



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Eleanor  
Ward, 1972 February 8

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Eleanor Ward on February 8, 1972. The was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The original transcript was edited. In 2023 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

[00:00:03.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And say it's the 8th of February, 1972. Paul Cummings joined by Eleanor Ward. Well, could we start with some background about you and what led you to Seventh Avenue and the Stable Gallery? Did you have an interest in art before?

[00:00:23.46]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, I always had an interest in art.

[00:00:25.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that through the family, or school?

[00:00:28.11]

ELEANOR WARD: It was through the family, really through the family. We used to always go to openings. And my sister was—My father was an artist. As a matter of fact, he was a frustrated artist. He became a—

[00:00:40.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:00:41.14]

ELEANOR WARD: His family didn't want him to be an artist.

[00:00:42.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was his name?

[00:00:43.97]

ELEANOR WARD: His name was William Berry. And he became an architect.

[00:00:48.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? So it's been close all the time.

[00:00:53.08]

ELEANOR WARD: But he never lost his interest in art, and he never—he never ceased to paint. And my brother was extremely gifted. He probably would have been a great artist, but he was killed when he was only 12 years old. And my sister's gifted. I'm the only one that wasn't gifted. [They laugh.]

[00:01:11.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wow. I didn't know that.

[00:01:14.23]

ELEANOR WARD: None of them really did anything with it, except I think my brother would have. But you know, the way one always wants the unobtainable, and it never is a fixation, just a dream that you know you'll never have. I always wanted a gallery.

[00:01:31.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[00:01:32.15]

ELEANOR WARD: But never enough to make any effort in that direction, or to really have it overtly in my mind. It was something way in the background that I'd love to have. And even when I was—when my teens—

[00:01:47.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Are you from New York?

[00:01:49.01]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. We'd go to very proper openings. [Dog barking.] And the attendants were—[dog barking]—in striped trousers and colored gloves, you know. [Inaudible] And I used to think then what fun it would be just to have a gallery of people who walk in off the street, and be informal and free and relaxed. But never thought I'd have one, never, never set a goal to have one. I was married twice before I had the gallery, but just never—Well, this came about—I won't go into it because it's too involved, more, how I was able to get the space.

[00:02:32.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, did you have any—did you work for any other galleries beforehand, or—?

[00:02:37.27]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:02:38.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nothing?

[00:02:38.72]

ELEANOR WARD: Nothing. But I'd gone to a great many galleries, of course. I was very—

[00:02:43.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you know many artists?

[00:02:44.96]

ELEANOR WARD: I knew quite a few. I didn't know any on the New York scene intimately. [Dog barking.] Well, at any rate [dog barking], through some absolute extraordinary stroke of luck, I was able to get this building.

[00:03:08.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:03:10.20]

ELEANOR WARD: And the very first—do you want me to start off with the very first exhibition we had?

[00:03:14.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, I'm cur—but I read that you were going to open a shop with somebody, or something?

[00:03:19.46]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:03:20.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No?

[00:03:21.27]

ELEANOR WARD: I opened a very small boutique for about—over a Christmas holiday to get a foothold in the building.

[00:03:31.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I see.

[00:03:34.35]

ELEANOR WARD: That was how I got the building.

[00:03:36.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh. How did you ever come to find that space?

[00:03:39.48]

ELEANOR WARD: I knew the woman that had the building. And she was a very bad sculptor.

[00:03:51.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:03:52.09]

ELEANOR WARD: And I was afraid that if I told her that I wanted an art gallery, that the conditions of my taking the space would be contingent on my showing her work, which is the last thing in the world I wanted to do.

[00:04:02.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:04:03.40]

ELEANOR WARD: So I conceived the idea of opening this boutique, which was absolutely useless space. She wasn't using it.

[00:04:12.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It hadn't been used as a stable for a while, had it?

[00:04:15.01]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, not for years. No.

[00:04:18.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. So what was the boutique idea?

[00:04:21.11]

ELEANOR WARD: It was just to get a foothold in the unused space. It was just empty and going to waste. And then, because of the space, I met a man by the name of Alexander Iolas, who was intrigued by the space. And I gave—the first exhibition was that of contemporary Italian painters.

[00:04:55.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it was that exhibition, "Alexander Iolas Presents." That's the first one?

[00:05:01.91]

ELEANOR WARD: It's the first one. And then my intention was to continue with Iolas for a while, until I really found myself. And the next exhibition was that of Mathieu; the first time Mathieu was shown in this country.

[00:05:19.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? It's very hard. I haven't been able to find a lot of material, you know. So it's been—it's very fuzzy in the first half dozen years.

[00:05:30.08]

ELEANOR WARD: And then, during the Mathieu show, Iolas and I came to a parting of the ways.

[00:05:36.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you know Mathieu, or was that through Iolas?

[00:05:38.96]

ELEANOR WARD: No. Through Iolas. In the meantime, I'd been chatting to a great many artists on the contemporary scene. And one of them, who became a very dear friend, Nick Carone, and a group of artists, we all got together, and conceived of the idea of reopening the old Artists' Annual, which I did that year. The Italian— Young Italian exhibition had been in the summer, and the Mathieu exhibition, I think, was in November. And then there was nothing. I think the first Stable Annual opened in January. I think it was '53.

[00:06:55.29]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Because I have here it was the end of '52 or early—

[00:06:58.80]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. '53.

[00:06:59.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —'53.

[00:06:59.73]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, '52, you see— the end of '52 would be the Mathieu exhibition, which was really Iolas' work, but I exhibited it. We did it jointly. It wasn't his work. All the paintings belong to Mathieu, of course. But he was responsible for bringing them over.

[00:07:17.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, who were some of the artists, besides Nick Carone, who was in the initial group?

[00:07:26.49]

ELEANOR WARD: Marca-Relli, Franz Kline, Bill de Kooning, Pollock.

[00:07:38.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were these artists that you knew, or you were just getting to know about them?

[00:07:41.59]

ELEANOR WARD: I'd met them, and then sort of knew them because of their interest in what

I was doing in the space. And no one was really doing anything of any particular interest at that moment in history. It was curious. I mean, Betty Parsons was active, and was showing very good people. But it needed revitalizing. And I think everyone felt that someone new coming on the scene with a new space would help to be a catalyst, which of course, it turned out to be.

[00:08:11.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, very much so. [Laughs.] Well, was this in any relation, in juxtaposition, with the Whitney Annual?

[00:08:21.99]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, no. No.

[00:08:23.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Pro or against that?

[00:08:24.43]

ELEANOR WARD: No. No.

[00:08:25.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had nothing to do with that.

[00:08:26.26]

ELEANOR WARD: No such thing as protests existed in the early '50s. Everyone was just "for;" no one was against anything. [They laugh.]

[00:08:32.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They just wanted to be there.

[00:08:33.98]

ELEANOR WARD: Exactly. Exactly.

[00:08:36.44]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, because you had—you showed Burri and some other people—

[00:08:44.00]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:08:44.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —during 1953. Did you start having members, you know, getting members of the gallery—

[00:08:50.15]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:08:51.11]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —then, or was that later?

[00:08:52.82]

ELEANOR WARD: No. No. As soon as the annual was fait accompli, and the artists were delighted, and it was invitation by the artists, more or less. I didn't do any inviting. Bill de Kooning, and Franz Kline, and Pollock, and Marca-Relli, and Nick, more or less, I think, drew up a list about who would be invited. And it was all, at that time, all of the really top American painters, with two glaring exceptions.

[00:09:36.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who?

[00:09:37.48]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, you'd know without my telling you—Rothko and Still.

[00:09:41.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Right.

[00:09:42.94]

ELEANOR WARD: Even then, they refused to show in group shows.

[00:09:46.42]

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

[00:09:46.78]

ELEANOR WARD: But everyone else did. Oh, then, while the annual was in the works, I started going to studios to look for artists. And the first artist I showed was Edward Dugmore. And I think the second was Marca-Relli, I think, and then Joan Mitchell, and then Biala. And then in the fall of that year I showed Twombly, and Rauschenberg, and then Alberto Burri. And from there on, I can't really tell you.

[00:10:37.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Yeah. Yeah. Well, did you have any particular idea of what you wanted to do, or did it develop as you looked around?

[00:10:47.49]

ELEANOR WARD: I wanted to show Contemporary art. And I wasn't chauvinistic at all. I showed Burri, and I would have shown—and I showed Mathieu, as you know. And I was going to show—who was I going to show? Oh, I was going to show Matta. But again, it was through Iolas, and that had to be canceled because of—difficult man. But as it happened, I went to Europe every single year over 10 or 12 years. And I just never found anyone that—you know, it just became completely American by sheer accident.

[00:11:27.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, it's interesting, because you didn't—you know, as I look through the list—have very many figurative painters, did you?

[00:11:35.63]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, no.

[00:11:36.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, it was very involved with Abstract Expressionism—

[00:11:38.27]

ELEANOR WARD: Completely. Completely.

[00:11:39.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —and that whole movement.

[00:11:41.48]

ELEANOR WARD: With the exception of Biala, who was representational. And I showed her consistently for many years.

[00:11:50.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How did you get through to her, because she lived in Europe, didn't she?

[00:11:54.27]

ELEANOR WARD: No. She was living here then.

[00:11:55.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, she was living here then.

[00:11:56.28]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, Jack Tworokov is very much involved with this group too.

[00:12:00.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's his sister.

[00:12:01.53]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. I got to Biala through Jack.

[00:12:08.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, did you have ideas about promoting your gallery, or merchandising the artist or any of those things. Or was it—

[00:12:16.21]

ELEANOR WARD: No, it just gradually grew.

[00:12:17.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was a very quiet—

[00:12:18.50]

ELEANOR WARD: Very slow growth and very quiet.

[00:12:20.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:12:22.00]

ELEANOR WARD: The only thing that began to happen that I, of course, became very keenly aware of, was that everybody from museums started to come, and didn't miss one exhibition. Everybody from the Whitney came. Everybody from—when I say everyone was [inaudible], I mean Dorothy Miller and Alfred Barr came to every single exhibition. Sweeney came to a lot. And if I ever called Sweeney up, and asked him to come, he would come. He came once in a blizzard.

[00:12:57.02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, that's great.

[00:12:59.46]

ELEANOR WARD: He was fantastic.

[00:13:02.58]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:13:03.09]



ELEANOR WARD: And then of course, you know, with the museum people being interested, and word spread. And then, of course, it spread, through the artists, and then the publicity was fantastic. And Emily Genauer really made Rauschenberg, by spending the year-end column about—just a complete Rauschenberg blast.

[00:13:27.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:13:28.71]

ELEANOR WARD: It just made him.

[00:13:29.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. How did you find him?

[00:13:33.90]

ELEANOR WARD: I had heard about him. I forget how. The art world is really, when you come right down to it, quite small. It was even small then. I went down to his studio. He was living with Twombly at that time. And Twombly was painting black paintings with white, and Rauschenberg was painting all white paintings. [Laughs.] And then Rauschenberg had some sculpture, too that we showed at that time—rocks with strings.

[00:14:04.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:14:05.53]

ELEANOR WARD: And some objet trouvées, quite fascinating—boxes with rocks and—

[00:14:11.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Whatever happened to those? I don't remember—

[00:14:16.86]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, when the exhibition—of course, nobody bought a thing, he used to say. When the exhibition was over, I kept a few things around. They eventually went back to him. And who knows? He might have given them to friends, or kept them. I don't know—destroyed them, maybe.

[00:14:31.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, how did the collectors react in the first year or two? Were they curious or—

[00:14:40.47]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, the First Stable Annual had "Blue Poles" in it. And it had a major de Kooning and a major Kline. And well, everybody that hung a painting then—now, you know, they always pick the third best, or something. They picked the very best thing that they had ever done. And it was absolutely smashing.

[00:15:11.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That would have been a fabulous exhibition.

[00:15:14.07]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, it was incredible. And I realized that the whole—both floors of the gallery were used, and paintings were hung going up the ramp. And I realized that the whole exhibition could have been bought for \$10,000.

[00:15:30.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

[00:15:31.69]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, that is, if somebody came in and said, "I'll give you \$10,000 for this." And I called everybody that was showing, and I said, "Now, it will equal out this way. Will you take it?" I'm sure they would have.

[00:15:43.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

[00:15:45.03]

ELEANOR WARD: You know, because the prices were, in the first place, extremely low. And nobody was buying anything. They were token prices when you come right down to it.

[00:15:56.61]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's very interesting, because now the young artists want so much money for things.

[00:16:00.56]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, a staggering amount of money. I think it was a year later, it could have been two years later, that Bill de Kooning had an exhibition of—I think he had, oh, something like 48 drawings at a gallery in Philadelphia. They were priced at \$50 a piece, and not one sold.

[00:16:22.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible. Yeah. Yeah. And most of these were not young, you know, 25-year-old artists either.

[00:16:29.91]

ELEANOR WARD: No. They were all established. They were all established.

[00:16:34.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. Well, you know, the Stable Annuals as a series of exhibitions is so famous. They were like—that's what happened every year, you know.

[00:16:46.27]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:16:48.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you feel that they changed over the years a great deal? Or did they reflect the same people or—or not?

[00:16:59.41]

ELEANOR WARD: What happened, which was understandable, and at the same time rather sad, was that every year more people were invited, because more people heard about it, and would get on the other artists, you know, and say, "Well, please include me." So it ended up by there being a size limit. So it was impossible to have really great major works of art, so that it took on a uniform look. Everything was limited to, say, 50 by 60 or even smaller.

[00:17:41.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Everybody started sending the same size. Yeah. Wow. But there were—because I know in some of the later ones, where the announcement was a great big page with all the names on it—

[00:17:58.11]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. It was always there.

[00:17:59.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was? Even in the first one?

[00:18:00.69]

ELEANOR WARD: Even the first one.

[00:18:01.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I haven't been able to find one of the first ones. There's so many people. It's like a whole history, one of those exhibitions. Well, in selecting the artists that were in the gallery, there were no contracts or anything at that time, were there?

[00:18:25.03]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:18:25.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, nobody had—I don't think people started having contracts 'til about the '60s or something, with some galleries. Did you ever have contracts with the artists?

[00:18:36.46]

ELEANOR WARD: No. I don't believe in contracts.

[00:18:37.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was all just verbal arrangements. How about Graham? Because you had some John Graham.

[00:18:44.59]

ELEANOR WARD: I showed him.

[00:18:47.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, but he was, again, somebody different compared to all these other people. How did you get involved with him?

[00:18:53.80]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, you see, because he was a great friend of de Kooning's and a great friend of Stuart Davis. And they had worked together in the middle and late '40s. And at one time, John Graham was an Abstract painter.

[00:19:15.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm, really?

[00:19:16.12]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:19:17.20]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't remember seeing any of those, ever.

[00:19:21.93]

ELEANOR WARD: And I don't know when it was. I think it was in the very late '40s or very early '50s that he moved away from Abstract Expressionism and started to paint figurative, those marvelous women with the cross-eyes.

[00:19:36.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, those heads.

[00:19:38.64]

ELEANOR WARD: So of course, I knew about John through the whole—he was in that whole circle.

[00:19:46.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic because he's one of those curious people who seems to be everywhere, but you can't really pin him down. What about Paul Burlin? Because he came in there in 1954, right?

[00:20:05.36]

ELEANOR WARD: [Coughs.] I don't remember the date.

[00:20:07.09]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was he, again, part of that group?

[00:20:11.02]

ELEANOR WARD: Not really. And I gave Paul Burlin what, I suppose, one would call a guest show. I didn't take him on in the gallery. Most people in the gallery were there, and expected to have a show every two years. Now, of course, they have shows every year, you know. But then it was every two years. And they would bring new work into the gallery periodically, and were, you know, part of the gallery, part of The Stable. But Paul Burlin was never really part of The Stable. I gave him a guest exhibition.

[00:20:47.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there many people you did that with?

[00:20:49.67]

ELEANOR WARD: Not very many. No.

[00:20:51.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the critics, people like Hess, and Greenberg, and Rosenberg, and people who were writing about those artists? Were you involved with them? Did you get to know them? Or were they, as some of them like to be, somewhat distant from the [inaudible]?

[00:21:06.98]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, no. They were very involved. They were very involved.

[00:21:09.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I know Clem did an introduction one year for an Annual. Right? A little one.

[00:21:19.15]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:21:20.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:21:25.13]

ELEANOR WARD: And Tom Hess—I gave an exhibition to a collection that Tom Hess put together for—I forget now what it was.

[00:21:36.75]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, for that foundation, the Longview?

[00:21:39.25]

ELEANOR WARD: No. I don't think it was for the Longview. I think it was for—

[00:21:46.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, there was that one for the Walker Art Center.

[00:21:48.42]

ELEANOR WARD: That's it.

[00:21:48.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That "U.S. Painting, yeah, some—

[00:21:50.48]

ELEANOR WARD: That's it.

[00:21:51.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —"[U.S. Painting:] Recent Directions."

[00:21:53.79]

ELEANOR WARD: That's it. Yes. And Harold—Harold Rosenberg was always around, and Clem was always around. And Tom Hess was always around. I mean, they came to all the exhibitions. And they were always interested in practically everyone.

[00:22:10.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, you would sort of consistently showed sculptors for a while. I mean, you had—Noguchi was there, and Stankiewicz. And who else?

[00:22:22.23]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, outside of Bob Engman—

[00:22:24.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Engman and Indiana.

[00:22:25.65]

ELEANOR WARD: And then I gave two or three sculpture Annuals. But I wasn't—there weren't too many sculptures outside of Noguchi and Stankiewicz— and then two exhibitions to Robert Engman.

[00:22:45.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, Indiana had objects, didn't he? I mean, did he call them sculptures?

[00:22:51.01]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, those weren't in his first show.

[00:22:52.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, they were later.

[00:22:53.35]

ELEANOR WARD: And that's after I'd moved. You see, after I left Seventh Avenue and went to 74th Street.

[00:22:57.70]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had Cornell over there, too, didn't you?

[00:22:59.80]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:23:00.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you ever get to him? [Laughs.]

[00:23:01.51]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, that was—that was another freak. I don't know who it—it could have been Rauschenberg that invited Cornell into one of the annuals. And when the Annual was over, the Cornell box stayed on and on. And finally one day Cornell came in to pick it up. And I told him how sad I was that he was taking it away. And he said, "Oh, would you like to keep it?" And that's how it happened. I had several exhibitions with Cornell—first a series, a small series of night skies, and other different subjects in this very small little area in the back. And they were always held in December because he was very, very sentimental about Christmas.

[00:24:04.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. That's fascinating.

[00:24:05.67]

ELEANOR WARD: And they were always held in this very small, little, teensy gallery about the size of half of this room. And then the final exhibition I gave to Cornell was upstairs in the old gallery. The room was painted a very dark charcoal gray. And things were either hung, or on pedestals. And there were no lights except spots on the pieces, so they just receded into the blackness.

[00:24:35.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How fantastic.

[00:24:38.90]

ELEANOR WARD: And it was absolutely the most marvelous installation of Cornell I've ever seen.

[00:24:44.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, do you find that, you know, you had a broad, developing base [Eleanor coughing] of collectors because I mean, somebody like Cornell, really, people knew about him, but he wasn't collected that much was he, until fairly recently?

[00:25:15.92]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, as Cornell once said, "The trouble with Eleanor Ward is she lets things get away from her." [They laugh.] He wasn't happy about the amount I sold at all.

[00:25:29.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:25:31.34]

ELEANOR WARD: And yet on the other hand, I'm sure if I hadn't sold anything he would have been unhappy.

[00:25:37.13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So it's one way or the other.

[00:25:40.26]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:25:40.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, was it difficult to sell things in the early '50s? Or did people just say, "I'm interested," or, "I'm not?" Or could you develop enthusiasm amongst people?

[00:25:52.64]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, you—really, the very fact that you were enthused, and were making this statement, which was backing up your enthusiasm, and never any high pressure, never tried to sell anything, but, "here it is, and it's what I am, and it's what I believe in." And this is what I think exists today. That was—it gradually made collectors aware.

[00:26:20.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's interesting, because I—what you just said is what reoccurs over and over in discussing the 1950s generally, and even the dealers had almost as much of a philosophical commitment as the artists did.

[00:26:36.72]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, very definitely. All my evenings, for example, were spent with artists. And, well, Charlie Egan, I'm sure, considered himself an artist. And his commitment to art was just as deep as the artists. And I think a great many people were that way. I think Betty Parsons was that way.

[00:27:05.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:27:05.24]

ELEANOR WARD: And I certainly was that way. I mean, I was in it because of a belief and hope that one day it would carry itself. But I didn't start with that in mind. I think if I had, it never would have succeeded.

[00:27:18.53]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting, because now, this year, one gets a feeling there's so many people in the art business who are just dealers. And they could sell cars, or shoes, or anything else, you know. And there's no—there's not that kind of commitment anymore around, amongst the younger dealers, generally. They think they can sell lots of prints, and make a lot of money or something. And it just—

[00:27:46.82]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, maybe they can, but it isn't the same thing.

[00:27:49.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. No. No.

[00:27:50.78]

ELEANOR WARD: It isn't the same thing.

[00:27:51.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I think you miss that quality in a gallery, too. I mean, they've become stores rather than exhibitions or idea places. The ambience is different. Well, how did you come to do that—the exhibition that Hess did with the Walker Art Center? Because that was a museum exhibition that came to a gallery.

[00:28:22.92]

ELEANOR WARD: I think it was the timing had to do with it. I think whatever museums could have shown it were already booked out. And I think he felt that by the time they could show

it, it would no longer be timely. And of course, I did have museum space. You see, the two floors were an enormous amount of space.

[00:28:40.50]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I remember how huge that was.

[00:28:42.42]

ELEANOR WARD: Yeah. And so I think it was a timing thing. I think he would have preferred a museum. But I think he was delighted to have a gallery that was available—

[00:28:51.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: To do it.

[00:28:51.75]

ELEANOR WARD: —to do it.

[00:28:52.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. Well, did you—some of the people were with you for a long time, weren't they?

[00:29:02.77]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:29:07.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Could you talk about some of the artists generally, and how you worked with them, or what kind of relationships you had with them? Noguchi was with you for a while.

[00:29:21.09]

ELEANOR WARD: He was with me for quite a while.

[00:29:22.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For quite a while, yeah.

[00:29:23.50]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. He hadn't had an exhibit in many, many, many years. And, oh, he was with Egan, I think. Yes, I think Egan—

[00:29:34.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For one—yeah.

[00:29:35.91]

ELEANOR WARD: I think. But he wasn't—he wasn't "with him."

[00:29:37.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He didn't show very often.

[00:29:38.28]

ELEANOR WARD: No. He wasn't "with" Egan. He had had an exhibition with Egan. He was with no one. And he'd been in Japan for a number of years, and in Europe, both Japan and Europe. And he came back to this country. And he'd been doing a series of terracottas in Japan. And he wanted very much to show them, but he needed a great deal of space. There again, the space had a lot to do with it.

[00:30:06.56]



PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:30:06.74]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, plus the fact that the gallery, by that time, had already set its standards. And its standards had been acknowledged and appreciated by the critics and the museums. So, it isn't as though it was just a loft someplace.

[00:30:24.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:30:25.64]

ELEANOR WARD: You know? It had gained—it had rather achieved its prestige.

[00:30:32.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, you said you had gone to Europe in the summers. Did you take many of your artists' work with you, or do anything about that?

[00:30:43.10]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, no. No.

[00:30:43.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. You just went as a holiday, and to look and see.

[00:30:46.31]

ELEANOR WARD: I went to look at other artists' work. But I didn't pedal my artists in Europe. Later on, I arranged exhibitions. But I did it from here, when European dealers would come here, and when everyone was climbing on the New York bandwagon, you know.

[00:31:05.51]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah. No, because it would have been very interesting to find out what kind of comments one would have gotten from the European art scene.

[00:31:14.64]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, except that so many—all the art dealers were coming here. And all the critics were coming here. I mean, they—they were coming here as early as '54—'54 and '55, it started to, you know, just—just began to blossom, really. And they could smell it a long way off. [They laugh.]

[00:31:45.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, let's see, that was the one Lawrence Alloway coined "Pop Art" in London, before he'd ever been here.

[00:31:51.21]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, no.

[00:31:51.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:31:52.53]

ELEANOR WARD: Not '54.

[00:31:53.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Because he was working at the ICA, as was I at the same time. And that's when he coined that word.

[00:32:00.96]

ELEANOR WARD: Not in '54, surely.

[00:32:02.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. It was based really on Richard Hamilton, and on people who used, as he said, pop—popular—

[00:32:11.60]

ELEANOR WARD: Popular.

[00:32:12.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —images. You know, soda pop and all this sort of thing.

[00:32:17.17]

ELEANOR WARD: I didn't realize it was that early. I thought it was later in the '50s.

[00:32:19.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It had nothing to do with American art, really.

[00:32:23.13]

ELEANOR WARD: No. I knew that.

[00:32:24.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was very strange. And then it came in—became—

[00:32:27.06]

ELEANOR WARD: Boomeranged.

[00:32:27.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —more American than anything. [Laughs.] Well, what was it like working with somebody like Noguchi, who's sometimes rather difficult?

[00:32:41.10]

ELEANOR WARD: Absolutely marvelous. He's one of the most wonderful people I've ever worked with—just marvelous. In the first place, because I considered him a master, I never interfered with him. I gave him the space to handle as he wanted. And all I did was do what I could possibly do for him to make life easier.

[00:33:14.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Would he, for example, do the installation of his exhibition?

[00:33:17.67]

ELEANOR WARD: Absolutely.

[00:33:18.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would many of the artists do that, or would you do it?

[00:33:21.07]

ELEANOR WARD: Only sculptors.

[00:33:22.39]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Only sculptors?

[00:33:24.70]

ELEANOR WARD: Because I felt that a sculptor understood space, and understood space in a way that would relate to his sculpture far better than I could. And I would never let a painter hang his show.

[00:33:38.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hm. Why?

[00:33:39.99]

ELEANOR WARD: Because they couldn't be objective—impossible for them to be objective. But a sculptor could be objective because of the space problem.

[00:33:51.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Well, how about Cornell, who kind of goes in the middle of—

[00:33:57.30]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, he was never around when I hung a show of his.

[00:33:59.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No?

[00:34:00.24]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:34:00.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He would just appear and disappear. [Laughs.] Well, you know—

[00:34:09.75]

ELEANOR WARD: And don't forget, Cornell's things were not in the round.

[00:34:13.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not really, no.

[00:34:14.76]

ELEANOR WARD: No, they're not. They're all frontal.

[00:34:16.17]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, right. Right. I mean, they do have those marvelous backs and things that you want to look at.

[00:34:21.48]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes, but—

[00:34:22.38]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Basically, they're from the front. One of the things that's always intrigued me is the collection of people who were with you for a while and then all of a sudden, boom, they went off somewhere else and became very expensive, and sought after.

[00:34:50.65]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, it's just it's the—

[00:34:52.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It happens.

[00:34:53.47]

ELEANOR WARD: It happens, you know, all the time, really. The first time that I was raided was by Kootz. And his technique was around, you know: "You're successful and you need a—you need a knowledgeable man." [They laugh.] You know. And he'd pat them on the back and say that, "You know, you've had that scene. Now you really need the real thing." [They laugh.] "Come with me and you'll—" you know. In the meantime, most of the people that left me and went to Kootz had already been placed in almost every important museum. So there was very little Kootz could do for them in that direction. Of course, he promised them great commissions. And I think he did get them, probably, in some out-of-the-way museums that I hadn't. And of course, he had a different collector.

[00:35:53.89]

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

[00:35:54.04]

ELEANOR WARD: You know, we both had different collectors. Although at the same time, most collectors went to every gallery, so there was a great overlap.

[00:36:03.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting, the American collector, unlike the European, shops around a lot more.

[00:36:09.58]

ELEANOR WARD: Not necessarily. It's only in a certain type of gallery. I'll digress for a moment and tell you that, oh, Allen Brell was here a couple of weeks ago. And he walked into Marlborough. And he was ambling around, and he suddenly saw everyone galvanized. And he turned around to see what had put them into this state of shock and rigidity. And it was Seymour Knox. [They laugh.] Well, of course, when Seymour Knox came in to see us it was, you know, "Hi, Seymour, how are you?" [Laughs.] And I was "first name," and Allen was "first name," and nobody sprang to attention. We're just seeing an old friend. Well, at any rate, every gallery that Allen went to, he ran into Seymour Knox. And there were only about five or six. But it just shows you the pattern. Certain collectors go to certain galleries.

[00:37:03.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:37:05.30]

ELEANOR WARD: And they stick to that routine, more or less. If they go to some new one, it's because someone's ear they respect will get them to go off the beaten path. But as a rule, it's a circuit. It used to be, and I think it's still more or less is.

[00:37:23.98]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think since the galleries have stopped serving liquor at openings, and all those great things—

[00:37:30.24]

ELEANOR WARD: I never served liquor.

[00:37:31.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But so many used to.

[00:37:34.71]

ELEANOR WARD: Not—yes, but not all.

[00:37:36.04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: They openings aren't as gregarious as they used to be.

[00:37:38.23]

ELEANOR WARD: Not all of them.

[00:37:38.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. Well, at different points, quite a few, though. And then they stopped at one point. Everybody just decided it was too expensive.

[00:37:48.99]

ELEANOR WARD: I never did, ever.

[00:37:52.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was there a reason for that?

[00:37:54.45]

ELEANOR WARD: No. I just thought it was a bore.

[00:37:55.90]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

[00:37:58.29]

ELEANOR WARD: And I knew that people would be standing around with their backs to the paintings.

[00:38:00.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right—drinking all they could drink. Yeah.

[00:38:05.65]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I used to have, occasionally have, really wonderful parties at night in the gallery, and have the artists and their friends, and things of that sort. But I never served liquor. I always thought it was a—and there's one thing I absolutely abhorred. It was the paper cup and cheap, cheap sherry.

[00:38:31.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:38:32.12]

ELEANOR WARD: Of course, I would never do that. But then, if you serve what one should probably serve, which is plenty of scotch, and plenty of bourbon, and plenty of vodka, and plenty of gin, people get too much to drink. And as you say, they're just slopping around. They're not looking at the work.

[00:38:47.27]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. How do you think that the gallery changed over the years as far as its—its attitudes and the ideas that you had, what you could do with the gallery and what its image was? I mean, as you said, Kootz raided you and took some people away. Obviously, you had to replace them, and find new things, new artists rather. Did you look for new people in the sense of contrasting—

[00:39:30.78]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes, but very private. I think it was during that time, for example, that I gave Paul Burlin a guest show to fill a blank, without making any commitment.

[00:39:42.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So there were ways of kind of testing and—

[00:39:45.07]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, it wasn't that I wanted to—I never did that. I tested in the studio, and depended on my own judgment, and very often made mistakes. But I never took an artist on and said, "Well, if the show goes over, you're on the gallery." I never did that.

[00:39:59.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, no. I don't mean that way. I mean in just finding your own interests, and things.

[00:40:05.21]

ELEANOR WARD: No. If I responded to work, I usually—if I could take the artist on, I would.

[00:40:17.54]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you take things home, ever to look at them for a while before you decided?

[00:40:21.54]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:40:21.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was always—

[00:40:22.59]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:40:22.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —in the studio.

[00:40:23.64]

ELEANOR WARD: In the studio.

[00:40:27.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I know a lot of people take something home and stew around for a while.

[00:40:33.07]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. No, I would depend completely on my instinct, and the initial impact.

[00:40:40.74]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating. Did it play you true most of the time, do you think?

[00:40:55.82]

ELEANOR WARD: Uh—[pause] I would say 80 percent.

[00:40:59.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's pretty good.

[00:41:00.43]

ELEANOR WARD: Which is a very good—

[00:41:01.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:41:04.33]

ELEANOR WARD: I went to Indiana's studio one spring. The way I went there was that I was at the Penthouse, at the museum. Campbell Wyly put on a group show. And there was a perfectly marvelous piece of sculpture called "Moon." And it was by Indiana. And I was having lunch with Campbell that day. And I said, be sure and let me know when Indiana has his next—has his exhibition—not next, but exhibition. And Campbell said, "Well, he's not with any gallery." And I couldn't believe it. And so Campbell asked me if I would like to see his work. So, I went down there. And that was in the spring of '61, I think, or '62 maybe—'62, I guess. And there was an opening in late September. [Dog barks.] And the minute I saw the work, I knew that I wanted it, and I believed in it. I don't know how many galleries turned him down. I wonder how many. He had been in a group show with Martha Jackson that Ralph Nelson had put on. And Ralph—it was the end of the season, and Martha had thrown Ralph this bone. "You can put on your show if you want." [Inaudible] a lot of his acquaintances and friends.

[00:42:46.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:42:47.04]

ELEANOR WARD: And Indiana was one of them that was there. She didn't take him on, or even look at—care about the work.

[00:42:51.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Didn't work, yeah.

[00:42:53.82]

ELEANOR WARD: Then an artist was scheduled to have a show in November. Oh, in the meantime, that—the spring of '62, I think it was in March, with Marisol. And of course, you know that was just a smash.

[00:43:13.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were the first one to show her, weren't you?

[00:43:15.09]

ELEANOR WARD: No. Leo Castelli showed her.

[00:43:17.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the little bronze dolls, right.

[00:43:19.11]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. I showed her first in a sculpture Annual. But he gave her her first one-man show. And he didn't like the new work. Well, at any rate, that was a smash. And we had to—we were able to extend the show, which we didn't do because it was becoming like a circus.

[00:43:52.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:43:53.14]

ELEANOR WARD: I mean, it was just jammed from the moment the doors opened, 'til we closed at night. You couldn't move. I've never seen a show that drew such a—

[00:44:03.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So many people.

[00:44:05.24]

ELEANOR WARD: Incredible. Well, that was in the spring. Then Indiana showed in the fall. And then before the gallery closed, an artist who will be nameless did something rather naughty. He exhibited some work. He was with me, and he exhibited a type of work he'd been doing, which I hadn't particularly cared for, in another gallery, without telling me. And I read the announcement walking out of the gallery one day. And I was on 74th Street, and I read this announcement of the gallery. And I just dumped it in the wastebasket on the corner of 74th Street and Madison Avenue, and called him up. And I said, "I think we'd better part company." One of the few times I had to do that.

[00:44:56.47]

So I had November open because he was scheduled to have an exhibition in November. [Coughs.] And about a year before that, Di Antonio had brought Andy Warhol into the gallery. And I was in the country, the middle of the summer, wondering—you know, realizing that I had to get to work on the fall schedule because November is a prime period. And I thought of Andy. And I called him up and went in and saw him, and said I'll give him a shot. At that time, Andy had worked with Allan Stone, Leo Castelli, Robert Elkon—oh, I don't know. He had work all over town.

[00:45:49.86]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everywhere.

[00:45:51.86]

ELEANOR WARD: And no one would give him a show. Well, of course, you know history was made that fall.

[00:45:59.82]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you select that first exhibition?

[00:46:04.02]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, it wasn't too difficult. The Tremaines had already bought a "Marilyn Diptych." And I wanted that. And it was just a question of going over the things at Andy's studio. He hadn't started doing the "Disasters."

[00:46:26.15]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And away it went [laughs].

[00:46:27.80]

ELEANOR WARD: Away it went. Of course, the publicity was absolutely astounding, just astounding.

[00:46:33.47]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think he's always been able to generate that, or it attracts itself to him, or something?

[00:46:43.78]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, the same thing happened to Indiana. And then of course, all the critics lumped Marisol with—in the whole group. Of course, she didn't really belong. But the gallery then got—because of showing Indiana, you see. And then there was a woman by the name of Mosse [ph].

[00:47:08.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. I'd say I've heard, but I don't—

[00:47:10.33]

ELEANOR WARD: And she was over here from Paris. And she egged, really egged, Sidney Janis into giving this exhibition. And Sidney Janis wasn't for it at all. But she finally persuaded



him to. And he rented an empty store on West 57th Street—

[00:47:33.69]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that was the Pop show.

[00:47:34.54]

ELEANOR WARD: —for the overflow.

[00:47:37.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:47:39.44]

ELEANOR WARD: And I think the Greene Gallery was—oh, no, it was still going. Of course it was. And so the things from the Greene Gallery, from me, and from Castelli, and I think that was it. There's those three galleries. It's possible that Thiebaud was in it. I don't remember.

[00:48:02.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Wayne Thiebaud?

[00:48:02.78]

ELEANOR WARD: Wayne Thiebaud—I don't think so.

[00:48:04.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't remember. No.

[00:48:06.47]

ELEANOR WARD: I don't think so. I'm not sure.

[00:48:07.76]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did this change the concept of the gallery a great deal?

[00:48:16.13]

ELEANOR WARD: It didn't change the concept of the gallery at all. But it changed—to a lot of people on the outside, it did. They considered me a traitor.

[00:48:26.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Sure, because here was not—something else. It wasn't Abstract Expressionism.

[00:48:31.01]

ELEANOR WARD: But if there hadn't been this great furor, and if both shows hadn't sold out—or all three shows hadn't sold out, as he did, the Indiana showed out, you see, before the furor. And so did the Warhol show. Because don't forget that the Sidney Janis show was after both of those.

[00:48:54.52]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, that was the spring.

[00:48:55.93]

ELEANOR WARD: No, it was in December, I think.

[00:48:57.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was it in December?

[00:48:57.58]

ELEANOR WARD: Or end of November.

[00:49:01.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I remember, yeah. I thought it was later.

[00:49:05.19]

ELEANOR WARD: No, I don't think so.

[00:49:06.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they were very close, though.

[00:49:07.95]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, just followed—one, two, three.

[00:49:10.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's phenomenal. Well, what did the other artists think? I mean, people who've been with the gallery for a while and all of this.

[00:49:19.91]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, they were shattered. I never heard what went on, or what they said about me, but I had an idea. [They laugh.] You know, I mean, they couldn't possibly—you know, they felt that I was a turncoat. And they couldn't be objective about it and realize that, in the first place, Indiana is not a Pop artist. He's pure Americana.

[00:49:43.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:49:43.76]

ELEANOR WARD: You can't call Marisol Pop Art. She's a caricaturist. Andy definitely is. But the critics lumped them all together. And I'll never forget, Sidney Janis called me. And he said, "Eleanor, I'm terribly sorry, but I can't include Indiana in the show." I said, "Why not?" He said, "He's not mature enough." I said, "Well, Sidney, if Indiana is mature enough to be in the Museum of Modern Art, and to be owned by Philip Johnson, I think he's mature enough for your exhibition." So that got him in.

[00:50:26.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.]

[00:50:27.79]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, what happened was that we had the good old *Herald Tribune*. And something unique—I don't ever remember it happening before, but the art was given the front page, which is always devoted to theater. And there was a huge reproduction of the Indiana about that big. And the headline was, "One for the Roadside."

[00:50:49.21]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How marvelous. [Laughs.]

[00:50:50.59]

ELEANOR WARD: And it was this long article by Genauer on Indiana. Well of course, that did that [inaudible]. Sidney was just—forgot completely [they laugh] about his immaturity. And then Burden bought the piece from Sidney Janis.

[00:51:03.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Oh, marvelous.

[00:51:05.38]

ELEANOR WARD: So that it was just—you know, just the whole thing just snowballed, just snowballed.

[00:51:10.81]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, did the gallery change when you moved to 74th Street from the Stable in—

[00:51:20.56]

ELEANOR WARD: No. No.

[00:51:21.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, physically it changed. But otherwise—

[00:51:23.32]

ELEANOR WARD: It had to.

[00:51:23.84]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:51:24.71]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:51:25.49]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But otherwise it was pretty much the same?

[00:51:28.83]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:51:30.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you want to move up here, or was that just—

[00:51:32.70]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, the place was being demolished.

[00:51:34.16]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know that. But—

[00:51:35.09]

ELEANOR WARD: I had no choice.

[00:51:36.05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But this particular location, or was it just what was available?

[00:51:39.68]

ELEANOR WARD: It was what was available. And I didn't want to go south of 57th Street. I didn't want to go further west. And I'd been accustomed to big space. And I wasn't really looking in this part of town. And Johnny Myers came in the gallery one day, and said Herbert had just seen the most fantastic apartment. Described it to me, and I said, well, you know, I'm looking for space. And I went over to look at and took it.

[00:52:13.14]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was that.

[00:52:13.84]

ELEANOR WARD: That was it. I didn't go through an agent, because I hadn't called an agent to look in this area. I was looking over there.

[00:52:21.31]

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

[00:52:22.09]

ELEANOR WARD: It really was.

[00:52:23.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's those little, little things.

[00:52:25.36]

ELEANOR WARD: Yeah.

[00:52:28.78]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, in 1965, the *New York Times* did a story about the gallery, and also showed your apartment and things in your collection.

[00:52:41.41]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, yes.

[00:52:41.71]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Remember, the *Magazine* section?

[00:52:43.03]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. Yes.

[00:52:44.68]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where you had, oh, Egyptian, Etruscan, pre-Columbian, and things like that. Have you built up a collection of your own over this period of time?

[00:52:53.74]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Somewhat.

[00:52:54.28]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. What kind of things did [inaudible]?

[00:52:56.35]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, you don't see very much here because I haven't the space. But I have pre-Columbian, and African, which are my main interests, and some Near Eastern—Far Eastern, I mean.

[00:53:12.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you like objects? Sculptures?

[00:53:14.30]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, I don't know whether you remember, but I forget what year it was. I think it was '55, or '56, or '57. I had been to Mexico, and I fell in love with pre-Columbian art. And I'd never cared for it before. But when I saw it in situ, I felt very differently about it. And I became so enthralled with it that I took a course with Gordon Ekholm. It was given by

Columbia, but it was held at the Museum of Natural History. And then I went on a dig with him. And then I became more and more fascinated. And I ended up by giving an enormous show of pre-Columbian art.

[00:54:01.88]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:54:04.08]

ELEANOR WARD: *New York Times* devoted half a page to it, with photographs. And now it's a title that Andre Emmerich has picked up. It was called "Before Columbus."

[00:54:13.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic.

[00:54:15.96]

ELEANOR WARD: And Gordon Ekholm did an introduction to the catalog. And all the work belonged to a man named Stendhal from California. And because I was not knowledgeable—you know, I knew what I liked, but I couldn't—wouldn't dare authenticate anything—I asked Gordon Ekholm to authenticate. And he authenticated everything, put his stamp on every single piece. Some things he didn't think should be on exhibition; they were just taken away. But the bulk of it he authenticated. And it was one of the few exhibitions I ever gave that Rene d'Harnoncourt came to, because that's one of his—

[00:54:55.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Right. That was his great, great interest. Yeah.

[00:54:58.45]

ELEANOR WARD: And that was a fantastic success, really fantastic.

[00:55:03.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous. I don't remember that exhibition. Well, did you find—

[00:55:14.74]

ELEANOR WARD: All these goodies, by the way, you know, I don't really forget them.

[00:55:17.96]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Well, did you find that, over the years, that you attracted new collectors?

[00:55:24.61]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:55:25.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Different collectors, people would come into the—

[00:55:27.37]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, the same ones would stay, but then the new ones would come, and then they would stay.

[00:55:33.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How would they appear? I mean, through other collectors or through the artists? Or just the name?

[00:55:38.53]

ELEANOR WARD: Very often through what you were showing; very often through reviews. One very fine, fine, fine collector came—went to the Museum of Modern Art, said he wanted to start a contemporary collection, who to go to? He was told to go to me. And I started his collection, which was a very brilliant one. I don't mean that I made it very brilliant, you know. But I started it. It ended up by being a very brilliant one. Because after I'd worked with him for a couple of years, he was taken over by Clem Greenberg.

[00:56:25.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, but that means Clem's a dealer, and he never says he's a dealer.

[00:56:27.97]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, but he was. He had a gallery.

[00:56:31.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know. Oh, and he was with French & Company for a year. Yeah. Right. Right. But did you find that reviews were really that important?

[00:56:39.38]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, yes.

[00:56:40.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: If a show got a rave review, it would bring people in. Or a very damaging one—

[00:56:44.28]

ELEANOR WARD: Or it got an absolute damaging one, it would bring people in. I'd much prefer a damaging review to a namby-pamby review. I mean, if you got really brutal reviews, sometimes it'd be wonderful. [They laugh.]

[00:56:59.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: People really come in to see what it was all about.

[00:57:02.30]

ELEANOR WARD: Yeah.

[00:57:03.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fascinating. But if it was just so-so, it wouldn't—it wouldn't do that. Um—see, we've got three minutes left on there. You did a black-and-white show, 1956. Did you do many theme exhibitions like that?

[00:57:27.19]

ELEANOR WARD: Not many. No. Not many.

[00:57:28.73]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you come to do a black-and-white exhibition?

[00:57:32.77]

ELEANOR WARD: Because everybody had Christmas shows, and I wanted to do something different. [They laugh.]

[00:57:37.03]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. I remember, they'd all do those Christmas shows, just filled with everything.

[00:57:42.82]

ELEANOR WARD: I didn't want to do that, so I did a black-and-white show. Because it's—Christmas is the one time, with the exception of Cornell, it's not a good time to have a one-man show.

[00:57:53.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because people don't—nothing happens.

[00:57:56.14]

ELEANOR WARD: No. And their mind—people's minds are on other things. And they're not concerned about, you know, necessarily going to look at one artist's work. They will go to a group show, maybe see something or possibly acquire something. So most everyone does have group shows during that time. But they're always called Christmas shows.

[00:58:18.41]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, going back to collectors again, are there any particular collectors that you worked with for a long time, or who you really feel you've influenced their collecting?

[00:58:33.73]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, should I mention names?

[00:58:35.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, sure.

[00:58:35.83]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, the one that I started with, started his collection, it really started out to be perfectly marvelous collection was J. Patrick Lannan. And then I lost him.

[00:58:48.35]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he's got a phenomenal collection.

[00:58:50.27]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. But he went to—oh, he did buy a few things from me, after he went to Clem Greenberg. But at the beginning, he only would only buy what I recommended. And there's a marvelous story about Clyfford Still. I don't know if there's time on this for it or not.

[00:59:08.80]

PAUL CUMMINGS: All right. No, let's turn it over, get some more time on it. Well, what about Still?

[00:59:16.00]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, I thought the time had come when I wanted him to have people that weren't in my gallery and weren't part of my Stable. And so I worked very hard on what I thought was a—people that he should have. And there was Still, there was Rothko, and there was Pollock, and de Kooning, and Kline, and you name it. And I thought, let's start out with the most difficult one. [Coughs.] And I told him that I couldn't do anything but guide him, as how to get a Still. But you'd have to follow my directions on how to do it.

I said, "First you write him a letter. I'll give you his address because it's not obtainable, but I have it. And you won't get any answer. And you write him another letter, and you won't get any answer." And I said, "I understand that you own half of the Giants, or whatever they're called." "Yes." I said "Well, the next time that there's a ball game in New York, you send him a telegram and say you have a box." And I said, "You call him up." And it absolutely worked to a "T."

[01:00:40.64]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Fantastic.

[01:00:41.99]

ELEANOR WARD: And Clyfford Still did call. And they went to the ball game. And then of course, the appointment was made. And Pat Lannan went down to the studio. And of course, Still was not there. And there were three paintings. And his secretary was there, the woman he was living with at that time—I think Pat has since married. And she just let them in, said, "You have a choice of one." No one mentioned money. You couldn't be as vulgar as all that.

[01:01:20.77]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[01:01:21.52]

ELEANOR WARD: And he chose. I don't know what the other two were. But he chose a great Still. Now, whether the other two were equal quality or not, I don't know. And then Still went up to his apartment and stretched it and hung it. And then in his enthusiasm, he called in Clem Greenberg to see his great acquisition. And I never was able to do another thing. [They laugh.]

[01:01:53.08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How terrible.

[01:01:55.60]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, it had its funny side.

[01:01:57.25]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[END OF TRACK AAA\_ward72\_9066\_m]

[00:00:05.56]

PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side two. That's a marvelous story about—Still, though, typical impossible man. But were there other collectors besides Lannan who you worked with for a long period of time?

[00:00:20.83]

ELEANOR WARD: No.

[00:00:21.67]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was a major, major one.

[00:00:26.23]

ELEANOR WARD: I had many people write to me and even people telephone from California and asked to put a collection together, and I would never do it.

[00:00:36.48]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How—did you work with many galleries outside New York City, around the country, things like that, or—?

[00:00:43.17]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, yes.

[00:00:43.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah?



[00:00:44.22]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:00:45.24]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that—but that really started when? Right away or in the '60s?

[00:00:49.26]

ELEANOR WARD: Very—it started—no, it started in the middle '50s. Uh, the—I think the first artist that I showed at the Chicago Art Institute was Marca-Relli. He won the Logan Prize. And two years later—it's a biannual, as you know—two years later, Brooks won it. So that just those things in itself, you see, made the museum very close.

[00:01:31.89]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I mean other dealers, though—dealers in Los Angeles or—there weren't very many.

[00:01:36.55]

ELEANOR WARD: No, not at that time. There weren't any, really.

[00:01:39.83]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:01:40.22]

ELEANOR WARD: Perls Gallery, I think, was the only gallery out there then.

[00:01:44.72]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And Matisse was out there too. But he didn't—was not Modern. There was nobody really handling modern American painting. Those few years ago—

[00:01:56.94]

ELEANOR WARD: Not until much, much later. Yes.

[00:01:57.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah It's incredible. How did you find Boghosian? Because he's never been a New York person, really.

[00:02:07.24]

ELEANOR WARD: I found him through a friend at New Haven.

[00:02:13.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because I wondered, all of sudden, he turned up with those marvelous things.

[00:02:18.58]

ELEANOR WARD: So I went up to New Haven, looked at his work. Of course, I loved it. I thought it was enchanting.

[00:02:24.23]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, very much.

[00:02:26.09]

ELEANOR WARD: Did you see his last show at Cordier?

[00:02:27.97]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:02:28.67]

ELEANOR WARD: Simply beautiful.

[00:02:29.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He gets better all the time.

[00:02:30.86]

ELEANOR WARD: Gets bet—Exactly. I knew it when I saw his work.

[00:02:32.99]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He grows.

[00:02:33.11]

ELEANOR WARD: I knew that this was the first step.

[00:02:34.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:02:35.00]

ELEANOR WARD: We were just—I just had that sense because—you know, he's basically a poet.

[00:02:39.59]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:02:40.01]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:02:40.55]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does he write, too?

[00:02:41.45]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:02:42.65]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's funny. I didn't know that.

[00:02:43.88]

ELEANOR WARD: Not for publication because he—

[00:02:45.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, just for himself.

[00:02:46.34]

ELEANOR WARD: But he really is a poet. He would like to have been a poet. And you could see the poetry in his work.

[00:02:52.31]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:02:52.52]

ELEANOR WARD: That's one of the reasons I had such confidence in him, because I knew it would grow and grow and grow.

[00:02:57.30]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have an interest in literature, speaking of poets and poetry?

[00:03:01.70]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, yes.

[00:03:03.95]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you play the piano?

[00:03:04.91]

ELEANOR WARD: I do.

[00:03:05.45]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah? Great. That's good. Um—I think the only other thing is really, why did you decide to close the gallery, and not—

[00:03:19.60]

ELEANOR WARD: Basically, it was because I—I should have done it two years before I did.

[00:03:25.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

[00:03:25.44]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:03:25.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:03:27.37]

ELEANOR WARD: I didn't like the scene. The enthusiasm had gone out of it, the excitement, the wonderful sense of discovery. It just became a business.

[00:03:42.85]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened, though? Because it—

[00:03:44.38]

ELEANOR WARD: I don't know.

[00:03:45.91]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody asks what happened, and nobody seems to be able to define something.

[00:03:50.69]

ELEANOR WARD: I think that—I think—I think that there are too many things happening too fast, that it confused the collector enormously. The critic was confused. The artists themselves were confused. And it was—everything was sort of pell-mell. And then when the Minimal art came along, well that was fine. But then when the holes in the ground came, the Earthworks—

[00:04:27.87]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

[00:04:28.44]

ELEANOR WARD: People got so bewildered. They didn't know what to think. The critics didn't know what to think. I came out of the gallery one morning, and I was walking up Madison Avenue and wondered what on earth had happened to the Whitney. What could have caused this? Well, it was a happening, all right. [Paul laughs.] It was several tons of ice and rotted leaves. And the—

[00:04:55.94]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh no.

[00:04:56.25]

ELEANOR WARD: And the ice was melting away, and the leaves were, you know—it was messing all over the place. And you'd step over them, track them into the Whitney. And this was a work of art. Well, I understood it, and had a certain appreciation for it, because it did have a place. But what it did was to confuse everyone until they just sort of withdrew.

[00:05:27.37]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think that—

[00:05:28.00]

ELEANOR WARD: Then of course, one of the most awful things that happened was the lack of controversy when the *Tribune* died.

[00:05:33.43]

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

[00:05:33.85]

ELEANOR WARD: There was no controversy. You need controversy to be alive.

[00:05:36.79]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Right.

[00:05:37.66]

ELEANOR WARD: No controversy, just one paper. And even though the *Times* tries at times to have three critics—

[00:05:48.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's still the *Times*.

[00:05:48.88]

ELEANOR WARD: It's not enough. But also, it's not enough. They can't cover all that.

[00:05:55.12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh well, there's so many more galleries.

[00:05:57.28]

ELEANOR WARD: And so many more galleries, so it means there's so much more second-rate work.

[00:06:01.66]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you ever involved in the Artists' Club? Did you ever go to any of their meetings and things?

[00:06:06.16]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, yes. We used to go there a lot.

[00:06:07.93]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, that's one of the things that I feel that's caused the scene to change so much, is the fact that people like de Kooning left New York. You know? He wasn't around. You couldn't run into him at a bar somewhere like you could for so many years.

[00:06:26.41]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. And Franz died.

[00:06:27.46]

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Franz died, and even people—Motherwell's moved away now. And so many of the established artists aren't so accessible as they were, so many years. And I think younger artists like to be able to have that atmosphere available, whether they use it or not.

[00:06:48.95]

ELEANOR WARD: I don't think this particular group did.

[00:06:54.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean, this young—the Minimal—

[00:06:56.09]

ELEANOR WARD: No. In the first place, the Club, when the—not the Minimal group, but let's say the Pop group, when they first made it, the Club was struggling to survive.

[00:07:07.57]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. It was almost finished.

[00:07:08.83]

ELEANOR WARD: But they were really struggling to keep alive. But the people involved in Pop Art didn't go to the Club. They couldn't care less about the Abstract Expressionists, and Tom Hess, and that whole world.

[00:07:23.32]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Marisol used to go, I think.

[00:07:24.76]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, yes. She used to go. But she wouldn't [inaudible].

[00:07:27.19]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't think any of the other ones ever went to it.

[00:07:30.76]

ELEANOR WARD: Mm-mm [negative]. She'd go because she'd run into friends. She didn't go for any aesthetic reasons.

[00:07:35.06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No. So, how do you like not having a gallery now, after all that time?

[00:07:41.27]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, I think I told you when I came in. [They laugh.] When you came in now. I miss the activity, excitement of having openings, and going to all the studios. And it's one thing to go to an artist's studio, and look for a painting for a collection or a bang, or

something of that sort. But it's another thing to go and look at a body of work and commit yourself to it.

[00:08:04.36]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And to plan an exhibition and do all of the—

[00:08:06.44]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes. It's a very different thing. And that's what I miss. I miss that. But I don't miss what the present scene is, and what it had come to be a couple of years ago.

[00:08:18.92]

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

[00:08:19.97]

ELEANOR WARD: Which I felt it had become very debilitated. And I—did you—you must have seen Paul Thek's "Fishman."

[00:08:28.07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yes. Sure.

[00:08:29.36]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, didn't you think that was fabulous?

[00:08:31.43]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Up in the tree? I have a little fish from it. I actually—

[00:08:33.68]

ELEANOR WARD: Well, don't you think it was a fabulous work of art?

[00:08:37.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it was so removed, in a way. I thought the ideas were very—

[00:08:42.50]

ELEANOR WARD: But it was there. We'd looked at it. It could be seen, but nobody wrote about it.

[00:08:46.62]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:08:49.55]

ELEANOR WARD: On the other hand, the "See Right" exhibition, as you know, was just absolutely incredibly successful. It was written about brilliantly. And "See Right," with one—just with one exhibition, was completely made. And everything went to museums.

[00:09:07.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. You know, the one thing—you had mentioned Alan Groh. Who are some of the people that have worked for you in the gallery over the years, besides Alan and Nick Carone.

[00:09:16.60]

ELEANOR WARD: Nick Carone, then Paul Chew, who is now Director of the—I want to say Greensburg. Isn't it Greensburg? It's outside of Pittsburgh.

[00:09:33.60]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think so. No, it's Pennsylvania Museum.

[00:09:35.91]

ELEANOR WARD: Yes.

[00:09:36.49]

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

[00:09:41.42]

ELEANOR WARD: And Harold Fondren.

[00:09:44.18]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Did I see that? I didn't know that. That was before you moved. That was on the—on the old one. Oh, that's fantastic. Good old Harold, and all this food and cooking—

[00:09:57.68]

ELEANOR WARD: Oh, he was the best cook in New York. [Paul laughs.] Fantastic.

[00:10:01.10]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] He sits up there now in the gallery and reads his Escoffier [laughs]. Marvelous.

[00:10:11.07]

ELEANOR WARD: Superb.

[00:10:16.42]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Um, okay, well, unless you can think of any specific kind of topics or anything, I think we can just stop.

[00:10:22.51]

ELEANOR WARD: Just chat.

[00:10:23.26]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

[00:10:23.79]

ELEANOR WARD: Gossip 'til the next time.

[00:10:25.33]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]