the architect is saying "you're obliterating my building, it stands without it." The people in the neighborhood could not care at all about this, they didn't need it, "why are we spending the money on it." And yet every time I drive past that building I get a kick, a wonderful rush, because it is such a splendid sight.

RICHARD: Yes, but to go one step further, through his efforts at that point, Bill Ward met with the firefighters on a continuous basis and sort of gave them an education in art as well as the education in this particular work-- what the piece means, how it's done. And by the time that thing was up, the greatest bunch of cheerleaders for Bill Ward were the firefighters -- I mean, they thought that he was great --

RUTH: I want to give credit to Bob Sindelir, who was --

RICHARD: Absolutely.

RUTH: -- a tremendous diplomat in this. I came at it from a rather ferocious "this is going to happen, it has to happen," and then blessed Bob was the one who made sure that it did happen on day-to-day, keeping all of the parties talking to each other. And at the time we had hoped that this program would be the kind of program where artists would actually be on site and creating works, so that neighbors could come by and see that this was just another guy making a living, that artists weren't some esoteric or dangerous force coming in "ruining our building" and disappearing. Unfortunately, it got away from that, and I just think that that's been one of the weaknesses of the program; because it's such an opportunity for people to see art and artists at work. And that's what artists do, they work.

BY: Very hard.

RUTH: Very hard. And I think if neighbors can see this, and can feel a sense of comfort and then a sense of ownership, we would have far more support for what I think is one of the greatest collections that we have: and that's all of the public art in Dade County. After I went on the Commission and we were building the Metrorail, the then executives of the Transportation Department said that they would have no public art, and I said, "Now wait a minute, wait a minute, the stations are buildings, are they not?" "Well, yes." "And does not this speak to buildings?" "Well, yes."

BY: The ordnance had passed by then?

RUTH: Yes, the ordnance had passed before the transit was being built. But we were able to get some of those wonderful pieces in each one of the stations simply by declaring that this was a building. If there hadn't been advocacy for the program, those stations would not have had any art work at all, and that's where some of the best and most visible showed. I had a terrible time with Dick Judy at the airport who kept saying, "This is my building, this is my facility, who needs that stuff. It will get in the way of people walking from one place to another. An airport is to get people in and out of town. Who cares about art?" And, again, through sheer force we were able to make certain that the program was adhered to. It was the law of the land but if no one pointed that out, it simply would not have existed

RICHARD: The classic was Frank Borman (Eastern Airlines), who made them remove Rosenquist's "Star Thief."

RUTH: Well, they wouldn't allow us -

RICHARD: Wouldn't let it in.

RUTH: We had the opportunity to have Rosenquist's "Star Thief" --

RICHARD: And that was, like, a quarter of a million dollars? And it just went to auction for $2 million.

BY: That was a very public controversy.

RICHARD: Frank Borman said, "That's not what space looks like, there's no bacon in space."

RUTH: And the saddest part of all of that, of course, was that Frank Borman had absolutely nothing to say about that decision. He rented space at the airport; those concourses belong to the public, belong to Dade County.

BY: And six months later he was gone, I think; in a very, very short time.

RICHARD: So it's rather unique. Well, we're a unique community.

BY: But as a commissioner, there were many opportunities for you to really do effetive things for the arts in the community.

RUTH: Well, Christo (Surrounded Island, Biscayne Bay, 1983) was of course for the golden moment for Dade County and that was one of the most absurd public hearings I have ever been through, because the opponents to Christo were the environmentalists who were sure that that pink fabric would kill the bay forever --

BY: People would bring little children out (to the meetings) with little poems they had written about how this was going to kill the manatees and the guppies and all the things in the water.

RUTH: Exactly. And their argument also was that the islands were pristine and magnificent and we would be ruining them. And of course I remember most of them were called "beer can island" and I made that quite public. And then, one gentleman who just broke me up completely was the tour operator who had a little boat and insisted that this would kill his business. And I would like some day to find that gentleman and find out just how much money he made with his "little boat" chugging people around all of that wonderful fabric.

BY: That was a very tough time, because there had been months of information in the newspapers, they'd been talking about it, and permits and things going back and forth --

RUTH: Well, of course, that's a part of the project. That's what is so wonderful about Christo and what he does, that the end result is simply the end result of all of this political activity up to it. And he's so skillful --

RICHARD: They did vote it down.

BY: They were voting it down and then Ruth stood up (Ruth laughs heartily) and said "no, you will not do this, you will go to lunch and think about this."

RUTH: And come back with a different vote. And then of course it was so wonderful and so beneficial to this community. The economic spinoff was just incredible, and of course the artistic notoriety was wonderful. And we hang in museums all over the world. Nice. And then historic preservation was another major brouhaha. I thought I was doing a motherhood something, I thought I'd finally found an issue on which everyone could agree, and discovered that the very people who owned all of the little things that were called "deco-buildings" said, "If you pass this ordinance you will kill my business, it will be the end of Miami Beach." And they were the most vocal opponents, and of course despite their beliefs and despite their activities it has turned into one of the greatest economic bonuses this community has ever seen.

BY: And it's not just the beach now, it's other buildings in our community that have been saved.

RUTH: Well, yes, and that's a little harder to prove -- the economic benefit of that as opposed to the art deco district is so incredibly positive; it's wonderful. But there are a lot of opportunities to save the art budget, to carve 20% of the tourist tax for arts activities, to link tourism and the arts as integral to each other.

RICHARD: And the new group Friends of Art- in- Public- Places has done an excellent job.

RUTH: Oh, marvelous.

RICHARD: They've created situations at the airport which are wonderful and they've created some really, really outstanding symbols of the community, and it's worked very, very well.

RUTH: I'm just surprised that it isn't advertised more avidly. I think people would actually come and ride the metrorail to see the art if they knew that this was something they should be doing. And until we turn it into one of the bonuses of the community, it will simply be peripheral to what we do.

BY: They're working very closely with the school system in terms of educating future voters.

RUTH: Well, that's good, but I don't have that kind of patience. I want their parents out looking at it now. It's good to build for the future but there are people who should be appreciative of what it is they pass every single day.

RICHARD: It's more important for those who don't pass in those communities to see it. Because the majority of

the people that really could be affected by this don't go to the areas where a lot of the public --

RUTH: Well, they drive past Douglas Road and U.S. l and they see what one of the commissioners called the ''Falling Refrigerators,'' and they go --

RICHARD: That was a reference -- one of the Commissiners called that the ''Falling Outhouses,''

RUTH: And you could go to the Caleb Center (Richard Hunt and African Textiles) and see really outstanding art in the --

RICHARD: I agree, why have they been missing it? The average person doesn't go to the Caleb Center, and what should be instigated -- and you just gave me a marvelous idea. The support group at our museum (MOCA), for example, should definitely be taken on a tour. That should be one of the --

RUTH: Well, I have heart, because there is a newly formed group in the Friends of Art- in- Public- Places program and I can't imagine that they would not see this as part of their responsibility.

RICHARD: I think it would be terrific.

RUTH: I'd really be excited to see that. So it's the same when people come to see the Everglades or see Vizcaya--

RICHARD: ..... [overapping voices] ... take a tour with Paul George. You know, the city tours, I think it's the same thing. But I think Art- in- Public- Places should make it a commitment to do those tours the way Paul George does.

RUTH: Well, they do. And what's interesting is they have them available for conventions that come to town, but I just think it needs to be built.

BY: And we've got some major artists -- Claes Oldenburg and Edwad Ruscha. It's a long list of very impressive names. Purvis Young, Carlos Alfonzo, Maria Martinez Canas --

RICHARD: That could be a very good project to consider -- getting people out on the metrorail and the metromover.

BY: After county service, Ruth you are now president of the Dade Community Foundation, this was about '85 I guess that you'd taken that position? RUTH; Yes, you're right.

BY: But your commitment to the arts has really continued in that role also.

RUTH: Well, as much as we could. The mission of the Foundation is to build community and obviously you can do this through the arts almost better than any other way. So we've been able to work very closely with some great institutions. Like what was then COCA [Center of Contemporary Art], in North Miami, had a wonderful exhibit of Haitian artists from the Saint Soleil and made application to the Foundation for support for the exhibit. The Foundation doesn't support an exhibit, but what they did was so beneficial to that community that we wanted to be a part of the mix so that we did make a grant for lectures, for bringing people in from the neighboring communities, for opportunities to meet the Haitian artists who came to be on site, for young people and artists to do a mural on the side of the building. And this was particularly beneficial since the community is heavily Haitian at this point, and for them to feel ownership about the institution because they feel welcome and have used the museum now. We like to feel that we helped to build community in that area. So here we are, supporting the arts but not supporting the arts--

BY: Outside your mission.

RUTH: Correct.

BY: I know at the library you supported the Jack Delano exhibition. We had two Puerto Rican groups in the community that were very, very intense and excited and wanted to get that exhibit here, but were really not having the funding, and the Dade Community Foundation helped us to make that happen. Which was very important in getting people into the library.

RICHARD: Raggedy Ann and Andy (original Johnny Gruelle-creator of Raggedy Ann and Andy-family dolls, given to the library in 1953 and restored with the support of Dade Community Foundation in 1989) -- when you called and gave us that opportunity, I just knew (laughing) that this was the Foundation's mission, that this was what we were supposed to do. And in restoring those two wonderful dolls, we were able to hold onto a little bit of the history in Miami, and our history is so shallow that to be able to take advantage of whatever we have is just marvelous.

BY: It is still a bit of a surprise to many people that the original Raggedy Ann and Andy exist, and that they exist here in Miami, and now they exist in very good condition because of Dade Community Foundation.

RUTH: That was very wonderful. We have a small grants program that came up right after the hurricane [Andrew] when we discovered that there were individual artists whose collections, whose works, whose studios had been wiped away with the hurricane. And so we were able to raise some money specifically for that issue and were able to make grants directly to artists to help them to restore their art.

BY: And now you're beginning to see the result of that.

RUTH: The benefits of that work, yes.

RICHARD: Absolutely. And we were just lucky enough to add to the collection a work by Florencio Gelabert, whose studio got completely demolished. And with the material, with the equipment he was able to buy as a result of the grant from the Foundation, he did a piece that we have now ended up with. But not that we had gone after. It was just one of those unique situations that make the collection what it is. We don't search out things, as much as things come into our life. That's what really makes the collection fun. This is not a -- let's talk about that in a moment. This is not one of those collections that's a study collection in the sense that it's historical and it moves historically. It's a collection that's very personal, and there's a story almost with every piece. Otherwise it wouldn't be here. And that's what makes this collection, to us, fun to live with. We never get tired of a piece because there's a reason that the piece is here. It's very difficult to tire of something that you went to the effort to choose. We never buy a piece because it's "the right thing to buy." I don't think we've yet done that. These collections that are outstanding, and there are a lot of them, that people that we know have, where they really don't like the art but they know that it's important: there's none of that here.

BY: Do you have guidance with the collection? Someone asked me about that.

RICHARD: Absolutely none.

BY: I didn't think that you did.

RUTH: Aside from the names of the people whom we've mentioned --

RICHARD: They don't buy the collection.

RUTH: No, no, but they have the patience to educate our eye. And they told us what to read and what to look at and what to do and where to go to see. And then we gained the confidence through that kind of education to choose the pieces; but no one has ever stood at our elbow and said, "Take that one, it's a good investment" or "Take that one, it will fill in a gap in the collection."

RICHARD: They've said that. They frequently say that. "This is a good investment." And that's a perfect reason for us not to buy it. That is the one phrase that when a dealer says "it's a good investment," that's a good reason for us to make a run for it. We have never had a consultant. We have had people that we turn to, that's about the only way to put it. There are people in New York who know what our collection is and they will call and say, "I've found something you should really take a look at," and we do.

RUTH: That's wonderful -- to get a call from Portland, to get a call from some place that you have visited, you have been with the gallery, spoken to them, they have an idea of what it is we like. And then you get slides in the mail.

BY: Going back a little bit to [Tatyana] Grosman: that was a very, very special time in terms of prints, in terms of art in this country, and you had sort of immediate access to her, her workshop, and the artists and --

RUTH: I would describe a visit to Tatyana's studio as a religious experience, topped only by when she came to visit us at the hotel when we went to New York and she would bring her goodies. And on a cocktail table she would open the portfolio and begin to reveal these pieces that were just heart-stopping, that were so incredibly magnificent that you really wanted to sell your first-born so that you could have one of each.

BY: Were there four children? (all three laugh heartily)

RUTH: They're still around, not to worry!

RICHARD: The fun of that early material is that we knew that there was something happening; we could feel that there was something happening. We also knew that we couldn't buy it all, so we were really very, very selective. And it was just fun. But one of the great things that we have, one of the greatest part of this whole collection are the checks that we wrote Tatyana Grosman for pieces of art where on the back it says "Deposit to the account of Tatyana Grosman" in her handwriting, and I've shown these to dealers in New York who say, "Can

I have that??" I say, "No," (chuckling) "you can't have that." But the Rauschenburgs, the Rivers O'Hara "Stones" -- that's a 15-year anniversary, the one Tatyana. (Reference to image in room)

RUTH: Frankenthaler?

RICHARD: Yes, the Frankenthaler which was the first successful .....,the "Persian garden," the [Fritz] Glarner study for the mural in the Dag Hammarskjold Library (United Nations) Dine's first palette image, Rivers' "Last Civil War Veteran," the ‘'Lucky Strike Mirror'‘ and the ‘'Lucky Strike 2'' -- these are all pieces that we bought very, very early on, and they were all pieces where we have the checks, and it's incredible.

RUTH: We bought the pieces as they were produced, and we were there when we would watch the artist select them out of the 50 that were printed. She produced special paper for each one of these artists and there were always 50 sheets. And they would then choose, after printing 50, how many would be kept. And we'd stand there and watch them tear them in half --

RICHARD: (laughing) So we look back now that we see what the value is, we look back now and think about, we have editions that are 18, 20, 23, and realize that there were 27 that were destroyed. And we think, "Were they really that bad?" (he laughs)

RUTH: But they were unacceptable to the artist. (overlapping voices)

RUTH: And the printmaker had a lot to do with that as well.

RICHARD: But there were a lot of wonderful experiences. Of course, Ruth says it was like a religious experience, but also the second experience was that they had a marvelous commissary. She always had a cook there, and the artists and the printer would break and she'd always invite you for a time when there was food. And you'd sit around this huge table, either inside or outside, and the food and the conversation were just fantastic.

BY: Who were some of the artists that you actually broke bread with? (laughter)

RICHARD: Rauschenberg, Rivers, Rosenquist. Yes several times. Yeah, they were there, and we never knew they were who they were, because--

RUTH: At the time Rosenquist wasn't "Rosenquist" --

BY: These were just your mom's friends--

RICHARD: No, Rosenquist was a billboard painter who was also doing prints. The great thing I mentioned earlier on --

RUTH: This was before their notoriety is what I'm trying to explain. It was not unlike sitting here with one of the artists who was working in Miami. It's exactly the way we felt about these people up there -- we knew this was extraordinary work, we knew something was happening, but we never had anticipated what it was going to be.

RICHARD: I can't document this other than the history of what was told to me, by him. And that is that these prints we talked about earlier -- LAE prints, Limited Art Editions, not Universal Limited Art Editiions -- these screen prints were sold through a man named Barney Weinger, who was with the old Marlborough Gallery, and the person who sold them had just begun working and was not at all successful yet. His friend was, but the one who was selling them was Jasper Johns. And it was Rauschenberg who brought Johns out to Tatyana and said, "He's good, let him print too."

BY: Oh my goodness.

RICHARD: That's fact. Rauschenberg was there first. He did ‘'Stuntman I,'‘ ‘'II'‘ and ‘'III'‘ and and several other prints, and he brought Johns out there, and that's how that happened. Barney Weinger says that Jasper worked for him. He was the one that was selling the LAE screenprints, which were not even original works of art, for Barney at Marlborough. That's how he stayed alive.

RUTH: [overlapping voices] work with these people was wonderful because the conversation was wonderful, but there was no star quality. RICHARD The first start quality that we really felt, I think, was at the time, I don't remember the year, the Jewish Museum Show. And then all of a sudden we saw the Rauschenberg "Sleeping Bag." We saw work by Johns, a "Flag" or whatever, and we began seeing the importance of what was going on. And it was that first Jewish Museum Show in New York; and it was the first contemporary show in New York. It was before any of the other facilities and we had begun thinking about it. And it was exciting. I look back at that as maybe the turning point for us when we began realizing hey, these guys are really good.

RUTH: We thought they were, but we never thought anyone else thought they were that good.

RICHARD: We never went through the academic process of "why does this reflect on Bellini" and why does this do that, and why does that -- we believed in ourselves. And to this day I can honestly say, we believe in ourselves. I would be the worst academic curator that ever happened, because I do things that I like. We haven't talked about it yet but at the COCA, the Center of Contemporary Art, which was an outgrowth of the old Metropolitan Museum down here, when we got involved with that, there were only two of us involved. As Ruth said earlier, it was, like, "let's do a show, let's have" -- you know, the old Andy Hardy kind of thing; and if I ran into somebody who had an idea for a show, we put it in COCA. The decision apparently was good, because we did 85 exhibitions at COCA -- non academic. But the reviews were phenomenal.

RUTH: No, no,no. You always had the good sense and the respect for the artists to go to a curator to put these exhibits together -- you came up with the idea --

RICHARD: No, no -- we're going to disagree, first time in our lives, but things like our Photographic Collection, Publicity/Paparazzi, these were concepts: I didn't go into the history, I created the history of the difference between press, publicity, paparazzi. The photography exhibition that happened as a result of our collection was not an academic collection, it was a wonderful collection of photographs that ultimately ended up at the Southeastern END OF THIS SIDE BEGINNING SIDE A, TAPE 2

RICHARD: (continuing) Museum of Photography --

BY: But all the elements were there.

RICHARD: Right, but it was not done academically, is what I'm saying. In our collection here we have a piece that I'm looking at right now by Alexander Apostol. He's from Venezuela; it's one of the first gravures -- a whole new thing of photogravure that's happening. We don't have the history of where the photogravure came from or where it's going. We love that piece. The irony of that piece is that when I was in New York several months ago I wasn't even aware -- we get the New York Times but the Times that we get doesn't have all of the reviews and all of everything that's in New York. I went to the Marlborough Gallery and they were having a masterful exhibit of photography since Kim Schmitt came into Marlborough Gallery, [a few seconds' blank tape, then resuming] they had the image that we had bought, reproduced as the featured item of that exhibition. And we didn't buy it because we thought it was academically the most important. The New York Times thought it was. In the review it indicated this was the bellwether of this gravure proces. We bought it because we loved it, and that's what I meant about not going to the history -- we don't have any other gravure, we haven't studied the history of it, nor since then have we bought any. We just love the object. And that's what the nature of the collection is.

RUTH: But you also have a respect for gravure, you understand the process --

RICHARD: Absolutely -- I then read about it afterwards but that didn't mean that we were going to have a gravure collection. When we started with Tatyana, we literally went into the print collection. When we started with Bernard Davis, we literally went into a Latin American collection.

RUTH: We had a great Latin American collection.

RICHARD: Of Carreno, Loza, Canas, Forte, Chab, we had some great ones. We gave that collection to the old Metropolitan Museum, and then went on to the next collection. But we never made Latin America "the collection." We had a lot of Latin American art here. We then got very involved when Vanidades started a Gallery out on 36th Street, with Willie Bermaillo running it. And it was fun to go out there. We bought one or two from every exhibition. Then all of a sudden we had a Cuban collection. And then that Cuban collection we gave to people -- we gave some to the Miami Dade Public Library, we gave some to the Lowe [Art Museum], we've given things all over. We even gave away a whole group of [Enrique] Riverons and even some [Wilfredo] Lams, believe it or not, early on to the Cuban Museum at the Daytona Museum of Art because they have the Cuban Museum -- the Daytona Museum of Arts and Sciences has a Cuban Museum, which is essentially the Batista Collection. We knew that they wanted that material. We gave it to the director, Gary Libby, whom I had met when I sat on a grants panel in Tallahassee, and he said they're expanding their collection, I said "we'll give you some of our stuff." And that's what we do. It's not gratuitously that we do, we do it because it fills out a collection of somebody else, and we've got somebody waiting to jump on the wall.

BY: You had quite a photo collection?

RICHARD: Yes. Well, the photo collection started -- Ruth was very busy with other things, and all of a sudden --

RUTH: It was my decade of politics, when I absented myself from life, and Richard went on with it. This is literally his collection.

RICHARD: I've had a lot of fun with it, and we did it very quickly, and got rid of it very quickly. But I didn't get rid of it very quickly because I wanted to, it just was too big for us to handle. We had 140 pieces framed that

used to go out on exhibition. When it came back, and there was a total of 800 pieces in the collection, when you have 140 framed pieces, that's a room; and we have never warehoused art. That's one of the things we've never done. People all say, "Do you use the Fortress, or do you have storage" No, what's here is here. When we have one more piece that comes in that's too big, then something will move, something will give but it won't go to a warehouse. And we just don't do that. We just had a situation where I saw a folio in New York, thought it was marvelous, introduced it to the Whitney [Museum] where I'm on the Print Aquisition Committee. It was so good, and I was so thrilled because it's the 14th year of the Print Committee and it's my 14th year on the Print Committee, that I donated it in Ruth's and my name to the Whitney. It's a thing called "Couples," it's marvelous, so we bought one for ourselves. Now, all of a sudden we have 12 images by people like Brice Marden, Eric Fischl, Joel Shapiro, Mel Bochner. They're fantastic pieces, and their wives- April Gornick, Helen Marden, Sylvia PlimackMangold, and its got 12 pieces, what do you do with them? So we found a wall that was vulnerable and we removed a marvelous Ed Rusha and found another spot for it and a marvelous Gottlieb and found another spot for it, and now they're up. And it's just a thrill. We were up in Massachusetts and we ran into a piece that we thought was just terrific by an artist who had never been our favorite, we'd seen other works by him, but this really surpassed anything that we'd seen that he'd done. The piece is eight feet by four feet. When we got it, I thought it would fit in another place, but it didn't fit in the other place when we got it in. We found a place for it and we love it, it's really wonderful. It displaced a Chuck Close piece, and now we've found another place for the Chuck Close piece just by moving stuff around. We've not gotten rid of anything in this whole process, but that's the fun of the collection. With the photography we couldn't do that. It was just too massive. I had collected too much too quickly. But that collection when it travelled around was marvelous -- the catalogue was wonderful, it was really good, and I got a thrill out of it, I got a tremendous kick out of it.

BY: How did you happen to buy the first photograph?

RICHARD: The first photograph was the funniest mistake in the world. I went into a gallery and I knew that we could never afford a Hopper. I looked at this photograph and I said, "This photograph is a Hopper." I bought. It was not expensive, it was, like, $200 or $300. And it was a Berenice Abbott photograph called "Sisters." It's three buildings on Fifth Avenue, 357 or whatever. That was my Hopper. And then thought I'd find out who Berenice Abbott was. And then I said, "Hey, that's a photograph! She's important, that's a good one." And then I realized we had other photographs, but the other photographs were all objects. We had an early Lynton Wells series done of the family. It was on photo-emulsion, German photo linen. That's a marvelous piece; again, traveled around. A Jim Scheitinger ceramic, he used to work down here, and when he won first prize in Rhinebeck with this piece I said, "We've got to have it" and we got it, and it's a ceramic but it's got photo images on it.

RUTH: The Rauschenbergs.

RICHARD: The Rauschenbergs are all photo-lithographs. We got a Jerry McMillan " Torn Bag" that had the landscape interior. It was a photo. But to us these were objects, not photographs. And then we said, "We have a couple of photographs; let's continue." So I continued and I went crazy and we never extended ourselves to an enormous figure that was beyond our means.

BY: It was a wonderful collection, all the pieces -- [Fox] Talbot and Francis Frith.

RICHARD: Yes. It just worked wonderfully. It started with Hill and Adamson and went straight up to the very contemporary. And it was a lot of fun. When Ruth got involved a lot in the Cristo project, and this was during that period when she was a commissioner, Wolfgang Volz knew about the collection and gave us a piece for the collection. Well, to have a Wolfie Volz Cristo ‘'Surrounded Islands'‘ piece is more important to me than all of the drawings that Christo did. Wolfie did it himself, and he gave it to us, and that was what the collection was built on. It was built on a lot of personal stuff and a lot of fun. And then when it got too big, we happened to find out that the Southeast Center for Photographic Studies had a commitment from the state -- no, the Daytona Beach Community College had a commitment from the state for another building. And they were going to move the Southeast Center for Photographic Studies somewhere else. Of course, we came up with [the idea] would they use the new building for a photography museum? The answer was "yes" if they had a collection and had a direction. The direction was that they got a fabulous director, Alison Nordstrom, out of Boston. She came down, looked at the collection, she got the collection, and with the collection it became the Southeast Museum of Photography.

RUTH: We had offered it to some local institution first and they didn't see it as an integral part of their collection, so we felt not too uncomfortable letting it go out of town. But I do want, for the record, that we indeed tried here first.

RICHARD: And it wouldn't have had importance here because there was no facility. I mean, now I regret it, now that I'm so involved with MOCA. That would have been an ideal repository for it; except for the fact that the mission of MOCA is from 1945 on, and now it would have been dividing the collection for everything before '45.

So, it's in the perfect spot.

RUTH: It has the most marvelous impact, really.

RICHARD: Once again, it's in a perfect spot. But that's what's happened. The other pieces we have came at a funny persective. I'm on the Fine Arts Board of the Federal Reserve Board.

BY: What does that mean?

RICHARD: The Fine Arts Board is an advisory board working at the whim, literally, of the Director of the Fine Arts Program, a very good woman and a good administrator by the way, Mary Anne Goley, and a good academician -- I mean, she really understands and is really well studied in art. And she's put together this collection, this collection that is at the Federal Reserve, as well as advising other Feds on their collections.

RUTH: We have some beautiful pieces here at the Federal Reserve here in Miami. Richard's on the board in Washington, but here we have one of the most magnificent [Mark] di Suvero's sitting out on the front lawn of the Federal Reserve Board. In their board room there are about six Lynne Gelfman's that are just spectacular.

RICHARD: Each one of them is a very good collection. Plus the fact that I'm on this board and one of the items that they get involved with are money pieces. So we've got a lot of money pieces in our collection -- Moyra Davey, Barton Benes, Zoe Morrow. And people say, "Why do you get involved?" That's why we get involved.

RUTH: These are pieces that use currency.

RICHARD: Yes, they all use currency-- money pieces. They use the shredded currency or they use concepts. So, there are all little reasons why things are here. And it's just a great, great feeling to walk around. The greatest feeling that I have is when a group comes in and we get a chance to talk about the art. And that's fun, that's really fun. And it's great fun to find a very knowledgeable person .... and look at a piece of art here -- and I'm looking at one right now -- and we have a piece that we got maybe five or six years ago by a photographer, it was when I was interested in -- still in photography -- Mariane Yampolsky from Mexico. Nice piece, and I just loved it, I loved the image and that's why we got it. Find out now that she's a leading photographer in Latin America, and we're not going to run out because we have her and get ten more Mariana Yampolsky's. But we have a Mariane Yampolsky and I'm thrilled with the fact that she's very important now.

RUTH: It's a vindication of your taste, because this is a really gut reaction; it's what they call esthetic judgment, and we covet these pieces with that esthetic judgment. And then to find that your judgment has some value, has some merit, is very validating, very exciting.

RICHARD: Some of it gets very intertwined. For example, we love Robert Chambers, who's at the sculpture department of the University of Miami, and we have one big piece of his that's a floor piece; and we have another piece that he did with gell and a vacuum kind of installation, a sculptural piece. About a month ago, somewhere in late October, on the cover of the New York Times magazine, the photograph was taken by Timothy Greenfield Sanders [phon.sp.], who is one of the people that we have a tremendous respect for and we love to be able to give his work: that's a very important thing, we've donated an enormous amount of his work to good museums because he is museum quality. He did the cover of the New York Times, and on the cover the piece that he illustrated was a Bob Chambers piece. You know, it's so much fun to have all these elements come together. And they do come together and it makes it worth-while. The only thing we haven't talked about is MOCA and how that happened. Do you want to talk about it now, because we can almost finish --

BY: [contining interview] Interview with Ruth and Richard Shack on Saturday, January 18, at the Shacks' home in Miami.

BY: Last time when we ended up about a month ago, we were talking about the North Miami Museum. Maybe just as sort of background: I know that you were involved with a lot of different art organizations and institutions prior to North Miami. Can you give a little bit of real quick background about that and sort of how those involvements may have led up to North Miami?

RICHARD: Well, they really didn't. I was one of the presidents of the Friends of Art; that was at the Lowe Museum, but that really didn't have anything to do with where we got into North Miami. From the Lowe, the next thing we got involved with was the Miami Art Center and the Miami Art Center ultimately became the Metropolitan Museum and Art Center. And the Metropolitan had outreache programs, and one of the outreaches was in a little building on Northeast Eighth Avenue and 125th Street, which then was just an outreach. It was called the Metropolitan Museum and Art Center, North Miami.

BY: What year was that?

RICHARD: About 18 years ago.

BY: Was that at the end of the Metropolitan?

RICHARD: Yes. It was there for the last two years of the Metropolitan Museum and Art Center. People like Juanita May were involved and a lot of the instructors from the Metropolitan Museum taught classes at the North Miami facility. As a matter of fact, to this day and it's still there, the ceramic front of the Metropolitan Museum is a piece done by Juanita May and that's still up.

BY: So they were having exhibitions at that time also?

RICHARD: No, not at that point. It was a school, it was a school outreach, that was its function. It was for classes.

RUTH: The real strength of the Metropolitan were the classes, from my point of view. They had interesting exhibits but the ongoing value to the community, I think, was really its classes.

RICHARD: No question about it. When our kids were relatively little, we took classes at the Miami Art Center. As a matter of fact, at one point I was intrigued with the fact that we had these Rauschenberg prints and the Johns prints and I really -- you looked at them and you realized, "they're very easy to do, anyone could do that, why is Rauschenberg --"

RUTH: You're talking about you, perhaps, but not me at all --

RICHARD: I would look at it and I'd say, "How difficult could this be?" So I took --

RUTH: We took classes.

RICHARD: Well, we took classes, I took it with Lindy, ...

RUTH: We took classes in printmaking --

RICHARD: But then I went with Lindy and I tried to reproduce --

RUTH: Well, that's what the whole thing was about. We went up to try to find out how these were done and then discovered they were virtually impossible.

RICHARD: Yeah, you can't do them.

BY: But you were curious about the mechanics.

RUTH: I wanted my hands to be dirty, I wanted to try to -- I wasn't trying to replicate what they did, I was trying to experience their experience.

RICHARD: But I tried to replicate. I got a stone and I used some of the iconography from [Jim] Dine and from [Larry] Rivers and from [Robert] Rauschenberg and none of it came out, none of it. So apparently it was at that point that I realized that "I want to be a good collector." (laughter) I'm not going to be an artist. But that was our relationship with Miami Art Center. And then Arnold Lehman came in and became the director, and we stayed very, very close with the Metropolitan Museum and Art Center. And when that ended its operation or folded or whatever the terminology was, this building was still standing in North Miami.

BY: And you were living in North Miami.

RICHARD: Yes, we lived close to North Miami; my office was on 76th and Biscayne. There was a group called the Society of the Arts in North Miami and on several occasions they asked me to judge the art show that they had every year. I did that two or three times and got very, very friendly with the people involved. At one point one of the volunteers asked me, when the Metropolitan Museum went under, whether I would get involved with the Society of the Arts and with her in doing something with this building. So we went to the City Council and made an agreement with them that we would run classes at the facility for equivalent to half a year and half a year would be exhibitions. So there would be classes for several weeks, then we'd clean the walls -- because everything would be a mess from the classes -- do an exhibition; then classes again, and then an exhibition. And people like Marty Kreloff and Elliot Miller -- there were some good instructors that handled the classes. My involvement was in dreaming up ideas for the exhibitions. And we had a lot of fun because we were able to do watever we really wanted. And the city supported it.

BY: At this time the galleries had been opening up, is that correct? The galleries on Kane Concourse.

RICHARD: Oh yes, they were open. Oh definitely. As a matter of fact, when we put together our first board, we included Dorothy Blau and there was a lot of involvement of people who were in the arts. And it became fun, every exhibition was, "Well, let's do a show," like an Andy Hardy kind of thing.

BY: Do you remember the first exhibition?

RICHARD: Oh goodness no. But we did the first "Art- in- Public- Places" exhibition, we did the only exhibition that, I think, was down here of "Art of the Opera." That was put together by Barbara, our daughter. We did "Icons of Miami Vice" where the Miami Vice art director had just gotten an Emmy [award] and I said, "Hey, put together a show of all the art that you used" and they re-created three sets in our facility. By this time we'd eliminated the classes, by the time of ‘‘Icons of Miami Vice.‘‘ I jumped ahead: we had the classes and the exhibitions, and when we threw in the exhibitions it was more for fun and for giving people an opportunity to see what other art was. The first couple of exhibitions -- yes, I do remember what we did, we went to the various facilities in the community, like the Lowe. And we did exhibitions called "The Best of the Lowe," the best of -- I don't remember who else --

RUTH: The "Corporate Collections"--

RICHARD: Yes, but I meant the very first one, where we had the curators from the various areas. We had "Dealer's Choice," for example --

BY: You had the "Fellowship" shows also.

RICHARD: That was way later, but at the very beginning we had "Dealer's Choice," we let a dealer curate a show. And then we got into the corporate collections" where we had curators put together the "Best of Corporate Collections.‘‘ And that was very successful. And then we had the "Art- in- Public- Places" and architecture. We had Raul Rodriquez. He did a marvelous show on architecture. We had really, really interesting views of the community. And then we decided to expand, and in the expansion we did the areas of the state of Florida. So we did a show of Brevard County, of Monroe County, of the Orlando area, Pensacola, and we had curators from those areas do the exhibitions. And what we were really doing was looking at Florida artists, in a very, very good perspective. As we grew, we got to the point where we were using curators from outside this area, even to the point -- and not being a museum, we could do it -- we used curators who were gallery owners. A good example is Bernice Steinbaum, who did a show called "Collage Unglued" where the stipulation was that if she used five artists from out of the community -- people like Faith Ringgold and Mariam Shapiro, -- she'd have to use five from Florida; they didn't necessarily have to be Miami artists but five from Florida. And it ultimately ended up, she signed two or three of them for her gallery -- Elena Presser, Marie Chiarlone -- so these people were getting exposure outside the area, and we were getting very, very good reviews,-- at that point, in Art News, a couple in Art in America; it was very, very interesting. I jumped ahead, though. The volunteers from the Society of the Arts then sort of disappeared, the only one left was Lou Anne Colodny, and at that point she and I were the volunteers. We were literally volunteers, and we went to the City and got them to pay for a part-time secretary, and that's who we brought in.

BY: That was the first real honest-to-God staff --

RICHARD: Yes, that was a part-time secretary, and that part-time secretary kept the records of who was going to the classes, when the exhibitions were coming in, and all that kind of thing. Lou Anne would literally get in the car or the truck -- no, we made a deal with Ryder [Corporation], and Ryder lent us a truck once every month or so to pick up and deliver the art; that was their donation to the facility and it was wonderful, that went on for years. Lou Anne would go down and pick up the art, do the newsletter, and do whatever had to be done. After a couple of years it became apparent that this was a good facilty and we wanted to eliminate the classes, because that was really scumbling up the facility, and we got good walls, and we were getting good reviews, and we were getting a lot of good crowds. So we went to the City and said we were going to eliminate the classes. That was a very sensitive point, because this was a city facility and they really wanted it for the community. But we were saying "it's not costing anybody anything, we're underwriting it," and we really were underwriting it. The only thing that they were doing was the minor maintenance, which was very, very little, and the part-time secretary. We got marvelous donations from people in the community, a lot of people were very cooperative -- the Burdines, Steve Muss, even Marty [Martin] Margolies, who was in the area at that point with Jockey Club; but a lot of people were giving us enough money to keep us going. What they didn't give us, Ruth and I donated. So, the budgets were very, very small, but the ultimate result was very, very large. There was so much heart in the exhibitions and they cost so little to put up, but they were really done well, the artists loved it. The artists got involved in hanging it, everyone was a part of it and that was the beauty of that little facility.

RUTH: I think you just touched on something very strong: it was really an artists' center, where artists felt comfortable, felt welcome and felt respected. There weren't a lot of spaces in Miami that gave that to them.

RICHARD: And a lot of the artists were asked to curate things. We had more artists curating during this time -- I

mean, many artists had their first opportunity to curate anything in that facility. But artists curated, and they were all wonderful. There were opportunity for people who didn't have another venue to exhibit. Guys like Bill Ward of the University of Miami would curate a show of sculpture and have people like Bob Huff and Bob Thiele and some of the really outstanding sculptors of the area exhibit -- Joan Lehman; and they were really exciting shows. We went through galleries. We ended up with people like Bruce Helander, who did a show ''Art of the Real'' which was the first show in years that Duane Hanson participated in. The exhibitions were wonderful, and at that point we realized we had something good. And it was at that point that Lou Anne Colodny decided that being a volunteer was great, but she would like to be director. So she took over the directorship and we discussed it with the city and that's when I left before. Since this was a community facility, they were quite concerned that their people couldn't have classes there, so we arranged for classes at another facility and sort of eliminated that concern and this became strictly an exhibition space, called North Miami Museum and Art Center. After Lou Anne got in place as the director, we realized we can't keep ''North Miami Museum and Art Center,'' because it was not a museum. So we worked on a name for a while and came up with Center of Contemporary Art, which was COCA, and it remained COCA. And as COCA it became nationally famous, which was terrific. There was always the illusion that the place was much larger than it was. We had people come down and be shocked that it was as small as it was, and yet never complained about the exhibitions. The exhibitions were always strong enough, the facility was always big enough -- of course as Ruth brought out many, many times, if it were any bigger, it wouldn't have worked; and I think that she's absolutely right, because the type of exhibitions we were doing, if it was in a bigger space, it would have lost its effectiveness.

BY: Well, it was very fresh. There wasn't this kind of slick, well-packaged feeling, everything was very fresh and there were a lot of surprises, a lot of enthusiasm --

RUTH: There was an intimacy. "This is something I can handle, I'm not going to get -- my eyes aren't going to get glazed over, I'm not going to get exhausted before I swallow this exhibition."

RICHARD: Some of the biggest surprises were when we were hanging shows and hammered a nail into the wall and it went right through the wall to the outside. [laughter] The facility had a lot of limitations, and it was certainly not a museum. But it always reminded me of a dinner that we had with one of the directors of the Metropolitan Museum, who when I was saying that the problem we have in North Miami is that we're calling it the North Miami Metropolitan Museum and Art Center, he said, "Look how lucky you are that they didn't call it the Louvre!" [laughter] You could have called the "North Miami Louvre" -- [laughter again] So, Lou Anne became director, and during this whole time I was playing Exhibition Chairman from the very get go. And we did 85 exhibitions in that facility.

RUTH: We also put together a very supportive board.

RICHARD: The board was wonderful, they were always good, they were always helpful.

BY: Now, did you originally have a board, or was that developed?

RICHARD: Yes, we started out with a board.

BY: Who were the first people on the board?

RICHARD: Peggy Hurst, Frank Smik, Dorothy Blau, Nancy Bloom, myself, Lou Anne; I don't think there were too many others. It was a working board and everybody was doing something, being very, very functional. And a lot of fun, that was a fun period. And the 85 exhibitions -- it's a thrill to me now to go into the board room at MOCA where they have the catalogue of most of the exhibitions, and they're marvelous. And Ruth and I had the biggest kick in New York on the last trip we were on. Somebody told us about a fabulous exhibition they saw at the American Crafts Museum. We made our way to the Museum of Modern Art, and right across the street to the American Crafts Museum. We walked in, and what had intrigued them was an installaation by Patrick Dougherty. We had had this, we had had Dougherty do an installation at COCA five years before we saw it at American Crafts. So the choices were always wonderful, they were absolutely marvelous and they were way ahead of their time --

BY: But what was exciting, too, about the Dougherty exhibition was I think he worked with ....., he worked with Karen Rifas and Ron Fondaw.

RICHARD: -- and with all the schools. And what he did here was to get all the school children to go into the Everglades and to Uleta Park and, in approved areas, get the wood that created the round and round installation. But that was a kind of fun, that's the fun of being able to do things like that. We were able to say, "OK, we want a Patrick Dougherty -- "

BY: You were able to create exhibitions.

RICHARD: They weren't packaged. During the entire time that we had COCA only once did we ever bring in an outside exhibition, and that was because a promised exhibition by one of the curators who was from Miami and just couldn't get his act together, fell apart two weeks before the exhibition; we had to bring another one in. Which was fine, it was still a State of Florida exhibition, put out by a Valencia Community College, called Mini Art?- "Small Works" --

BY: That was something that Judith Page put together?

RICHARD: It was one of the Judith Page exhibits, the "Small Works." And it was a wondeful show, we had liked it before, but that was the only outside exhibition we had in 15 years.

BY: It seems sort of sad that that's really not going to be the mission now, is it.

RICHARD: Right, it isn't, and that does make a big difference. Even at the last couple of shows at COCA, we had the monster show, which was wonderful, and it involved a lot of Miami artists, and then the next exhibitions were single installations, which was not what we had ever done before. And then when we moved over to the new facility, there were a lot of Florida artists in the "Defining the Nineties." But from that point on, it has become such an important facility that it can't revert to our original mission of having half and half, which is what our mission was.

BY: Do you sort of wish that you could find a not-so-important facility?

RICHARD: We may do that.

BY: Really?

RUTH: Well, I don't think that it's so --

RICHARD: It's not in competition with the Museum.

RUTH: No. I want to argue the term that it became such an ‘'important'‘ facility. It became a very ‘'different'‘ facility, with a different board of governors and a different mission. And moved away from where it was.

RICHARD: Oh, absolutely.

RUTH: The other served an incredible purpose which is now an unmet need.

RICHARD: Yeah, and I would like that to be the next thing that I think about, to find some way to go back to that let's-have-a-show kind of thing and let whoever you talk to put together an exhibition.

BY: The Library used to do things like that --

RICHARD: Right.

BY: -- and the South Florida Art Center is doing it to some degree but it's sort of struggling with it.

RICHARD: Well, Barbara Young at the Library did a fantastic job; used to do more exhibitions probably than anybody else will ever do in their lifetime down here, and they were all very good.

BY: But it would be wonderful to find another space.

RICHARD: Well, we're just vaguely talking.

BY: There's a glimmer in your eye.

RICHARD: Well, I'd like to do that, I'd really like to do that -- artists curating. I find that artists curating are usually the best exhibitions because it comes from the gut and they know what's involved and they don't choose people because they're friends, they choose them because they want them to be in the same exhibition with something of quality equal to theirs, or even better, because it makes theirs look better. There are no compromises, and I've noticed that with all of the curators that we've ever had, that those that had been involved in the development of art, ... those were the most intriguing.

RUTH: But it's sounding very bittersweet and I want to go back. I know I'm usurping your position, but creating a museum and building a splendid building like that is wholly extraordinary --

RICHARD: Oh, that's another whole issue, we're not talking about that yet, we're not talking about MOCA now, we're still back at COCA. But on COCA, we realized at one point that it had to go to the next step, and that's when we were very fortunate to run into a conversation with Congressman Bill [William] Lehman about monies

that were available for anything cultural, redevelopment of 125th Street, which is an area in North Miami, and part of it could be used for cultural facilities. Anything: libraries, whatever. And I convinced him there was a tremendous need for a new museum, that we couldn't really build onto the old one properly. And he was the one that developed the grant, and that was one of the best things that ever happened to the community, because with that we were able to -- we put out an RFP (Request for Proposal) and interviewed an enormous number of architects --

BY: How did you decide? It's a beautiful facility. How did you decide on [Charles] Gwathmey?

RICHARD: Well, we didn't decide. There was an RFP and these people all applied and the board voted. All these people made presentations. And far and away Gwathmey's presentation was the most vital. There were other architects that we were really enthusiastic about as far as what we saw in models and concepts, but their presentation to us wasn't as exciting as what we really wanted, and in talking to Gwathmey, one of the questions that I asked him was -- I said we'd just come back from New York and we saw the Tower Galleries at the Guggenheim, which cost almost the same for just the gallery as what we're talking about for the whole museum. The budget at that point was 2.5 million dollars. I said, "Why would you want to do this for 2.5 million dollars?" And he said that for 20 years he'd done rehabs, add-ons, all that, but he'd never had his own museum and this would be a Gwathmey museum. So he was very, very enthusiastic and that's what we went into, on that basis.

BY: I love the entrance. It sort of says, "Come on in."

RICHARD: So we ended up with Gwathmey. In the last year of COCA we really needed additional help on curating, because it was getting out of hand and we had the opportunity --we had heard that Bonnie Clearwater had moved to town and we realized we could use her to curate one or two shows. And she did. She did a fabulous job on the first couple of shows. So good, as a matter of fact, that when I, as chairman of the board and Lou Anne as Director of MOCA, had the opportunity to hire Bonnie, we hired her as curator for MOCA. She did a marvelous job on "Defining the Ninetiess" and moved into other very, very good exhibits. And it's been hugely successful -- the buildng is wonderful, it works. The problem really is that Lou Anne had so much of the finance area to deal with that it was too difficult to be director, curator -- you know, what all the requirements were. So she retired, just retired, and Bonnie at this point is Senior Curator and is acting as Interim Director. But the City Manager is the one who has to appoint the new director. At that point, with all this happening, I decided that the board needed a little boost too, and we developed a nominating committee and an executive committee and I moved up to Chairman Emeritus, and we were very, very fortunate in getting Irma Braman in as Chairman of the Board and she's done a wonderful job; she's been in there two months and has really done an outstanding job so far. So that's where that is. But the COCA situation was one where -- and the thing that I left out -- the board kept growing in directions that were going toward wanting a new museum, and that was what really pushed us forward. And the city was aware that we were getting tremendous, tremendous input for the City of North Miami -- which of course owned COCA, and which owns MOCA. It is their building. We are acting really as managers of the building for the City of North Miami. And they've been wonderfully cooperative.

BY: One thing that's added to the mission now with the facility being a museum is developing a collection. Is that the responsibility of the curator or does the board work with that? END OF THIS SIDE, A OF TAPE 2 BEGINNING SIDE B

RICHARD: [beginning mid-sentence] [The collection is] certainly not as large by any means as the Lowe, which no one will ever catch up with because they've been collecting for 25 or 30 years. But it's a very strong collection. One of the exhibitions that we had was paperworks from the permanent collection and it was outstanding. It was really a wonderful show. That was months ago. This July, I believe it is, is the exhibition of the works from the collection.

BY: The focus will be contemporary?

RICHARD: [contemporary] only; from '45 on. And that is the mission of the Museum -- from 1945 to now.

BY: How does that differ from and MAM (Miami Art Museum) and FIU (The Art Museum at Florida International University) collections?

RICHARD: I have no idea. I think that it's very competitive. I think there's room for everybody. I think MAM is in a little confused state because they're talking about moving and that creates a problem, makes people unsure.

BY: Well, they don't have the space to collect at this point.

RICHARD: That's right, and the Lowe is a university facility and has all the assets of being part of a university, and that's a new building and it is going to do very, very well. FIU is talking about a new building. The more of these facilities that are important contribute to the success of the community. We were talking about the art

fairs that are here that just left here a week or so ago. The Gramercy Art Fair, which is one of the most creative art fairs in New York and in L.A. and has traveled around, would never have come here without MOCA; I mean, MOCA is now the center of contemporary art for Florida. And I don't mean Dade County. People in New York refer to MOCA as the center of contemporary art for the State of Florida. There is no other facility that competes with it, and it's very, very exciting.

BY: What was MOCA's role in bringing the Gramercy?

RICHARD: The dealers and the artists have either -- the dealers had artists who had exhibited at MOCA or they were artists who had exhibited at MOCA and everybody was pushing to have a sales exhibition similar to the "Art Miami," but one that would be better suited to them.

RUTH: Let me go back to the hospitality that has always been shown to artists coming out of the old COCA and now MOCA. Dealers felt that they would survive here, that they would have a friendly atmosphere to show their work, because their artists had been shown here and received well. So it was a community that would understand what they were showing; they felt that there was a constituency for the kind of art that they believe is valid and a part of contemporary life. And so the existence of an institution that would show their artists makes it possible for dealers to think that they could sell to the same audience. And it proved valid.

RICHARD: Very much so. And there was another very big influence, and that influence was the fact that the Cuban community of artists grew here, and COCA first and then MOCA has been exhibiting them straight through. Jose Bedia, Torres-Llorca --

RUTH: Felix Gonzales?

RICHARD: We didn't start with him. I can't even think of their names -- Fernando Garcia --

BY: Pablo Cano, Maria Brito --

RICHARD: Yes. But they were all very, very involved with -- the locals, the ones that live here; and that's what I'm referring to: they now had an outlet. They were ones that passed the gallery -- the only place they were ever able to show was in a gallery and the gallery that sold them or didn't, but they never got the credibility of being in a museum. And this museum, we always gave them a tremendous, tremendous push.

BY: Do you think some of the galleries that came down for the Gramercy Fair here now look at Miami as a place for a more permanent situation?

RICHARD: We were in Atlanta the weekend that Gramercy was here, we were there on Friday, and when we came back Monday, we heard that four or five dealers had been on 125th Street discussing spaces across from the Museum.

BY: Right now 125th Street has kind of died down in terms of the galleries,

RICHARD: Well, 125th Street never had galleries. But in the North Miami area they're looking at those --

BY: And not Kane Concourse --

RICHARD: No, no, right across from the Museum they're looking at spaces right now.

BY: That would be an amazing area, wouldn't it.

RICHARD: Yes. And it could become the center of contemporary art. I don't want to push it before its time but I think that's a very, very important location. It will be an important location, and be great. When the exhibitions are right, the crowds are just fantastic. When we did the "Mexican Modernism" show we were doing 3,000 people on a weekend, which is enormous in this community. It's really incredible in this kind of community. So it's very exciting. And COCA ended very nicely and coming into MOCA was just the most exciting thing in the world. And to see a building come up -- it's coming up to a year now is just amazing. First of all, it's amazing that the building was up in a year and a half; that was one very amazing thing.

BY: But the city was really behind it.

RICHARD: They were behind it one hundred percent.

RUTH: A local architect --

RICHARD: Yes. Jose Galabert Navia and his father did a fabulous job as being the Miami architectural firm for Gwathmey. One of the things with Gwathmey was that he always anticipated that we would come up with more

money, and I kept telling him over and over again that there is no more money, that you have to stay within the budget; and he thought that was very funny. But it didn't work that way. We did get another $500,000 in capital from the state but we never got that additional money that he thought we were just going to be able to raise. Unfortunately, because of a conflict with a Disney project he was doing he couldn't come for the opening, which was last February. He did come down in March, and I walked through the gallery with him and he was actually shocked. He said, "This thing really works!" [laughter] So it was amazing to him. You know, he knew that it was good, but he didn't realize how good it was. And it is.

BY: It has a wonderful clean exhibition area.

RICHARD: And the building itself is just stunning. And it has the ability to grow, which is the next stop. It's got the capability of having another building directly behind one of the buildings now, there's space out there. That will happen in the next year or so.

BY: So from a parttime secretary and a couple of volunteers?

RICHARD: Right. ... amazing. It's gotten national and international exposure and recognition everywhere. It's always a kick to pick up the New York Times and when they have the national listings to see the major picture, a picture of one of the pieces that was in one of our shows. It's happened twice now. So it's really an exciting thing. They're only about 15 facilities listed in those national listings, and to be one of them is very, very exciting, and very gratifying.

BY: As it develops, with a permanent collection, is it going to be another space, or a different kind of space, or a different arrangement?

RICHARD: Well, we have the advantage of the main facility is there, and the preparation area and the storage area can be another exhibition space by adding another building on, and the capability is there to do it. All that has to happen is that the board has to raise the money. Which I think it can at this point.

BY: Who are the people on the board?

RICHARD: A lot of people. There are 18 on the board now and it's a very good board. And it'll grow. The whole place will grow. But that's MOCA and that's where we are now. And that's a very good place, and I'm chairman emeritus, just sitting there like the old man on the hill.

BY: What does that mean? What do you do as chairman emeritus?

RICHARD: I don't have to worry about the day-to-day operation as I did for all 15 years as chairman, and I have a site, and it's a much nicer position to be in at this point. There is so much activity going on that rather than trying to recreate stuff from before, bringing in somebody new is much better because it gives a whole new perspective.

BY: Are you still working with the acquisitions?

RICHARD: Oh yes, absolutely. As a matter of fact, Ruth and I just donated a Rauschenberg, Oldenburg, Anuskiewicz, quite a few other things to the facility this past year.

BY: How many pieces are in the permanent collection?

RICHARD: About 400. It's "getting there," it's really a good collection.

BY: Let's go back a little bit to Ruth and talk about some of the things you've done with the Dade Community Foundation. I know that you have a special project of loans to artists that you have mentioned before, and the Estate Project that you're working on?

RUTH: The mission of the Foundation is to build community, and if it's possible to do that in any field, I think it is in the arts --it's a kind of universal language which transcends all kinds of cultures and all kinds of interests. So we're always looking for interesting, innovative arts projects that will allow us to dabble in that field and allow people who want to bring communities together through the arts to do their good work. We just received a spectacular grant which I helped to fashion at the national level in helping to build audiences for the arts here in Miami, and it's always been my frustration through the years of volunteering in the arts, and then in public service having an interest in the arts and elective office and the rest, that there was no hue and cry about the artists and arts in town. If arts budgets were cut, there was polite "oh, isn't that too bad" rather than a real outpouring of outrage. I kept looking for outrage from the arts community and never could get it. There's very little built-in ownership of the arts in Miami and I'm hoping that this grant will show us how to and help us to build that kind constituency not only for the visual arts, which has been so much a part of our life, but for artists and performing artists, dancers, writers, historians, and the rest. So we're very excited about what's going to be

at least a five-year pursuit for the Foundation. Whenever we've had the opportunity we've focused on the arts, and the annual report for last year was a golden opportunity to highlight art in the community without choosing one institution over the other. We looked to an impartial place where people felt comfortable, that had a spectacular art collection, and that, of course, was the public library system. The people of Dade County own that art and have access to it constantly and I'm not sure even recognize how important that collection is. And so in building our annual report and looking for ways to illustrate the concept of building community, we were able to go to Barbara Young, who heads up that program and ask her to help us curate this particular annual report, and it has received such wonderful acclaim. We used Purvis Young, who is a spectacular Overtown, Miami artist as a cover, both front and back, and this is [an image of] people interacting with buildings. It's the quintessential building community message. And then inside, people who live and work in South Florida of every ethnicity are depicted. And again it was a delicious way to show off what we have in Miami and at the same time show how art can help to explain the message without being didactic and without being tiresome.

BY: It was a wonderful concept. The library is very proud of it.

RUTH: Oh, I'm glad -- we're fast running out of them, people call and ask for several copies we want to send them to and we're pleased to support that. It maybe the number one sales tool for the Foundation, but at the same time it's a very nice depiction of the vitality going on in Miami and we're really grateful to the library for letting us do that.

BY: Going back a little bit to the other project, the Lila Wallace [Readers Digest Foundation], the community is now developing a performing arts center, so we really are at a wonderful time to talk about developing audiences.

RUTH: Well, the Foundation has been a part of trying to diversify the audience in Miami, because we have a splendid mix of people in the greater Miami area. We've worked with the Opera in trying to diversify their constituency. We've worked with the Philharmonic in trying to come to a strategic plan in how to bring different kinds of people into their place. We've funded a massive study for the Center for the Fine Arts, which is now the Miami Art Museum. None of those studies were transferable from their institution to the arts; and that's been a frustration and that's why we worked so hard in trying to get Lila Wallace to pay attention to the fact that looking on beyond the institutions, we want to build a group of people who expect a quality of life, and that quality of life includes the arts. I'm waiting to get the Nobel Prize when we figure out how to do this. [laughter] I know we'll be in line for it.

BY: So people will act with outrage when the arts are short-changed.

RUTH: That's what I'm hoping for. I was on the commission -- if we changed a bus route, there were hundreds of people there shaking their fist at us, but when we eliminated the funding for the arts to the Cultural Arts Council, maybe two people came and said, "You really shouldn't be doing that, you know."

BY: I think one thing that's sort of wonderful about this community in terms of developing arts audiences is the Dade County public school program, and I think some of the private schools are really trying to work with their students to make sure that they expect to have the arts in their life.

RUTH: And the classic example of that in the arts, is Roberta Balfe. Years and years ago she gave money to the Greater Miami Opera, as it was then known, for opera in the schools. And she absolutely believed that if kids saw real live opera singers in their costumes, singing these marvelous songs, they would feel that opera should be a part of their life. Here we are, 15 or 20 years later, after the steady doses of opera in the schools funded by Roberta year after year after year, there are young people dating at the opera, there are young people buying tickets to go to see the opera, and we're all convinced it comes directly from Roberta Balfe's generosity and her vision. I personally don't have the patience to wait 15 years, so while indeed art in the schools is important, and I think that should be part of the taxes that we pay -- if we're going to teach math and language we should be teaching art at the same time -- I want to work with those who are here now, who are voting, and who are a part of the audience or should be part of the ticket-buying audiences for the arts.

BY: This is an exciting project and a big one that you have taken on.

RUTH: Well, it's forbidding simply because there are no rules and there are no parameters and we have to make it up as we go along. And there's no history either, you're right.

RICHARD: And particularly in this community, which is so divided ethnically that you really have to go in three different directions at the same time.

RUTH: At least.

RICHARD: You have to do it in multi-languages.

RUTH: Well, when we were building the Center for the Fine Arts, I spoke about how we really should be doing it not unlike a political campaign: every neighborhood should see the model for the Center, every neighborhood should see real live artists, every neighborhood should feel vested in what was happening in a space downtown. Of course we never had the money for it because it wasn't anyone else's priority. But that would have helped with the Art- in- Public- Places Program. We had one of the preeminent public collections on the streets and in the buildings of Miami. If the artist who was producing that work was on site producing it, meeting the people in the neighborhood, convincing them through example that they were hard workers, that they sweat, that they went home, that they ate lunch usually out of a brown bag as they did, that they were real live human beings -- there would be a sense of ownership about that thing that was just erected in the middle of wherever they live. And they would feel, again, a sense of ownership about it.

BY: Not that the artist is an elite person.

RUTH: That an artist is something "out there," as opposed to one of them.

RICHARD: Let me interject: one of the things that didn't come up was that you were a county commissioner at that point and very much in the forefront of the development of the Art- in- Public-Places. But one of the commissions that I remember you pushed was the commission for Bill Ward on the fire station in North Miami --

RUTH: One of the first.

RICHARD: -- and it was one of these situations where the firemen were very, very annoyed that somebody was going to deface their building --

RUTH: To say nothing about the architect.

RICHARD: Right, the architect also. But, by the time this was over, with Bill Ward working up there, he was like their mascot and they adored him! And they're very, very prideful of that wonderful sculpture that he did on the outside of the building, which is the allusion to the State of Florida.

BY: Did they get so afraid of the ‘'art'‘ word?

RICHARD: Ward was a great person to interface with them because he was one of the outstanding artists of Florida and he's also a real, real person.

BY: He knows how to weld, he drives a racecar, ... He's very human.

RICHARD: Very into what they were doing, too, and they understood how difficult it was for him. And they began, from what I heard from him, they began helping him; which was very interesting, they became a part of the process.

RUTH: To prove this, and you mentioned her earlier, when Juanita May got the commission to do a frieze around the outside of one of the park buildings in the mid-south end of Dade County, she actually went down there and crafted the work on site and had people in the neighborhood working with her. And up until a few years ago -- I've lost track, I don't know if this still is true, but none of those ceramics had ever been defaced or in any way messed with, simply because they built it. That's really what we're hoping to be able to do -- to bring people to the arts, and not to take three musicians and sit them on Lincoln Road and have them play baroque music on a Sunday afternoon. I'm talking about really being with musicians and watching them rehearse and watching what happens. I used to take my Girl Scout troops to the dress rehearsals of the Opera and we watched Madame Butterfly die three times! You can't top that for a Sunday afternoon, this is heady stuff. [laughter] That's what I'm talking about -- being really up close and personal with art.

BY: It's a great way for this community, becasue we are so diverse... but if you go to the Symphony you see people on the stage that are African Americans that are Latin, that are Anglo, that are... a whole mixture.

RUTH: And they also happen to be talented, and that's a bonus.

BY: And that brings them together, that's the important thing.

RUTH: The Foundation is looking to produce its annual report for the last year -- we're always a year behind, waiting for the finance to be up to date -- and after all of that color from the library edition, we tried to figure out, how do you top color, and we decided we'd go back to black-and-white. So we're working with Photogroup, a non-profit group in town of photographers, both professional and fine arts photographers, and choosing from their mountain of work the photographs that will again show the community at work.

BY: Oh, that's a great idea. (pause) Well, we can go back and could you talk about some other things, or talk a bit more about the loans to artists, that's one thing we haven't covered at all.

RUTH: Well, the loans to artists, and the Miracle Fund is also another wonderful thing that we have. The Foundation was beneficiary of the opening of a shopping center, and the promoters of the Center decided they wanted a permanent endowment at the Foundation. Well, there wasn't sufficient money to permanently spin off enough money that would benefit anyone, so what we did was set up a loan fund to arts institutions. This is unlike a grant, which is what our usual business is, but if a theater was waiting for a grant and they had three months till the check showed up, but they knew they were getting that money and in those three months they were going to have a very dry spell, we will loan them the money to carry them until the grant comes in and then we're the first funders after that. We've kept a whole lot of fledgeling and really outstanding arts institutions running, simply because they knew that money was coming in. We've bought them an artist to produce the brochure which would then bring the subscription dollars in, in a few months. That kind of bridge loan has been a tremendous assist in the community and made the institutions feel just a little more secure. There are all kinds of theaters and dance troupes and the rest who can't make it from subscription to subscription series and rely on the Miracle loan fund to make it and we're very proud of that.

BY: So this is not to individual artists but to -

RUTH: No. That's to arts institutions. After the hurricane, we realized that along with a whole lot of other people, artists were very badly destroyed -- their art works and their studios; and we were able to put together some money -- out of the arts community, as a matter of fact. The Coconut Grove Arts Festival that year asked every one of the exhibitors to put aside a percentage for hurricane relief. The money that came from those dealers went into a fund at the Community Foundation, and we were then able to give artists who had been affected by the storm grants to rebuild their lives, to rebuild their studios that were completely destroyed.

BY: And now the Estate Project.

RUTH: Well, it became apparent that there were people dying of AIDS who were incredibly talented. These people were everything from visual artists, to choreograpers, to writers and had produced a body of work that really deserved to be archived, that deserved to be saved and/or exhibited and used in the future. So we are in the midst of putting that project together where we will be able to work, again with the Library, which has offered curatorial and storage space, and with arts institutions in town so that we will be able to dignify the work of people who were cut short in their life because of AIDS.

BY: And they've expanded a little bit too, haven't they? Aren't they now often trying to give advice to other artists just to try to make them aware that this is something that all artists should be thinking about?

RUTH: Clearly artists should be thinking about end-of-life planning and what happens to not only their personal estate but the work that they have created. So the Estate Project is designed to bring artists and lawyers and accountants together to discuss how do I deal with the end of life and how do I distribute my worldly goods so that it makes an impact.

BY: And the documentation I think is really important. I think a lot of artists tend to forget about how important just having a document that lists the pieces that they've done --

RUTH: Exactly. They're busy creating, they're not doing the backup work that others should be, and that's why we're hoping to bring them together to make this work. END OF THIS SEGMENT OF INTERVIEW. BEGINNING SIDE A, TAPE 3 "Arts ...Institution" -- an interview with Ruth and Richard Shack on February 8, 1997 in the Shacks' home in Miami. Interviewer: Barbara Young.

BY: We've talked a little bit about how you started the collection and the influences of Bernard Davis, your connections with Mrs. Grosman, and the early galleries in Miami, the wonderful photographic collection you gave to Daytona, how you buy as a couple, and a few of the artists in your collection, like Florencio Gelabert, Robert Chambers, Mariana Yampolsky. I know that there are some artists that you've been involved with in especially supportive roles, like Timothy Greenfield Sanders. Do you want to talk a little bit more about how you got involved with him? He grew up here in Miami, he's a Miami product.

RICHARD: We got involved with him at the very beginning --

BY: Did he study here?

RICHARD: No, in New York. I saw a photograph in the Piffer (Marcus Piffer) Gallery in New York, a photograph of Orson Wells and I thought it was fantastic.

RUTH: We saw that poster on Ruth Greenfield's door in her home, a poster advertising the exhibition in New York, and fell in love with the image at that time, not realizing that this was Ruth's son. YOUNG Now, Ruth and her husband have been involved with the arts. He passed away recently. They were very active in performing arts?

RUTH: Well, she is the mother of music in Miami and she took the band shell, which our kids used to call "the abandoned shell," in Bay Front Park, and would invite musicians. She would play there Sunday afternoons free to the public and it was an extraordinary happening. There was no advertising, no anticipation, people just seemed to know it was going to happen, and show up and listen. She would play piano and invite others, and she moved music along. The last, I think, real activity that she had was at the Gusman Theatre downtown, where she used to do the six o'clock music --

RICHARD: No, lunchtime --

RUTH: Well, the Lunchtime Lively Arts certainly, and then at six o'clock people would come out of their offices downtown and go to Gusman and listen to invited artists and performers. It was really quite extraordinary. She serves on the Public Trust now in programing the Bay Front Auditorium downtown.

RICHARD: Tim was very, very impressed with artists, with celebrities, and when he did this one piece of Orson Wells that was really extraordinary and became a postcard all over New York, that kind of thing; anyway, in his gallery, the Piffer Gallery, I saw his first major piece, which was called "The Artists of the ‘50s to the ‘80s," where he did photographs of almost all of the major artists -- Rauschenberg, Johns, Tworkov. And his father-in-law, who was Joop Sanders, were all part of this 40-photograph folio of artists who worked in the 50s, he took their pictures in the ‘80s. It was a tremendously impressive folio of work. We bought it and wanted to help him really get started, so we took two portfolios, separated them into units of 20, and submitted them (two images) to all the major museums not only in the country but the Victoria and Albert Gallery in London --

BY: Where were you in terms of your collecting photographs at the time ...

RICHARD: I hadn't been heavily in it yet, just beginning. We submitted the two as a gift to each one of these and every one of them wanted the ones that we had suggested. So all of a sudden, Tim, who was doing nicely, just beginning, really, in New York, was in every major museum, including Houston, San Francisco, Detroit, you name it, he was in it. It was a wonderful way to start, first of all, for us to start giving photographs, and also to help him get going. We then bought another portfolio for ourself, which a lot of years later -- '85 or '86, somewhere in there, maybe even later- when David Ross came into the Whitney, we donated Timothy's "Artists of the ‘50s to the ‘80s" as the first major donation in photography to the Whitney -- they had not had a concentrated photography collection prior to that. And that was the first major donation that they got. Then he did two other folios. One was called "The Critics" and we immediately bought that.

BY: That was the one you had at the Library?

RICHARD: Yes. And then he started working with Comme Des Garcon, and instead of just using models, he used artists. And that was a fabulous collection of work --

RUTH: Advertising art.

RICHARD: -- advertising art, but fine art -- the large format, but they became fine art as well. Comme Des Garcon went to the Southeast Museum of Photography, the portfolio did. "The Critics" I'd have to look it up, but we've donated all of his work --

RUTH: It seems to me that earlier you mentioned the term "celebrity," then backed off "celebrity" and used the term "artist" instead, and when you said that it triggered in my mind that I don't think artists were considered "celebrities" before Timothy's photographing them and incorporating them into fine art photographs and using them as images and not just background to the work they were doing.

RICHARD: Very, very true --

RUTH: Moving on to using them inComme Des Garcon, and now we see them endorsing products --

RICHARD: Well, it went even further, because --

BY: Barney's

RICHARD: Yes, well, after Comme Des Garcon, he did the series for Barney's. And then Barney's wanted to keep the concept going, and, you know, you can't do something forever, so he did maybe the first year of Barney's and then Annie Leibowitz came in and did the second year. So it became a very interesting --

RUTH: He did a series for the New York Times, again using artists, and then moved into photographs of Joseph Abood, who creates clothing for men, now women. So he has taken people who have always been in the background and dignified them, put them up front.

RICHARD: And in a lot of the work that he did, like in Comme Des Garcons he was using writers, he was using

musicians, it wasn't limited to artists. But his impact on making the artists visually important was wonderful. We used to get the biggest thrill in the world opening up a New York Times and being able to count five or six photographs of Timothy's where the photograph was attached to the review of the artist's work. It was a kick, I mean, in the Sunday Times there'd be five or six of the photographs that we had in our collection. But that was an example of a very bright young man who has really gone very, very far, and we stuck with him. At the beginning we tried to buy everything that he did. It got out of hand, we couldn' t do it after a while when he got into the major polaroids, so we just honored the work but weren't able to include it in the collection.

RUTH: His photograph of Jane Alexander is now in the National Portrait Gallery.

RICHARD: We donated that, as well as the photograph that he did of Hillary Clinton. The photograph that he did of Hillary Clinton for Vanity Fair, I bought the original of that from Tim and donated it to the National Portrait Gallery.

BY: What a wonderful portrait! So many of those are very stiff and boring and Timothy has such a way with people --

RUTH: Well, he gets the essence of the person. It is really wonderful. Both Richard and I have had a portrait done by Timothy, and at the time he was doing straight-ahead stock-serious fold-your-arms and don't-think-about-anything.

BY: He always gets this sort of proximity with the subject.

RUTH: Exactly. And when I got there, I just was playing with him and he said, "Wait a minute: smile." And it was such an exciting thing to be able to smile when you knew that he didn't want you to, and yet the picture is so much me and probably would not have been me if it hadn't had that smile. And with Richard, he just captured the solidity of him. Thoroughly exciting.

RICHARD: But having done those series that he did, it was incredible, because at that point literally that was the first smiling picture -- Ruth. That was the first smiling picture you'd ever had.

RUTH: That's my touch of history. (laughter)

BY: Who were some of the other artists?

RICHARD: Lynn Gelfman. We had a very, very early piece of hers and then we have this enormous canvas of hers. We just adore her work; we adore her so much that we also took a very large canvas and donated it to the Cornell Museum at Rollins College and the piece now hangs in the president's house at Rollins College. It's just a joy. We got a marvelous letter from Dr. [Rita] Bornsteen [phon.sp.] saying that the painting has "made the house." That really is a thrill when those kinds of things happen. RUTH; And beyond the contribution, however, of works themselves, I think it's our fierce patriotism about what's happening in Miami and who's making it happen. We're ambassadors to the rest of the world and wherever we travel we're looking at art and going to galleries and museums and talking to people who are making the art scene in that community. We really feel that we're kind of cross-fertilizing, we're bringing back what they have to us but even more, we're telling them about what's happening here in Miami.

BY: I think that a very distinctive part of your collection, though, is that you really have supported the artists in the area --

RICHARD: Not only the artists in the area --

RICHARD: Let me just throw it even further in. There was a dealer in New York whom I really respected, by the name of Bianca Lanza and I convinced her to come to Miami, and she did. We helped her financially to get going with the gallery and it was fun because she was so creative and did so many wonderful shows --

RUTH: And has such an impeccable ethic about what she wants to show.

RICHARD: And she's very, very close to Edward Albee. She got Edward Albee to curate a show at her, the Bianca Lanza Gallery, and it was called "Five Young Artists Who for Some Dumb Reason Are Not Yet Known in Miami." And we have one of each of all their works and they really are outstanding artists, but --

BY: Who are the artists? RUTH; (loud overlapping voices) But for some dumb reason, we can't remember --

RICHARD: Jonathan Thomas, Robin Miller, several others. It was just a concept, but what I wanted to talk about is the concept of opening the door to many young people, and many adult people --

BY: [inaudible phrase] and many perspectives.

RICHARD: Yes, yes. And as far as the Florida artists are concerned, our collection covers everyone. I can't think of anybody who has shown down here who's not in our collection, whether it's Cesar Trasobares, Maria Martinez Cavas, Robert Huff, you know, we could just go through the house and it is, if we pulled the list out, it's incredible. Bob Thiele --

RUTH: Yes, but these are people whose work we respect. We've never gone for a full spectrum of the arts that have been shown in Miami. What we've done is recognize that there is good work being done even though it was being produced 20 blocks from here as opposed to across the continent. And taken not only our enthusiasm for here by buying a piece or donating it, but also talking about them elsewhere and helping them to be known outside their locale. I refuse to call people "local artists," they're artists working locally.

RICHARD: Just to embellish that list a little, there's a broad base to it. There's Carlos Alfonzo, there's Joe Nicastri, Emilio Falero, Purvis Young --

RUTH: These are people who will stand up and be compared any place in the country or in the world.

RICHARD: Absolutely.

RUTH: And some of them are creating what is now the "new Miami look." We have a "Miami sound," we have a "Miami fashion," and the fine artists today working in this community have taken all of the cultures, mixed them together, and created a very unique and vibrant kind of art. And that's the message that we bring wherever we go, to anyone who will listen to us.

BY: Well, this goes beyond the house. At the office you also have art.

RUTH: Yes indeed. Well, of course, we lust for walls, you know -- any blank space we're thrilled to be able to hang pieces, and for years Richard had a great collection in his office and I have some marvelous pieces in our office at the Dade Foundation. There's one that's just a wonderful story, about a dealer calling from New York saying that a portfolio was being put together of really extraordinary photography and he recommended that this was something we would like, and once hearing the list we decided that yes indeed, this was something we wanted. We then found out that this money was to be used to fund AIDS-serving organizations across the country. Very excited at that; Made it even more satisfying to us. After we got more documentation about the portfolio, I discovered that one of the groups they were going to fund was the Dade Community Foundation. So here were sending money to New York to the portfolio and to the photographers to go to a national funder in Washington who then distributed some of those dollars to the Greater Miami area through the Community Foundation. That was something that was completely unexpected, but an absolutely lovely circle.

RICHARD: The folio is called "The Indomitable Spirit" and included Cindy Sherman, ..., Richard Prince. It's one of the most incredible folios of photography around. It really is a gorgeous piece of work. Barbara Kruger, Baldessari--

RUTH: We showed these publicly and they when they had finished traveling put them into the office. It's so wonderful to work with that kind of --

BY: How many pieces in the portfolio?

RUTH: The portfolio is about ten pieces.

BY: And the images are AIDS-related?

RUTH: No, not at all. The portfolio was created for Photographers Fighting AIDS, a loosely knit group of people who just felt that they had to do something for AIDS and the pandemic.

BY: An awareness kind of thing.

RUTH: It was really a fundraiser and an opportunity to display it with that name so that people were thinking about AIDS; this was years ago before it was fashionable to do things for AIDS.

BY: This was difficult.

RUTH: Indeed. And then we have other pieces. A huge Bob Thiele shaped canvas --

BY: An early piece. RUTH; A very, very early piece which hangs in the hallway and just knocks everybody out. "What is that?" is the first words out of their mouth and I said, "Well, what does it look like?" We've gotten everything from a fist to a -- they all make it up and it's a lovely confrontation with your own perceptions. Kind of a Rorschach test in the hallway.

RICHARD: Just to answer on "The Indomitable Spirit," I'm just looking at it now -- John Baldessari, Chuck Close, Jan Groover, Annette Lemiux, Duane Michals, Robert Rauschenberg, Cindy Sherman, Bruce Weber, William Wegman. So this is really an intriguing kind of piece. And it's great for the office.

RUTH: Talking about portfolios and also being an ambassador to other communities about what's going on here -- sorry, I'm taking your job, Barbara -- Richard, talk a bit about the Cuban portfolio at the Whitney.

RICHARD: There was a folio put together by Fred Snitzer. The folio Snitzer put out was called "Five" and it was a portfolio of five silkscreens by Juan Abreu, Julio Antonio, Luis Cruz Azaceta, Carlos Cardenas, and Ernesto Pujol. And there was a major brouhaha about bringing in Latin American artists at this point. I got them to look at this folio through the curators' committee and the curators' committee finally agreed that this would be a terrific piece for the Whitney

BY: Why was there a question about it?

RICHARD: Well, it goes back -- Ruth asked about the folio but it goes back to the very, very beginning where I submitted a piece to the print acquisition committee, which I serve on, of Azaceta. And the question came up, this being the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Azaceta being Cuban, whether it fits into this collection. My answer was that Azaceta was a citizen for 30 years. So that brought him into the collection. Then the "Five" folio came up and a couple of these are Cuban. So when that got in, that changed a little bit of the concept and there was discussions that were very, very good, and David Ross was marvelous about it where he said rather than the Whitney Museum of Amercan Art, let's consider it the ... ...Museum of the Art of the Americas. And that opened the door for other Latin American artists. The next one was Bedia.... and we submitted a piece called "Dobles" and it was accepted by the prints acquisition committee, and that put Bedia into the collection. It doesn't sound that important, but in a facility like the Whitney, you can't just donate a Bedia piece and that's the way that it happens -- it has to go either through one of the acquisition committees or a curatorial committee. Once the artist is in the Whitney, then anyone can donate any kind of a piece and that's not a problem; but the artist has to be in the Whitney first.

BY: But that is really curious especially someone like Azaceta who had lived in the States for a long time.

RICHARD: Well, the people on the committee didn't know that, so it was something that we had to introduce to them and say "yes, he is a citizen," and it worked. But this concept of giving to a facility like the Whitney -- and Whitney is not the only one -- I think is a very good philosophy because it eliminates the intimidation of somebody on the board saying "my sister-in-law painted this picture and it's going to go in the Whitney." It has to go through a very, very valid process. That's what made it so exciting. We had another situation just recently where Ruth and I donated a folio called "Couples" to the Whitney. This is a very sensitive thing and I'm sure Ruth will jump in and think about it, but these were six artists and their wives and they are all couples --

RUTH: Excuse me: these are twelve artists who happen to be married. Can we do this one again?

RICHARD: (laughing) Yes, you're right.

RUTH: Twelve artists who make six couples.

RICHARD: Right, correct. The interesting part about this is that for the most part, and what I was really thinking of, for the most part, the males were already in the Whitney. The spouses were not in the Whitney. And by putting this ‘'Couples'‘ in, you open the door for several other spouses, six other artists. But they were wonderful -- Brice Marden and his wife Helen, Eric Fischl and April Gornik, Robert Mangold and Sylvia Mangold, Robert Ryman and Merrill Wagner, Mel Bochner and Lizbeth Marano, and Joel Shapiro and Ellen Philan.... And it was really an exciting folio, but it was the idea that now that whole area has opened up because of one folio, and it's very, very exciting, it's very exciting when you're able to do something like that.

RUTH: So politics and art do indeed mix ... (laughter)

RICHARD: Oh very, very much so, no question about it. Getting back to one little item, and it's an artist that we talked about, young, since we mentioned Cuba just now, Florencio Gelabert whom we'd just mentioned earlier that we'd just purchased a piece of his: it was really a joy to go to New York right in the middle of this interview process and see Gelabert's exhibition at the Intar Gallery there. It's wonderful, I mean it's an absolutely stunning bunch of work. It again vindicates our taste as far as I'm concerned. That's always been what we've prided ourselves on, even if it goes back to the early prints of Johns and Raschenberg and Dine and Frankenthaler. Our taste has been vindicated over the years, and I feel that with the current artists that we're collecting, the same thing is happening. New people like Craig Roper, Brad Durham, Lucy Puls, Meg Belichick -- these are names that are not out there at this point. But I think, in the long run, our kids will have work that they're going to love.

RUTH: Well, they do now. And that's what's wonderful about the kids.

RICHARD: (laughing) You can do the kids in a second: let me just tell you, I'm getting to the point of that these pieces in a very, very short period of time, will be those artists that we vindicated our tastes on --

BY: I guess it's not a gambler's high, but there is a kind of risk when you get involved with a new artist.

RUTH: It's because we collect, not because it's going to be vindicated 30 years later, it's because we can't live without it at that moment. There's a joy of finding something that just strikes you in the gut, and you walk pass it and it draws you back, it makes you look at it again and again and again. And then you realize you can't go home unless you know it's coming home with you. To have that stuff mature over years is as wonderful as raising children --if the kids turn out all right. And that's essentially -- we've had some disappointments and we've had a whole lot of incredible joys, both with the kids [laughter] and with the art. And we tell this to anyone who says, "How do you begin collecting? How do you know if it's worth anything?" If you look at a chair and you love it and you want it at home, then you buy the chair and you bring it home. You don't anticipate that it's going to be worth 40 times as much in ten years. As a matter of fact, you hope you don't have to replace it in ten years. Art is essentially the same thing. You want it, you can't live without it, you hang it or you stand it some place, walk around it, enjoy it. But if when years later the artist has matured to something that others think are equally as wonderful, then you get this rush. YOUNG; Now, your children, your daughters, collect. RUTH; Each very very distinctively, very differently. There's one wonderful story about our oldest daughter Barbara growing up and being able to give the tour and years later remarking she never knew the difference between the stature of Rauschenberg and [Frank] Rampola, because to her they were both wonderful. We each gave them dignity and wall space and it wasn't for years that she began to discern that these were important artists and these were artists who never quite "made it" for whatever reason. But for her, these were wonderful pieces that she grew up with and was surrounded by. And when we left the old homestead to move to this wonderful place, we had more than we could bring with us and there was no quarrel between the three girls about which pieces they wanted.

BY: How do they differ in their choices?

RUTH: The youngest [Lyndia Bubb] one wants things she can recognize, things that she's comfortable with, images -- soothing, comforting, friendly images, be they abstract or realistic; she just likes that feeling. Barbara [Shack], the oldest one, is very excited about the contemporary South American and Latin American artists and has a wonderful collection of them. And the middle one [Janice shack Marquez] is just in love with works from Caracas, from Venezuela -- that particular environ because she married a young man from Caracas and he resonated immediately and she as well. So when we're out looking at art we recognize something that each of them would particularly enjoy.

BY: Do they collect actively?

RICHARD: Well, they collect from our collection. [laughter] They choose, and they choose well. Jan's got a very good collection of Soto and Ricardo Benaim who's an excellent Caracan artist who happens to be a cousin of her husband's our a son-in-law and there are a lot of other works in the collection. The younger one -- I began realizing it -- that she liked things particularly of people that she had earlier met. I just thought of that a very short time ago: artists who never really went that next step, like Sadie Rosenblum who was very, very, very important in this community when our youngest one was growing up.

RUTH: She always made images of three young girls, and our daughters were always certain that they were indeed the subjects.

RICHARD: Right. And Edna Glaubman, Eric Speyer.

RUTH: Again, that's a very good point -- that indeed she knew the artist and --

BY: She liked that very personal connection.

RUTH: Yes. But we send them art often in lieu of gifts, you know.

RICHARD: Not in lieu of, they are gifts. [laughter]

RUTH: But I mean we don't send them tractors and household equipment, but arts of the world and for the walls. And the first time they hung these major pieces in their new homes, two of them independently said they loved having them there because it was like going home. Now here they had created their own home, but there was that connection to the place where they grew up. They're very much involved in the art scene. While they don't have the resources now to put into art, when I say that I think of it, we didn't have the resources to put into art when we started but we did anyway. That was our choice at the time.

BY: But Barbara does collect --

RUTH: Did collect avidly and has a wonderful eye.

RICHARD: Jan, the middle one's got a tremendous advantage because among other things that I've done I'm on the Fine Arts Board of the Federal Reserve Board and we've donated a considerable amount of work to the Fine Arts Board up there, the program which installs the pieces throughout the Federal Reserve. So that she's got the opportunity of seeing pieces that we've had here or that she's grown up with and they're in her office. She's an executive with the Federal Reserve herself, so she's able to walk around and see pieces that she knows well. As a matter of fact, she's made several demands to have some pieces close to her so she could at least live with them. That's a lot of fun.

BY: Then there are other people that have been influenced by being around you and seeing you collect.

RICHARD: Well, very, very early on Dennis and Deborah Scholl when they were very young, and he was just a beginning attorney, used to come to the house and we used to do a lot of talking, I think he was influenced by what we did. But there were a lot of people, because we spoke so avidly about art, and Ruth and I used to do that auctioning on Channel 2 and we would talk about art, and then we would be asked to auction at other functions. And once again we would just talk about art and make it so accessible. My statement from the beginning is that the way to begin collecting is just to find anything that you like, go in and on this blank wall, hammer a nail in, and you've begun a collection. So that it's not untoward to start yourcollection at a Beaux Arts sale, or a Coconut Grove Arts Festival, or in the old days it used to be Grove House. When we first started we used to go down to Grove House, which Ann Sams was running then; and several very influential women in the community really did a marvelous job down there and --

BY: Actually it was important not just in collecting but also, I think, they had drawing classes?

RICHARD: Oh, they had all sorts of classes, and the beauty of it is that most of the people that exhibited there were really good artists. I seem to recall that that was the first time that we saw a Gene Masson.

RUTH: That's Scornavacca.

RICHARD: And Edna Glaubman and a lot of the artists that ended up in everybody's house in the early Miami -- we're talking 35, 40 years ago. Everybody had something from Grove House, and even to this day Ruth's got an Ann Sams in her office, one of the kids has an Ann Sams, I mean these are artists that just worked for the Grove House process. And now Grove House is gone and many of the same people are at Bakehouse Art Complex. I think that's an outgrowth; Ann Sands is working at Bakehouse, and Jack Hopkins and several others that we call local artists, Miami artists, but that's what they are. And they do wonderfully. And Bakehouse is, I think, the next step to a community kind of facility, where artists get space and --

RUTH: I'm seeing a pattern here and it's nothing new, but the Grove was an arts community, the artists made it vibrant. Others moved in and the artists were pushed out through gentrification. We're going through that now on Lincoln Road, watching the artists having a tougher and tougher time paying the rents and carrying the freight over on Lincoln Road. They're moving into the district that used to be the design district, and it will probably be a matter of time that they will no longer be able to afford to stay there. There's an enclave in North Miami and we should not talk about it because we don't want it to become gentrified, for them to be pushed out. The point that I'm making is that artists are always in the forefront of making a community safe for other people to come in behind them, but because art is not a growth industry, and can't sell itself en masse, it can't stay where it makes it safe. So others move in behind, push them out and they have to go out and find a new frontier. So the arts are a wonderfully safe way to revitalize neighborhoods.

RICHARD: We went into one this past weekend up in New York, the Chelsea district. Hardly a place to live right now, but the galleries are there and they are gorgeous.

BY: And five years from now it will be --

RUTH: They'll be trying to find a new place to move to as they did from 57th down to SoHo, over to Chelsea. They'll be a new frontier in Manhattan.

BY: So really, developers should buy a lot of land, bring artists in, let them work for five years and sell for a lot of money.

RUTH: Miami Beach did it very successfully. They gave Lincoln Road to the artists because no one else wanted it and that was the only way to keep the lights on. They discovered that, and I think this same thing will happen over in the design district.

RICHARD: Well, it was very interesting because as a non-profit organization the South Florida Art Center bought property and that's what they operated with, and now the property is worth enough to keep South Florida Art

Center going. Now they're in the real estate business as opposed to just struggling along showing some artists. And just to give him the credibility, because we looked at the artists that we were looking for before, and [whose name] we battled with for a couple of minutes is Eric Speyer -- he's the landscape artist that our younger daughter adores.

RUTH: And a very good artist, known for his administrative capabilities, but a really fine watercolorist. Thank you for rememering that. But to their great credit with the Commission of the City of Miami Beach who said to the artists, ‘'Here, do this, we'll help you with this property."

RICHARD: Well, in the Chelsea district the artists haven't moved in yet, what's moved in are the major galleries like Morris Healy, Barbara Gladstone, Matthew Marks and these are major galleries. Now the artists will come in because the area is a "down" area, it's a lot of taxi repair places, body shops, and the artists will move into those areas END OF THIS SIDE, A OF TAPE 3 BEGINNING SIDE B, TAPE 3 RICHARD (continuing mid-sentence) there was one gallery owner who might stay here because he did as well at the Gramercy Fair as he would do in a month in the gallery. It was just incredible; but these were not a mass of out-of-town people, because they didn't come in from out-of-town for this, these were people from this community -- Dade, Broward, Monroe County --

BY: That went and bought --

RICHARD: -- they went to the Gramercy and they bought.

BY: And these are also the young collectors --

RICHARD: Absolutely --

BY: -- who will be supporting institutions in the future.

RUTH: Just to make the connection: I absolutely agree. I'm not an impartial body, but I agree that MOCA made it safe for contemporary collectors to express their own point of view and made it safe for the Gramercy exhibitors to come to Miami, to think about this as a serious collecting place, a community. As opposed to simply wanting those artists who've already been validated by someone else. These are on-the-edge experimenters in the arts.

RICHARD: One of the young people that I asked to join the board at MOCA joined the board at MOCA and had a very minimal collection which had been to his house, ended up buying four very contemporary photographs at Gramercy. He didn't buy them at a standard fair like Art Miami. Now Art Miami, on the other hand, is geared to deal primarily with the Latin American market, that is, the Latin American people who attend the Art Miami fly up for the fair or they are here because --they are the Brazilian contingent who comes in at that period of time --

BY: Miami is a doorway to Latin America art.

RICHARD: December to January there's a tremendous influx of --

RUTH: Actually, a marketplace to Latin America and this proves it, because this is the arts market.

RICHARD: And the arts market does very, very well with the Latin community at Art Miami. A contemporary market was at Gramercy, the concept being that the arts are beginning to happen in the area. Two or three of the galleries are moving to new locations. I was very, very impressed that both Fred Snitzer and Genero Amprosino had moved for their art.

RUTH: Well, I think it already is. In our travels to other cities people are fascinated that we come from Miami, want to know more about what's happening in the arts community, and we who are immersed in it have the feeling that maybe it's "the emperor's new clothes." But then when you really look at it, there is extraordinary work being produced here.

RICHARD: That's the advantage, you see. We have, in the cities that we do visit, they have wonderful galleries, they have marvelous museums, they don't have an artists community -- many of them don't have an artists community. We have an artists community primarily because of the Cuban artists; this is their home.

RUTH: Add South American to that.

RICHARD: All right, but it's primarily this influx of Hispanic artists who have come into the area and have done marvelous work that's now being recognized all over the world. But we do have a large producing community, plus the fact that many major artists work here and people don't really realize that. When you talk about Florida artists, you're talking about Jim Rosenquist, Robert Rauschenberg, Jules Olitski, Larry Rivers, Duane Hanson who unfortunately just passed away. These were the artists who were working in this area. Marcorelli on the west coast --there are really exciting artists working in Florida. Now you take that and back it up with all of the

emerging artists, that's where the strength is. And the emerging artists coming out here are truly exciting and they're very, very important --

BY: I think a lot of people do think of Miami, they think Latin America...or Hispanic artists but you're really beginning to see people like Robert Chambers or Purvis Young. They're also getting incredible reputations.

RICHARD: Absolutely.

RUTH: And this is the commnity that just 20, 25 years ago was known for its pink flamingos, preferably in plastic. So we have come from kitsch to a center of real intellectual and esthetic art. It's very exciting.

BY: When you go to the exhibitions, the receptions, the openings, the people that you're seeing, there are an awful lot of young people there that look like they're seriously interested in what's on the walls.

RICHARD: There's no question about it, and the material that's on the wall and the material that's in the galleries is new, I mean it's not derivative, and that's one of the other important situations. Ambrosino's got an installation up now that's unfortunately closing very soon, but I wish it could stay for a year. None of it is derivative, it's all wonderful, new kind of material. They're artists that we have in our collection, which is also nice, but it's --

RUTH: But that's always been the pull of Miami. People who are frontiersmen, who are real courageous -- the term I think you would have to use for people who continue to live in Miami. Those who are not courageous picked up and moved out a long time ago.

BY: It is not an established community. It still has the potential for lots of different kinds of things to happen.

RUTH: Absolutely. It has no stable character; that's both our weakness and our strength. And if you look at it from the strength point of view, you see that -- I really believe that the artists are the motif for what's going on now. The fact that they bring from where they came and they incorporate where they are now into a body of work is very, very exciting. It's a kind of new world frontier of art.

RICHARD: This is a very good example of that right here with Robert Huff. We've had work of his for years and we've always been impressed with him and anybody who's seen it here is impressed with it. We have a rather large piece and we have a larger piece in our other office. When you go to the airport there's one whole concourse that has an extension of what we own, and there are thousands, upon thousands, upon thousands of people seeing this work every day and reacting very, very positively to it. And I think that's an advantage that is part of the Art- in- Public- Places, but it's a definite advantage to exposing the artists who work here to a very large market. Maria Martinez Canas has a show coming up in New York. No question that it's as a result of the impact of her work at the Airport. Michele OkaDoner, who's well-known in New York, without a doubt, the installation that she has at Miami Airport on Concourse A is the most important piece she's done. No question about it, it's huge.

BY: It's a huge support for the artists ...the Art-in-Public-Places program.

RICHARD: Right. But I mean that's an example of how the images -- people coming to the community don't necessarily have to go to a gallery to see a Robert Huff, a Maria Martinez Canas, or Michele OkaDoner..., they're visible; Purvis Young, they're visible. And that's very exciting, and it doesn't happen in other areas. We walk around New York: I don't think we see that much of art as we're walking. I know we get stopped every time we walk in front of the Equitable Building and see that 90-ft. Lichtenstein and are just absolutely in awe of it.

RUTH: It is awe-inspiring, but this is the private sector using art to enhance its building and there's a whole lot of that going on in New York. But here, we put our public money into supporting the arts and I think that's, again, whether it's a conscious or an unconscious support of the arts, very beneficial. The new institutions that are being built and enlarged come mostly out of tax money, and there are those who say that if the taxpayers knew the money was being spent that way, there would be an uproar. I tend to think the other way -- that they would really appreciate the fact that we are not only building roads, but enhancing the quality of life and are giving people a moment's respite in the urban experience. Again, Miami has incorporated that into its life and the new museums, while they are certainly not museums in the context of the old industrial centers, are nascent centers of intellectual activity. And maybe that's all we need at this moment in our life. Perhaps if we built ourselves a Louvre or Metropolitan, we'd all be so intimidated by it that we wouldn't quite know how to approach it. So, in order to buy it, to feel it's our own, it has to be maybe a little leaky, maybe a little lopsided, maybe a little smaller than we would like, but it's ours and we embrace the places that we have enhanced -- from the universities, which have always been the center of intellectual activity here, to the municipalities that are now supporting institutions of art.

RICHARD: I think that's why the timing was just marvelous with MOCA, with the Museum of Contemporary Art.

BY: Ther's a kind of competitiveness--

RICHARD: We created a situation with MOCA where these other facilities had to catch up. It really worked that way. When we made the announcement of MOCA being a collecting facility, immediately everybody jumped on and became a collecting facility.

RUTH: That's terrific.

RICHARD: I know, and I said that the timing was perfect for MOCA to act.

RUTH: Well, the new expansion of the Bass, which some day they hope they'll be able to pull off --

RICHARD: The Lowe [Art Museum] --

RUTH: The marvelous doubling of space of the Lowe came, I am certain out of -- it may have been on the drawing boards for a long time, but the kicker, the thing that got it off the drawing boards and in concrete, was the establishment of MOCA.

RICHARD: And, I think, there was FIU with their museum and ... and the Miami Art Museum, which was the old CFA, is now collecting and is going to have to consider expansion. I am firmly convinced that it's all because of pushing the community. Well, between Ruth and myself, we pushed the community to the edges --

BY: You have already been involved in all of these institutions --

RICHARD: In one way or another, and pushed them just to go a little bit further. And then when Photogroup first started, it was small, and we pushed it and pushed it, and then when it got pushed enough, then you leave and go on to the next one. And you just don't stay with one item, you don't stay with one thing forever.

BY: What is the next thing?

RICHARD: Well, there are projects and there are some exciting projects. I know one thing that I would love to see is some sort of a location for a look back on the Miami Museum of Modern Art and remembering Bernard Davis. And exhibiting many of the artists that were shown there in the ‘60s and I think it would be fabulous -- people like Enrique Riveron, Jack Hopkins, Elenora Chambers, Sandy Trovato. These people were really the beginning of what happened down here, and I think that would be a very, very exciting thing. I see more projects -- one of the things that we don't have enough of, there is somebody who just keeps doing -- Mary Luft of Tigertail Productions, keeps doing it, but they should be more projects, there should be more happenings, there should be more really intelligent art installations that the community doesn't always support, probably because of the ethnicity of the area, that they have to be one or the other of the ethnicities, and that doesn't work too well. We were able to build a building onto MOCA, called a pavilion, where we have a Robert Chambers exhibition now, so we're able to do installations, and the installations are marvelous. That's important for everybody to support, but I think the community as a whole has to get into art installations of some sort, and that's what I'm really thinking very seriously of getting involved with. There are artists from the West Coast -- a wonderful creative woman by the name of Suzanne Lacy; there are people in the Wshington area through Pyramid Arts who are doing very, very good projects, and we should be doing them here, we just haven't.

RUTH: I think we've not made it possible. There aren't alternative spaces, there aren't people willing to support this, and if you can act as broker and bring those people and those spaces together, I'm convinced that this will happen. It was happening for a very little time on Lincoln Road --

RICHARD: And we did it with COCA. We did it by bringing in the Saint Soleil and having a three week Haitain festival all throughout the community.

BY: We used to really do it at the library.

RICHARD: Now, the libary is truly the only one that's been broad-based in the community.

RUTH: It's a trusted institution, it's in every neighborhood, it has the capacity to get the neighborhood to come and look.

RICHARD: And it also has a very, very bright person in charge of that whole program, Barbara Young. (she laughs) It's true, it's true. And I think you've got to get a lot of credit for that.

BY: Well, really we've changed direction a lot, so maybe the things that we're doing have really not been quite as playful. Its more of a historical perspective now.

RICHARD: Well, you went through a period of driving a bus around, so ... very, very exciting, and it's

unfortunate when those things end, but, for years the Library Artmobile was one of the things that everybody looked for.

RUTH: Well, it just looked wonderful. The whole exterior was done by Lowell Nesbitt and it was just so rich and right and exciting, that as it approached, if you didn't know what it was, you wanted to know what it was.

BY: Well, what we have to do is find a big space to do installations, and we'll take the Artmobile out of storage. (laughter)

RICHARD: It's also a possibility and I'm very excited about the community as far as the possibility, and I don't think that it will always be divided ethnically; that there will be a marriage of both --

BY: Maybe we'll start to think of ourselves as a kind of Caribbean community ...

RUTH: There are still neighborhoods where there is a typical whatever-it-may-be. And perhaps it will always be that way. We walked in Manhattan last week and you could feel yourself going through Little Italy and moving on to another neighborhood. The neighborhoods were really sacrosanct. And the people who live there "own" those neighborhoods. We have too much flux in Dade County for that to happen, but it may well come out of the next generation of movement. And then those neighborhoods can create their own happenings, their own experiences. We have lots of street fairs, I don't think there's a weekend that goes by when there isn't something that you couldn't attend, that either has an ethnic or an intellectual point of view. So that we can celebrate the differences every week if we wish to.

RICHARD: But that doesn't always bring out the best in art. But, I believe that's what we're talking about.

RUTH: But that's where art starts. That's where people feel comfortable with art. You talk about art and most people think of paying a fee and walking into a museum. They don't recognize that the costume that someone created, in order to march in the parade in Sweetwater, is art. And that's the bridge that we have to make. We have to make people understand that they make esthetic judgments every time they pick this tee shirt over that tee shirt. Why did you choose this one? Was it the logo, was it the color, was it the shape? What makes you want that one and not the other twenty-five that are in the stack? If we can take art out of istitutions and bring it into people's lives, then I think we will have made a tremendous leap forward, and we're not working at it. If someone asked me what my next step was, that's where I would like to be. "Educating" sounds so pedantic that I don't even want to use that term.

RICHARD: Well, arts in education is very, very important.

RUTH: But, arts education always leads people to understand why Rembrandt was great. I want arts education to talk about why we are artists, whether we are performing artists or working artists or simply artist afficionados. We all have a stake in art. What color do we paint our house? And why? This is art as far as I'm concerned. It's creating an environment in which your life is a little bit more pleasant than it might have been otherwise.

BY: You're seeing it as a part of your everyday routine.

RUTH: Our everyday routine. We've got to spread that.

RICHARD: You've got to start with kids and that's where the arts education I was referring to --

RUTH: I don't have patience to wait for the kids to grow up. I want to go directly to the adults to whom I can speak now and see if I can't peel away some of the myths and mythology about art and get people to recognize that they are a part of it whether they want to be or not, whether they recognize it or not.

RICHARD: I love to see kids coming into a cutting-edge exhibit at MOCA with one of the arts education staff like Susan Shone and see her work with the kids. And you see what comes out of that and it's incredible, absolutely incredible.

BY: Well, let's talk about this --

RUTH: Well, perhaps I did -- cut me off if I've already mentioned this, but arts and education are direct links between those people who recognize that they have to bring others along. Roberta Balfe was the classic example, with the opera. Fifteen, twenty years ago Roberta Balfe was putting money into bringing kids out of a classroom into the audience to watch opera even if they were rehearsals, which were even more fun.

RICHARD: We did that --

RUTH: I think we did. And the direct link twenty years later to young people dating and coming to the opera.

BY: Because they feel comfortable walking into that space and sitting down for a few hours and listening.

RUTH: Exactly. Bob Heuer calls it "live MTV." That's what the opera has represented. So your point is absolutely on target, but I don't want to have to wait twenty years. I think there's work that we can do right now.

RICHARD: It's the same concept. There are groups that are coming into MOCA, for example, who are adult groups who are coming to see the exhibits and then are going to particiate. And there's an area -- we're setting it up -- where they will do participatory stuff, ... cardboard, or whatever, they're going to do collages or -- but they're going to do something. And I think it's very, very exciting. YOUNG; And they're ending up at the galleries. Last night ...Fred Snitzer's new space opened and it was filled with a lot of young people.

RICHARD: And the Americas gallery opened last night and it was filled with a lot of old people.

BY: Yes! (laughter)

RICHARD: So there's a very broad base.

RUTH: Well, it was a Friday night, and certainly the Saturday nights on Lincoln Road, and the Friday nights in Coral Gables have become date nights. It's a cheap date, and these kids are together, wandering, and it well may be that they're wandering without knowing what they're seeing, or they may be incredibly intelligent, but the impulses are coming through. And, they are now recognizing that art --

RICHARD: And there's a very big move in a couple of the galleries, one is the Meza Gallery, which is putting jazz concerts, jazz performers, good ones, in the gallery on certain nights. And that brings in another whole group. But then they see the art and maybe buy one and when they buy one they're hooked, because that's what collecting is all about. And collectors are the people that create the market that keeps the galleries going, the galleries keep the artists going, and the artists keep the museums going. So it all starts with somebody doing something. And the intriguing thing is -- you mentioned the Snitzer Gallery was packed last night, and that's in an area that nobody has ever been in before.

BY: And many people had a lot of trouble finding!

RUTH: But they did find it.

BY: But they did. We went up and down three streets and finally saw some activity at the end of one.

RICHARD: That's it, and that's the way it was.

RUTH: But I want to go back to this so-called arts education. Every kid grows up pasting magazine pictures on the wall next to their bed. This becomes their collection, these are the things they want to wake up and see, either they're movie stars or sports figures or whatever their parents -- whatever. They plaster the stuff on the wall with absolute abandon. There's no one to tell them what's good and what's wrong. If they're lucky enough they just keep putting that stuff there and feeling comfortable about it. They get a little older and they go to posters. They get a little older and they go to limited-edition posters. But there is a point at which they lose their enthusiasm and lose their confidence and need someone else to validate what they're going to put on the wall next to their bed. Someone is going, now, to have to tell them that it's either a good investment or valid art. That's anti-everything that I want to think about. I want people to be able to walk into a place and say, "Wow, I love that" and tack it on the wall or frame it within an inch of its life and put a light over it. But I want them to feel pride and joy in having put that thing on their wall.

BY: That they're not just filling up a space, then.

RUTH: Correct. That this is personal, this speaks to them very directly.

RICHARD: This is the essence of our collection. Our collection has always been one where 50% of the material that's hanging in the collection, which has got to be well over 100 pieces just hanging right here. People have no idea who they are, but once they meet the object, or meet the painting, then they want to be a part of it: they want to know where they can get it and they want to know where to go. And we're very -- that's another thing that we're very, very strong about, we're very supportive of galleries. We know the artists, we still go to the galleries, and I think that it's the galleries that are going to have to educate these people, the ones that we've been talking about. And if you can get these young people into the gallery to meet the gallery owners -- and I think the gallery owners are beginning to realize that too. It used to be the gallery owner or owners were terribly intimidating, and you just didn't want to put up with that.

RUTH: This week we were in Manhattan. One of the curators of the Whitney Museum had breakfast with us, spoke about going to a gallery because he wanted to see their work. Whitney Museum, with a pocketbook, prepared to buy. He couldn't get anyone in the gallery to pay attention to him. That's reprehensible! I guarantee

that if he walked into other sales spaces, which is what this is, they would have been all over him with "can I help you?"

RICHARD: And there are certain galleries that have an intimidating, arrogant attitude, but I think that's changing. I think that they're beginning to realize that they are retail stores; whether they like it or not that's what they are. They're retail stores with the ability to educate.

BY: They're also ambassadors --

RUTH: Also they're brokers. YOUNG If that is your only art experience?

RICHARD: Right. It's true. And I think that's where we're going now. Once the galleries that are staying, once they begin their education process and once the museums start their education process and make it accessible to young people, they begin to see that it's fun. Then they just go with it and it really becomes an experience. And art is an experience. You can spend all day dealing with art and not regret any of the time you've spent with it. It's just absolutely exciting. We were just in New York and we saw four shows. In two of the shows, I was as aware of what was on the wall, on the stage, as I was what was happening. And it's true, your eye automatically is attracted or goes to what's on the wall, because what's on the wall tells you more about the people that you're dealing with than probably anything else. And people come in here and they realize that we love art. They may disagree with some of it, but they see things that they like and they get very, very warm and fuzzy about it. Art is a very warm, fuzzy thing. It's fun to be around --

BY: It's a good spirit thing, too.

RUTH: It's interesting. We have tours coming to the house constantly and one of the last groups came through and I was shepherding a group through the house and at first every question was, "Who is the artist? What is the name?" They wanted to know names, and after a while they recognized that they weren't going to know a whole lot of these names, so they stopped asking for identification of the artist and started talking about the subject, or what the artist was doing and what the thing said to them. You walk around a piece of sculpture and you touch it and you lean on it and you hug it and you say, "Wow, this is nice, this is good." And it's not important to know who the artist is in order to appreciate the piece of work. I think, coming full circle from where we spoke about Timothy Greenfield Sanders turning artists into celebrities, I think we have to begin now looking at the art that they produce as opposed to who is producing the art.

RICHARD: And even when you do, there are so many wonderful stories. One of my favorites is when a very, very important person was visiting here in a group that was with one of the museums -- it was a San Francisco museum that came to the house -- and somebody was standing downstairs looking at a large canvas, a large canvas, and he was just absolutely in awe of it. I went down to discuss the canvas with him and he looked very deeply into the canvas. He's an orientalist and he saw something totally oriental, totally Asian, in this piece. But we know the artist. She hasn't the vaguest idea of not only what oriental art is or where it is. She's an abstract artist and she's wonderful. But, when you look at the piece, you can look at her abstract art piece and see a marvelous oriental piece. He wanted to get in touch with her in order to see other works that were of the same type. There are none, she works strictly abstract. And he was loving the piece but for the wrong reasons -- that's what I was getting at.

RUTH: But for him it was the right reason.

RICHARD: But it's just that the work talks to you, and if it talks to you, then you should have it. We have a pair of chairs that when the writer for Japanese Esquire was here, he just was enthralled with them. And when they did the article about us for Japanese Esquire, they did a full-page picture of one of the chairs by Ed Batcheller.

RUTH: Which is really a piece of sculpture in the shape of a chair.

RICHARD: And did the photograph in the shape of a chair, because what it is are two glass plates, one the back and one the seat, And it's put on an aluminum structure. You can literally sit in it. Most uncomfortable chair you could want to sit in, but it's glass and it just awes people. They see it and what they don't realize is that it's accessible to them, that they could have one; because every one of these images is a photographic image. And they could get this photographic image and a lot of them have been very shocked -- this group Ruth was referring to that was here this past week, two of the people asked me to write down the name of the person where that could be gotten. And they were just absolutely enthralled by it.

BY: How many tours do you do a year?

RUTH: Whenever we're asked. It's like dressing up your children and showing them off -- you dust the table and you show off the art.

RICHARD: There are maybe five or six, I would say, collections in town that people know about and they want to see. They're wonderful collections. There's Irma and Norman Braman, marvelous collection; Craig Robins has a marvelous collection; Carlos and Rosa de la Cruz have an outstanding collection --

BY: Margulies.

RICHARD: Mrtin Margulies.

RUTH: Sackners, world-class.

RICHARD: The Sackners. That is the collection of concrete poetry in the world and it's just been a phenomenal collection. And these people literally open their door, and we do too. We've slowly found, like, the de la Cruzes have the most wonderful collection of Latin American art, no question about it. Craig's got cutting-edge art. The Bramans are classics, they have Miro, they have Calder and David Smith and Jasper Johns --

RUTH: All in multiples.

RICHARD: By multiples she means many by the same artist, but not multiples in the sense of editions. They have the most wonderful collection of unique stuff. And when groups come down, they hear about the collections. OK: they want to see all of the Calders they could ever see in their life. Then they want to see what they call an eclectic collection. That's a description of our collection.

BY: We had the art librarians (from ARLIS, Art Librarians Society/ North America) and I think they were thrilled. There were many things that they recognize, but there were a lot of surprises and I think that they really loved the surprises. RUTH; Well, it's also the way we live with it. We don't have it in a gallery, we don't have it set aside from where people walk in and walk through the whole place and say, "Yes, but where do you live?" And we laugh, because we "live" here.

BY: It is not isolated by cases.

RUTH: We don't put vitrines over pieces and we don't put guards around the sculpture. It's a place where you can be comfortable and people can feel it's accessible: they too could have this.

RICHARD: Absolutely. That's where I was going, is that there isn't a piece in here that we can't direct them to somebody to get the same artist. You go to the Bramans' and they have one of the most important of Jasper Johns' pieces. Well, you're not going to go out and buy a four or five million dollar piece but you're going to enjoy seeing that piece. With this collection we can tell them where they can go and get this artist's work.

RUTH: "You can do this too."

RICHARD: Yes, you can do this too. That's what we really strive for, to make it so that "you can do this too." And they do. We've heard from many, many people that that's exactly what they've done. We've tried not to have friends of ours reproduce our collection in their homes (he laughs) because then it's two collections that are pretty much the same.

RUTH: No, I'm thrilled to lead our friends to a dealer who they would be comfortable with.

RICHARD: Yes, to a piece or a couple of pieces.

RUTH: I consider that's the ultimate compliment. And again, as we were saying, a validation of our taste. It's great fun, it's wonderful to be able to say,"Well, this kind of thing you can see elsewhere."

RICHARD: Yes, but we like enough of a difference that it's our collection.

RUTH: Of course. It will also be our collection.

RICHARD: Many years ago we had the situation of a very, very good dealer in this area telling us that we really should meet this couple because "you both buy the same things from us." And we did, and we got friendly for years with them. They're no long here --

RUTH: And it wasn't a replica of our collection, but it was a resonance to the same kind of art. And it was really like looking at your collection through another set of eyes.

BY: But not like walking into your own home backwards.

RUTH: Not at all.

RICHARD: And that's what was the fun of it. It was in the days when Bill King had his first show. We bought one, they bought one, it was completely different.

RICHARD: We got a vinyl piece. They got a burlap piece. So, it was just that we had the same type of taste. And it was fun.

RUTH: It was wonderful.

RICHARD: And who got to the gallery first, to get the first. (laughter) And it was fun.

RUTH: They were different choices, so it was ....

RICHARD: It was really a lot of fun. But ours is an eclectic collection, no question about it. But its huge --

RUTH: And intensely personal. We could tell a story about every single one of these pieces that is as personal for us as it must be for the artist to have produced it. Where we found it, how we found it, how we made the decision that we had to have it, how we scrounged up the money to pay for it -- this is all a part of every one of these pieces.

RICHARD: Sure. We discuss it -- that's the other very, very important part of the collection, that neither one of us do anything unilaterally. But we have very, very few disagreements. The disagreements can be where shall we hang it --

RUTH: Oh, this is intense. (hearty laughter)

RICHARD: And that can be a good argument. But it's very, very rarely a situation of what the piece is. I'll even see something big, like this ‘'Couples'‘ folio, I just am certain that Ruth would react the same way with the piece. And then when she has the opportunity to see it, it's usually an agreement and it works wonderfully well. And art is fun. I think art is very important to be a part of your life --

BY: It is really important the ways you've made it a part of other people's lives.

RICHARD: The other thing I love about it -- I know with me, I can't speak for Ruth -- but it gives me a chance to dig in and do research on a lot of the material. I want to know the technique. I want to know what the artist did before. I want to know how it was done, and I want to know the history of the artist. That to me is a lot of fun. We have a great resource library here. We have files on every one of the artists. It's not difficult to have a file on Rauschenberg, it's not difficult to have a file on somebody who's well-known and has been documented and has one-man shows at major museums. But, a lot of these artists are trickling, they're on their way up and it's great to keep up with them.

BY: You have a collection of exhibition catalogues and clippings.

RICHARD: We cut, I do, cut everything out about an artist and we keep files on them. That to me is as important --

BY: So you are sort of a librarian, Richard.

RICHARD: Sort of.

RUTH: He'd make a very good librarian.

BY: He would.

RUTH: He would corral people in the stacks (laughter) and talk to them about works.

RICHARD: I pride myself on it, because when -- we donate a lot of art, there's no question about it, because we collect more than we can retain.

RUTH: And we're not interested in stacking away. RICHARDo: No, absolutely not. And especially after [Hurricane] Andrew where we stayed-- it isn't indicated here, but we are in a penthouse and we have the whole top of a building. This can be very, very dangerous in times of a hurricane. We got rid of stuff that was in closets, so that other people could enjoy it and there was never that fear of being damaged or destroyed. So we gave a lot away. We gave some very, very important things away and were pleased with it, but with everything that we give away, it's marvelous to be able to give the documentation of the artist and give them a history of where we got it and how it all happened. And it's fun.

RUTH: Before this ends I want to point out that this city is no more than 100 years old. Contemporary Miami is

probably the last 50 years and I am expanding it a whole lot. And, for us to have been a part of the last 43 years, 44 years in the arts and in civic activities, has been very, very exciting. We've not only watched it change but we've been very much a part of helping to make it change. That's very invigorating, and I rarely think about it, but in this time of retrospect, it's extraordinary to know that we were there at the beginnings of a whole lot of these institutions and now rituals.

BY: And are seeing them now become healthy

RUTH: And off on their own. It's lovely. Our "children" are growing up. (laughter)

RICHARD: At my age, it's, the biggest thrill that I have so far as art is concerned, the biggest thrill I have is the kids and Ruth and the house --

RUTH: I'm glad I made the winners!

RICHARD: The biggest thrill I have is having my name on a major gallery, at MOCA. There are people from all over the world and the most important collectors in the world are coming there and they see this, the name was a part of it. And that to me is a great legacy. And that's my legacy. And art has become my legacy. And I think that it's become a very important part of Ruth's life. Ruth has been phenomenal because coming out of politics, where she was very influential in forcing a lot of the art situations in the community to happen, now being a part of a Foundation where she's able to help artists, it is incredible. It's worked out well for both of us.

BY: This has been a great interview, and I want to thank you both very much. And I want to come back five years from now and we'll see what's happened in the next five years.

RUTH: Good! It's going to be a very exciting five years.

RICHARD: And I'm delighted that it was you that did it.

BY: I'm delighted that I was asked. END OF INTERVIEW