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Oral history interview with Richard L. Feigen,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Richard L. Feigen on 2009 January 9-13. The interview took place at Richard L. Feigen & Co. in New York, NY, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

JAMES McELHINNEY: James McElhinney interviewing Richard Feigen in his offices at the gallery [Richard L. Feigen & Co.] at 34 East Sixty-ninth Street in New York City, on Thursday, the 9th of January 2009.

How do you do?

RICHARD L. FEIGEN: Hello.

MR. McELHINNEY: How did you become interested in art? How did you become involved in art?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it goes back at least to I would say when I was about ten or 11 years old. I started out—I think I was interested in the future potential of things. It was mainly a business concept of mine when I was very young. Sort of spotting values that I felt were inherent in these objects. Later on I became very much interested in the aesthetics. But I've been interested in the business of art dealing for all my life.

MR. McELHINNEY: Age 11?

MR. FEIGEN: I think about that time. I remember borrowing a book around that time, I believe. I borrowed it from somebody—reminded me years later that I had borrowed that book. I thought for a moment that I'd forgotten to return it. But, no, she just remembered that I'd borrowed it. So I was interested in the business aspects of it. And then I think I got into the aesthetics soon thereafter.

MR. McELHINNEY: As you learned about the objects, you acquired insight into how other people valued them, how they were discussed by art history, by critics, by other collectors.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. And I started collecting, myself, very early.

MR. McELHINNEY: How old were you when you acquired your first work of art?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I was always collecting things. I can't remember when it started. But first it was postage stamps and coins and rare books. And eventually paintings, mostly paintings, some drawings. But it goes way back to at least—I know at least when I was 12 years old. And I still have the first serious thing I ever bought. Well, actually the second because the first I bought and sold and then tried to retrieve it and couldn't. So I still have the second thing.

MR. McELHINNEY: What is it?

MR. FEIGEN: It's a watercolor by Isaac Cruikshank caricaturing the French Revolution, which I bought I would I say probably around 1942 from an eminent bookseller whose premises I used to frequent in Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is that where you grew up?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And I guess you were encouraged at home to pursue your interest in art and antiques?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, I was encouraged. My parents weren't collectors, but they certainly encouraged me.

MR. McELHINNEY: What did they do?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, my father was a lawyer, my mother was a housewife. But together they owned some real estate. They didn't collect anything. My father was interested in music, played the violin, but did not have any collection.

MR. McELHINNEY: An earlier interview with Richard Gray explored the fact that his dad was involved with some

kind of a recording instrument or some kind of a way of screening LP's, some equipment like that; I don't know. And you and he are acquainted, I assume.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I've known Richard, yes. He was in Chicago. I can't remember when he started his gallery. Mine I started in Chicago in 1957.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: I returned to Chicago after being away for, oh, I left Chicago in 1945, I think it was. And I was away at school and college, graduate school.

MR. McELHINNEY: So were you actually in Chicago, were you in the region, were you often at the museum?

MR. FEIGEN: No, I was in the city.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, you were in the city. That's where you grew up.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, Near North Side of Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: And where did you go to school?

MR. FEIGEN: I went to school at the University of Chicago Laboratory School [Chicago, Illinois] in the South Side.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: The same school where Obama's daughters have just been. And then I was in the University of Chicago program which is—it's confusing now because after you were two years in the high school at the University of Chicago, they put you into what they called a college. And then four years thereafter you got a bachelor's degree. I only stayed for two of the four years, meaning that I would've— Let's see. I left there in '45, which would've been after I think three years of what would normally be high school and took one year away at boarding school preparatory to going to Yale [Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut]. I did not want to go through the University of Chicago college course and get a degree because that degree was really not recognized anywhere else.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So that would've kept you in Chicago effectively.

MR. FEIGEN: Oh, yes. And there you would have gotten a B.A. after what would normally be two years of college. But instead I decided to go backwards academically, let's say, and get a normal college degree at Yale.

MR. McELHINNEY: What college were you in?

MR. FEIGEN: At Yale?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Davenport.

MR. McELHINNEY: Davenport.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. I was in the art school at Yale.

MR. FEIGEN: Oh.

MR. McELHINNEY: And so you were in New Haven for four years?

MR. FEIGEN: I was in New Haven, yes, for four years. Well, I was in New Haven for basically four and a half years because I took a half a year off in Paris [France].

MR. McELHINNEY: Sounds like a good idea. And what were you studying at Yale, apart from the core, you know, the undergraduate core, what was your major?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I was basically interested in art history. At that time Yale's Art History Department was thin in courses, and it was difficult to major in art history. So I majored in a kind of a hybrid art history and English literature curriculum.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Were any of your teachers there, any of the professors with whom

you studied, mentors? Anyone who inspired you a lot?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, there was one professor there with whom I was in competition. That's George Heard Hamilton, who was a professor, and, you know, had some influence on me. But on the other hand, he was a competitor as a collector.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. FEIGEN: In those days there was a very interesting, sort of an interesting bookstore in New Haven, run by a rather eccentric guy. And not only did they have very interesting books and manuscripts, but every now and then they would end up with a very, very interesting work of art, which apparently were deposited there by Katherine Dreier. So I would race down there, and this George Hamilton would race down there; we would be competing for these things. I bought an early [Alexander] Archipenko bronze that was standing on the mantelpiece of this bookstore. And there was, I believe, at some point a [Henri] Matisse, which I think I missed. Whether George got it or not, I don't know.

Then there was a very interesting Joseph Conrad long letter about [Ivan] Turgenev's influence on Conrad, which I told the Yale library about; which they then subsequently bought. But this George Kirgo, this bookseller, would turn up with some fascinating things.

MR. McELHINNEY: How do you spell Kirgo, do you remember?

MR. FEIGEN: I think it was K-I-R-G-O. Later I understand he went out to California and became a screenwriter.

MR. McELHINNEY: [Laughs] Quite a change of career!

MR. FEIGEN: If my memory serves me, he would sit around in the bookstore in sort of an undershirt and stuff. He was not only an eccentric guy, but a fascinating bookstore where I went frequently when I was there at Yale.

MR. McELHINNEY: Where in New Haven was it?

MR. FEIGEN: I'm trying to remember the street. It was out—

MR. McELHINNEY: Whitney Avenue, that way, out towards East Rock [Connecticut]?

MR. FEIGEN: It's the street that went out to the engineering school or whatever, past the—

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. Yes, out near Hillhouse [Avenue] where the President's House was?

MR. FEIGEN: That sort of direction, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Out towards East Rock.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes. Curious neighborhood, always was, still is.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. Well, Yale changed a lot since I was there. And then it later on has changed subsequently in recent years I think.

MR. McELHINNEY: Are you still active at all in alumni affairs?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it's interesting. I've never been very active in alumni affairs as such. I was always interested in the art historical aspect there and the art gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: I wasn't active. I lent to, I believe, one or two of their alumni loan exhibitions. There was one in 1956, and then there was one in 1961. I know I lent to the '61 exhibition of loans from alumni collections. Because I had already things in my—objects in my—room at Yale from my collection I thought were always somewhat endangered by a bunch of rowdy roommates. I was afraid that they would wreck these things. However, when I left Yale, I heard nothing from Yale for 50 years. I think my chosen profession inhibited their kind of recruiting me. In other words, I never was on their visiting committee at the art gallery or anything.

MR. McELHINNEY: Hmmm.

MR. FEIGEN: In retrospect I sort of regretted that because when I was at Yale, the James Jackson Jarves Collection was there and intact. And subsequent to my departure, it suffered this unfortunate siege by this Yale

professor Charles Seymour who had this restorer there to clean the paintings, restore the paintings, which resulted in devastation of the collection. One of the great tragedies of American museology. And this man Petrin, I understand, is still alive, who perpetrated this devastation. It's unfortunate it was the earliest collection of early Italian paintings in America and had been at Yale since at least 1871. There was no oversight. The department was very thin. It didn't have a lot of faculty. And I guess Seymour ran rampant over the collection because I think that it—I think it suffered from a kind of a Yale disease, as kind of a Skull and Bones problem. Because it was this sense of entitlement apparently that allowed Seymour, who was the son of a Yale president, to act as if this Jarvis Collection was his to do with as he pleased. And that kind of arrogance represented to me the underside of Yale.

I didn't realize what was happening because I was not there. Had they involved me more in the art gallery activities, I might or might not have seen what was happening. As it turned out, I didn't. And I didn't get involved there until literally 50 years after I graduated. I was contacted by the present director, Jock Reynolds, who reached out. And since that time, I've been trying to get involved. I've been up there a lot. The last year I was auditing a course in—a graduate seminar—in connoisseurship of early Italian paintings. I went up every Tuesday.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who's the professor?

MR. FEIGEN: Laurence Kanter, who's a brilliant, brilliant genius at early Italian paintings. So I've become more involved in recent years.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you were involved with the renovation that just was completed a couple of years ago?

MR. FEIGEN: I wasn't involved in the renovation.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean in an advisory way at all?

MR. FEIGEN: No, no, no, no. I've lent things up there. I've even acted as their agent in the purchase of several things. Largely since Larry Kanter joined the faculty up there and left the—he was curator of the Lehman Collection at Yale [sic]—I mean at, yes—at the Metropolitan [MET, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York]. Excuse me. And he's been of enormous assistance to me in my collecting this area, which has become my passion, are these early sort of pre—of these 14th and 15th century Italian pictures. And Larry Kanter's been tremendously helpful to me. And he's actually at the moment, he's cataloging my collection, which I promised to lend up there next year for an exhibition.

MR. McELHINNEY: Great! It's exciting.

MR. FEIGEN: I mean for me it is because he's doing some interesting cataloging, which I'm, you know, eager to see what he's saying about these various objects.

MR. McELHINNEY: It seemed to me when we were at the opening of the Yale Art Gallery across the street, the [Louis] Kahn Building, the renovation of the Kahn Building, the reinstallation of the collection seemed to put more out on the walls.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: There was a kind of aesthetic, a kind of spare hanging aesthetic that ruled over the place for a long time. They seem to have gone for more pictures on the wall rather than less. And I kind of liked it actually. It was more exciting in a way to see all the stuff they have. A lot of it was in storage for years.

MR. FEIGEN: I know. They have, you know, an old museum, and they've got a lot of stuff there. Larry's discovered two Fra Angelicos in the basement and a Duccio [di Buoninsegna] apparently.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, my God! Amazing!

MR. FEIGEN: He's discovered incredible things there. And he's hung, I guess, the Old Master Galleries. To me it's a significant—it's one of the two important university museums in the country and probably only one of four in the world. And it's more than merely a great teaching resource. Which is why I'm hoping to help them—I've been having some meetings trying to develop a sort of center of museology up there like they had at Harvard [Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts] in the twenties. Because we really don't have a great art history department anywhere in the world really. And I see no reason why such a department shouldn't exist at Yale, where they could train young people in this discipline and possibly produce museum directors. Because there are few out there and a lot of open jobs and not enough potential directors. And it seems to me that Yale would be a logical venue for such a discipline. I mean it's 76 miles from New York. It's got the benefit of the wealth of the Metropolitan Museum.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's on MTA.

MR. FEIGEN: Hmmm?

MR. McELHINNEY: It's got trains going there every day every hour.

MR. FEIGEN: Trains, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, the local rail is Amtrak.

MR. FEIGEN: So I'm hoping that they will develop this.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, it's also there's that whole sort of fleet of New England art museums from, you know, the Addison [Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy] up in Andover [Massachusetts] or the Wadsworth Atheneum [Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut] or the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown [Massachusetts]. They all sort of talk to each other. And, you know, it's actually an area of the country that's got lots of art and important art, too.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. They have. And the most—I was just meeting today with the director of the Clark Institute at Williamstown. He said, "Well, why not such a thing here?" And I said, "Well, no reason at all except—" And they've trained a lot of museum directors up at Williams [Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts]. But Yale is a more logical venue because of its proximity to New York and the wealth of its museums. The Clark Institute is also rich in its collections. But Yale's more diverse. Let's say it's got a world-class collection of 20th century; it's got a world-class collection of the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection of furniture; and it's got the ghosts of the Jarvis Collection. And so on. So it's a very valuable resource. It's got the, you know, the Mellon [Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut] across the road.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right, across the street. The Société Anonyme Collection [Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut].

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, that Katherine Dreier Collection.

MR. McELHINNEY: All that stuff. So was there a professor other than the one—what was his name, Hamilton?

MR. FEIGEN: Hamilton and I remember a visiting professor Dennis Sutton—

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

MR. FEIGEN: —who influenced me.

MR. McELHINNEY: How so? How was that?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I—you know he was, again, a very charismatic teacher. Most of what I've learned has been, frankly, autodidactic. I mean it's been sort of on my own. And a lot of it's been done in the years following my departure from Yale.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, surely.

MR. FEIGEN: A lot of it is whatever I've picked up. So I can't say that I have adequate academic training because it's something I don't have. I sort of wish I'd gone to graduate school in art history at Harvard instead of business because it would've been much more important to me. So whatever I've gleaned has been basically just on my own.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, you clearly have strong opinions about stewardship and about the importance of—or how a person in charge of a collection ought to conduct themselves and address themselves to the care of the collection. And, you know, those are what we would call, I guess, values which are not universally held.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it has to start out with a belief that is not universal: that the arts are fundamentally important. Now not everybody agrees with this, and some people would call it elitism. The fact is that I believe that what we leave behind in terms of the arts is what really matters and not the bombs we make and the craters we dig and the structures we build which will turn into rusty piles in time, but the art that we make. So, you know, I believe that—obviously I find it very painful when something of aesthetic value is harmed or destroyed. And I believe that the country has dumbed down to the point where these values are basically denigrated. I think it frankly comes—it has to start at the top. And I think if you've got a president who believes in reaching down instead of up and in denigrating as elitist these pursuits and values, then it seeps down, and you end up with Sarah Palins. And you end up with damning people who eat arugula and drink latte and all that sort of thing.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: And I'm hoping that now we will get an administration—it seems not unlikely—that values these things. And if they value them, then these values will seep down into our society. And so I believe, you know, in preserving these things. And it pains me when I go up to Yale, and Larry Kanter takes us around the galleries, and we see the devastation that was perpetrated on these objects. It wasn't just at Yale. There was a kind of a concept of archaeological conservation that, oddly enough, began at the Fogg Museum [Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts] at Harvard. And it began for, you know, interesting reasons.

If you start out with, you know, a real belief in connoisseurship, it might be a logical step to what happened up there was that if you can identify an object by virtue of the handwriting of the object and the personality of the artist, rather than just documents, then you want to get to the point where you see where the handwriting of the artist began and where it ended. This could lead you into trying to remove everything that he didn't—that he the artist did not perpetrate, which involves this kind of archaeology. And then it isn't too far-fetched to think that you could go too far and remove more than you intended. That's what happened at Yale, and you got down to the gesso underlying the paint surface. And you ended up with ghosts of the paintings.

MR. McELHINNEY: It is the [Antonio] Pollaiuolo that seems like the skin?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, *The Rape of Deianira* [or *Hercules and Deianira*, c. 1475].

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Like Pollaiuolo. And that painting, I guess it was in an imperfect state to begin with. Now it's been absolutely ruined.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. It's basically an under painting and a drawing now.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, speaking about Italian art, what are your opinions about the recent cleaning of the Sistine ceiling [Vatican City, Italy] or the Cappella degli Scrovegni in Padova [Italy]?

MR. FEIGEN: Again, I'm not a conservator.

MR. McELHINNEY: No.

MR. FEIGEN: I think that the results were excellent in the sense that I think they've been restored to the point where I think we can see what the artist intended. Now there are those who thought that the Sistine Chapel was too garish in color. Well, basically you have the birth of Mannerism there. And that's exactly, I think, the way Michelangelo painted it. And the same way with the Giotto's. I think that effectively you've gotten them back, you've got the dirt from the smoke and everything else gone. And in my opinion that's the way they were painted. So absent any professional knowledge of—I mean I basically remember them the way they were and the way they are.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: And I think—

MR. McELHINNEY: Gut response, though, it's an improvement.

MR. FEIGEN: My gut is that they look wonderful.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, I agree. I think there's a lot of arguing about, as you stated, about altering appearance. It's now much more luminous and— Yes, it's a bit on the garish side. But if you look at his other paintings, so are they.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, that's where we— The Sistine Chapel was probably the most influential single ensemble of paintings on future artists, on the Mannerists and ultimately through Mannerism into the Baroque. And this was seminal. And I think these crazy colors, you see them not long after in Florence [Italy] and [Jacopo] Pontormo and the wild colors in the Pontormo *Deposition* [1528] in Santa Felicitá. And you see these unimaginable colors. Well, I mean if that painting had been in a smoky environment with a lot of intrusion of the elements, you might have found it all kind of yellow and subdued and everything else after 500 years.

MR. McELHINNEY: Surely.

MR. FEIGEN: But it isn't. It's crazy. The colors are crazy.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: And obviously he was influenced by Michelangelo, as were almost all artists.

MR. McELHINNEY: So after Yale you went to Harvard to study at the Business School?

MR. FEIGEN: After Yale I went worked for half a year, and then I went to Harvard Business School.

MR. McELHINNEY: At what? Where did you work?

MR. FEIGEN: I worked at a company in Chicago called Ecco Products. And then I went to Harvard Business School. And then it was thought that I would go to work for an insurance company out in California that was controlled or owned by relatives of mine. And I was always interested in the investment end of it. I didn't believe in insurance as an investment because I was always afraid of inflation. But anyway, that insurance company had as its investment advisors and investment bankers Lehman Brothers [New York, New York]. So after I finished Harvard Business School, they wanted me to go to work at Lehman Brothers so that I would know the people, when I was 3,000 miles away that I would know whom to talk to and so on and so forth. So I worked at Lehman Brothers for about half a year. Then I went out west, and that was in, let's see, I guess '55. Yes, '55. And I basically set up and ran an investment department for this insurance company. And after a time, we stopped using Lehman as investment advisors, and we had our own investment department, which I ran. But I finally wanted to—

Meanwhile I was trying to continue my art collecting and got all involved in German Expressionism. Ended up with quite a number of paintings. And then I wanted to be— I mean that was my primary passion, and I started-- the chairman of the company in buying art, some German things; and sort of an excuse to get East to buy art. And then finally I really felt that I couldn't pursue this from the West Coast. So I wanted to— So I bought a seat on the New York Stock Exchange, thinking that being in New York I could be closer to the art. And then after about half a year—I was advised by my sponsor, [Gustave] Gus Levy, that I would be bored, which in fact he was absolutely right. But meanwhile I thought I could get uptown and continue my art collecting. But I found out I didn't have time to do that. So then after about half a year I sold my seat on the stock exchange and went briefly to work for Goldman Sachs. And then that was in '57—in '57 I started my gallery in Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: Where was that located?

MR. FEIGEN: In Chicago?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: My first gallery was—I had like an apartment on Astor Street, and I lived in the back, and I had my gallery in the front of my— That was in '57. And then in '58 I bought this house on Division Street.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: And then I had my gallery on the first two floors and my apartment on the third floor of that building.

MR. McELHINNEY: Was your inventory at that time then mainly Expressionism?

MR. FEIGEN: When I opened, my first exhibition was "Masterpieces of Twentieth-Century German Art." And I had to use my own collection as my opening show. That was my—I didn't have enough money to go out any buy a whole stock of paintings. So I had to use my collection.

MR. McELHINNEY: Were there any employees?

MR. FEIGEN: I had one—yes, one assistant.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is that individual in the business still?

MR. FEIGEN: No. She was a very sort of lovely Lake Forest [Illinois] girl, not a professional. Her name was Lisa Woods. And she married a man named Ernest Bankert. But she was my assistant at the very beginning.

MR. McELHINNEY: But she isn't in the arts at all these days?

MR. FEIGEN: No, no.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who replaced her then? Did you expand your staff eventually?

MR. FEIGEN: Oh, let's see.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean we don't have to get into the details, but anybody who's memorable.

MR. FEIGEN: I never had a lot. I mean I only in those days had one assistant working for me. Later I had sort of a houseman who worked there and drove me around. But I never had a big staff. Later on, let's see, in— Well, I was there until—let's see, I don't remember. I was there until '66. In '63 I opened, effectively, a branch in New York; the reason being that I had started representing some Chicago artists in addition to my other activities.

MR. McELHINNEY: Who were they?

MR. FEIGEN: One was George Cohen who was influential but remained obscure. And he taught at the Northwestern University [Evanston, Illinois]. And Seymour Osowski [sp] and—well, I can't remember. Some of them— And they wanted—there was an intense sort of rivalry between the Chicago artists, who were imagists, and the Abstractionists in New York.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: And the Chicago artists were very jealous of the prominence, the increasing prominence of their contemporaries in New York. Another one in Chicago that I—I didn't represent him—was Leon Golub.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: A good friend of mine. And they—so because of that rivalry, they wanted exposure in New York. And because of that, I really—that was the basic reason for me opening this New York gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: And you opened that in '66 you said?

MR. FEIGEN: I opened that in '63.

MR. McELHINNEY: Sixty-three. And where was that?

MR. FEIGEN: That was at 24 East Eighty-first. What later became the Bankert Gallery, Klaus Bankert's Gallery. I also had as my neighbor in Chicago—my next-door neighbor was Ivan Albright, who became a very good friend of mine. And it was also— He also influenced a lot of these—he taught at the Art Institute School [School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois] and influenced a number of these artists.

MR. McELHINNEY: A lot of his artwork is in that collection. I guess he was associated with a magic realism school around the country. But he was really an individual, I think.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't think he was associated with anybody. Ivan was really a loner.

MR. McELHINNEY: I mean people try to throw him in with a bunch of other artists like [Philip] Evergood or [inaudible].

MR. FEIGEN: Well, in retrospect. He was oblivious to all that. I mean Ivan was a total loner. I mean sort of as an evidence of this, when his exhibition, an exhibition of his work, at the Whitney [Whitney Museum, New York, New York], the introduction was written by [Jean] Dubuffet. And when Dubuffet came out to Chicago to give his seminal speech called "Anti-Cultural Positions" in 1951 [Arts Club of Chicago]—I wrote about this in a catalog introduction—the only person he wanted to see in Chicago was Ivan Albright. And I have the manuscript of that speech; it was a very important speech. Apparently all the Chicago artists attended it. It was very influential.

I remember Golub saying that—I think I asked him at one point was he there? And he said, "Oh, I was there. But I didn't understand anything; it was all in French." Well, later I got the manuscript, and it wasn't in French; it was in English. And Dubuffet had spent a lot of time in New York learning English to give that speech. And George Cohen said, "This is nonsense. It was in English." And it was extremely influential. But Leon didn't want to really acknowledge the impact of that speech.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, I see.

MR. FEIGEN: It was at an exhibition there at the Arts Club in 1951 where—when he gave that speech, which was a very, very important show. And I think Chicago was the first place in the world to focus on Dubuffet's work. Certainly there was nowhere—they didn't in France or in New York or anywhere.

MR. McELHINNEY: They used to call it "art brut."

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it was this sort of anti-cultural—yes, I mean the art brut was the collective then and so on.

And art by mad people and children and everything else.

MR. McELHINNEY: [Inaudible] and the asylum—

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: —confined artists and so. And so how long were you operating at the address on Eighty-first Street?

MR. FEIGEN: We were at Eighty-first Street— I finally had to come east myself in '66 because the gallery was being—the guy that ran it was not a manager.

MR. McELHINNEY: Here, you mean the gallery here in New York.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Originally it was called Feigen Herbert Gallery because David Herbert was the guy that ran it. But he was talented but no manager. So the thing was just losing money and kind of chaotic. So finally I came east. I then got married in February of '66 here in New York to a woman whom I knew from Chicago. But we remained there in that space until 1967. In '67—in '65 I'd bought this building on Seventy-ninth Street, 27 East Seventy-ninth. And that building was occupied by rent-control tenants. So it took me a couple of years to buy them all out. Then I hired the Austrian architect Hans Hollein to design the building—the renovation of that building. And that I believe commenced in '67 and was finished—we opened in '69.

Meanwhile, I had kind of designed the upper three floors which would serve as my apartment for me and my family. We moved into the upper stories, and then the downstairs, the two floors were finished, and that became my gallery. Recently ruined unfortunately. I made a terrible blunder. Because I sold that building in '73, and I made a big mistake. I didn't have it landmarked.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ah!

MR. FEIGEN: It was the only Hollein building in North America, and it was very important. It was in the *Architectural Guide* and everything else. And the lady that bought it from me, the couturier Hanae Mori, promised to keep it that way, which she did do. But what I didn't ever anticipate was that she would go bankrupt and the building would get sold. And the landmark district ends about two or three houses to the west; it doesn't include this building. And I never thought that it would be wrecked because it's a little 25-foot building squeezed in between two tall apartment buildings. I figured nobody would ever have occasion to wreck this building. And then all of a sudden, a couple of years ago I guess it was, the building—she went bankrupt, the building was sold. And I couldn't reach the owners. I mean I got a hold of finally some lawyer out on Long Island and got a total stonewall, and some young architect who was involved in the work on the building, who was very arrogant and very kind of dismissive. And they proceeded, I thought tragically, to wreck the façade of the building. And only recently has it become—at least I understand it's the CIA that went in there and did that. At least that's the presumption on the part of several real estate people I've talked to.

MR. McELHINNEY: You mean Central Intelligence or the Culinary Institute? [Laughs]

MR. FEIGEN: No, I think the Central Intelligence Agency, I'm told, bought the building.

MR. McELHINNEY: I see.

MR. FEIGEN: Because the Iraqi Mission's across the street.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh.

MR. FEIGEN: It may be apocryphal. But I've heard it from several sources, so it may well be true. But in any event, they ruined the only Hollein building in North America.

MR. McELHINNEY: New York seems to have a talent for cannibalizing itself. A person observed that less of old New York exists than exists of old London. We didn't have three fires and Nazis in the air above for four years either.

MR. FEIGEN: No.

MR. McELHINNEY: So it's just sort of—it just recreates itself all the time and doesn't seem to have a huge amount of interest in preservation. A few people do.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I think that first of all part of it is the pattern of the city's growth. And secondly, the fact that I don't think we had any landmark protection until the end of the sixties.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: So this building on several counts wasn't protected. And I used to mourn the demise of Lower Manhattan. I used to go down with my family to watch these—on the weekends—and watch these Greek Revival structures down below the Brooklyn Bridge get destroyed. And it was painful to me. I talk about this in my book a bit, about the SoHo almost went, too. I mean the Cast-Iron District. Only recently has there been any protection for anything here. And there wasn't any in Chicago. The knocked down—painful to me—they knocked down the Garrick Theater by Louis Sullivan and the Auditorium and then the Stock Exchange. And there was no protection at all. And there was none here. And I—but I'm sure that the Landmarks Commission would have gladly landmarked this thing if I'd had the brains to ask for it to be done. It just didn't occur to me.

Because when I moved in '73, largely because people asked why did you not stay in the Hollein Building— Well, the fact is that Hans Hollein— A lot of these major architects are really sort of sculpture en grande; they're really making sculptures. And a lot of them don't want their spaces to be interrupted by any kind of intrusions and objects. Mies [van der Rohe] didn't. Frank Lloyd Wright didn't. And Hans made a very, very strong statement with a lot of chrome and a lot of colored velvet and all kinds of stuff in there, and it's kind of a latter-day Wiener Werkstätte statement. And the artists that I represented, like Bridget Riley and so on, Bridget said she was going to leave my gallery because she wouldn't exhibit in this place. So finally in '73 I sold it. But I never thought it would get wrecked.

MR. McELHINNEY: Sad story.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. But if I'd asked the Landmarks Commission at that point, which was in existence, would they have landmarked? Of course they would have landmarked. It was just stupid on my part. It just didn't occur to me actually.

[END OF CD 1.]

MR. McELHINNEY: How long have you been here?

MR. FEIGEN: I think, let's see, maybe eight or nine years.

MR. McELHINNEY: So what were the interim spaces after you departed the Hollein Building?

MR. FEIGEN: Then I bought—then I moved into a rented space at 900 Park Avenue, which was a dungeon. I mean I don't know why I ever rented it. I signed a ten-year lease, and there were no windows or anything. I mean it was awful. It was like a mausoleum in there. And I stayed in there 1973—I guess '83. Then I bought a house, a brownstone farther east on Seventy-ninth Street, only about three doors east between Park and Lexington. And then I bought another building next door. And I had the idea that I would join the two buildings. Then I found that the floors were not exactly on the same level, and it didn't really work. It wouldn't be worth it because there wouldn't be any really ample spaces. And I sold those two buildings in 19—, must have been, maybe it was, let's see, maybe about 1980.

I bought a building at 49 East Sixty-eighth Street, a very beautiful big townhouse. And that one I remodeled it. It was— I stayed there and— I sold that because I thought it was too big. I mean it was weird because this building we're in now is just as big. But the way the spaces are, that building, the thing had been sort of gutted and had brick walls. It was some kind of automation thing of [Theodore] Ted Kheel. And all the detail was gone from the inside. And it appealed to me because from the inside. And it appealed to me because you had brick walls; you could hang early paintings and Contemporary art and everything in there. And I've always enjoyed mixing these things up.

But the way it worked, the ground floor and the second floor were exhibition spaces. And if you weren't having an exhibition, they were largely unused. And we were all crammed into the third floor. And the fourth floor was largely unused and the fifth floor. So basically it seemed to me that the building was too big; we didn't need it. And it cost a fortune to heat and everything else—and cool it. So I sold that building in—when did I sell that building?—2000, I think it was around 2000 or something. And then I rented this building.

MR. McELHINNEY: As the business grew, as the gallery grew, as the galleries in Chicago and New York grew, as the spaces increased, what kind of amenities did you undertake? Do you have a preparation studio? Do you have storage on-site? Do you—?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. Well, by the way, all this time I kept the gallery in Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I wasn't running it, but I kept it. And that moved about three times. We have storage space here. We don't have a lot of it. So what we don't have here, we use a warehouse for. I also then—the Chicago gallery moved to Chelsea in New York. The director wanted to be here. Because at that time I thought Chicago could become the real core of the Contemporary art scene. For various reasons it didn't. My gallery became the sort of cutting-edge gallery under the directorship of Lance Kinz and Susan Reynolds. It became a kind of hangout for the artists. But it seemed to me the wind was taken out of Chicago's sails by this horrendous Contemporary museum building they put up. It seems to deflate the spirit.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, Museum of Contemporary Art [Chicago, Illinois], yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: And I fought like hell against that thing and incurred a lot of anger because of my position on that. But the building was so bad that it really—I think it deflated the spirits out in Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: They were in a smaller space, and then they built this thing next to a canal or something or the river.

MR. FEIGEN: No, what they did was— Actually this whole story I tell in my book. The Art Institute of Chicago—they never needed a second museum. The Art Institute of Chicago was a great museum, a great collection, and a lot of space. However, there was such a Middle Western kind of anti-Semitism in Chicago. And all the collectors, with I think but one exception or one or two, were Jewish. And they were not really welcome at the Art Institute, nor were the things they collected. So there wasn't any—they were not involved, they were not invited to the dinners or anything else.

MR. McELHINNEY: It's strange because [James] Jim Speyer was Jewish.

MR. FEIGEN: Jim—I don't believe he ever would have acknowledged that.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I'm during this evening going to have a meal with his niece, who-- really.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't know who his niece is, but I can tell you Jim never was ostensibly Jewish. And I don't think it mattered anyway because we're talking now about more or less the governance of the institution.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, I see, not the people in the operations end of it.

MR. FEIGEN: No, I don't think that mattered so much.

MR. McELHINNEY: But the trustees and the—

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, the trustees. I mean Leigh Block—basically the Blocks managed to dominate the museum. And they really aspired to the Christian social structure. Chicago was a typical Middle Western city in that sense. Although it was a huge and important city with great cultural wealth, the fact is in certain ways it remained a kind of a Middle Western regional [inaudible]. And there was no mixing of the Jewish and the Christian worlds except in business. But when they went home at night, they were two separate worlds. And Mary and Leigh Block had this great collection, and they basically used it as access to the museum and to the symphony orchestra and so on. And I don't think they particularly wanted any more Jews involved. That was my feeling anyway.

So there developed this need for a Contemporary museum because the Art Institute was not very hospitable to Contemporary art, hospitable at all. So the idea really germinated in a meeting that I had in my gallery on Astor Street in 1958. And we had the first meeting effectively of the Museum of Contemporary Art. There was a building that would have been absolutely admirable for the museum there, which was this United States Circuit Court of Appeals Building on Lake Shore Drive, which was this beautiful sort of limestone neoclassical building which took up practically the whole block except for I think one other building. And that building was being vacated by the federal courts because they were moving down into the new Mies van der Rohe Federal Court Building downtown.

So we went to Washington and got that building for one dollar for a museum. Meanwhile we had to check because the architect who was advising us, Phyllis Bronfman Lambert, was working for Mies in Chicago. And we checked out the access from the rear and the floor loads, and everything was perfect. And we were promised the building for one dollar as long as we got the—as long as the City of Chicago expressed a desire for this institution.

The thing was proposed at City Hall. And a very powerful and interesting lady by the name of Suzette Morton [Zercher] Davidson, who was a very important trustee of the Art Institute, her family having given the Morton Wing of the Art Institute, which was supposedly to house 20th-century art and her fortune emanating from the Morton Salt Company. And Suzy, who was a client of mine, a very interesting, very powerful woman, she came down to City Hall and blew us out of the water because the Art Institute did not want this thing to exist, this Contemporary museum. Notwithstanding the fact that we had stated that we wouldn't have a permanent collection, and no way would we, you know, kind of compete.

MR. McELHINNEY: It was going to be a *kunsthall* [art hall]?

MR. FEIGEN: Like a *kunsthall*. And then we were doing—then the thing got torn down. And a horrible one of these white brick sixties things went up. But then there was a hiatus. Joe Shapiro, who was the leading collector of Surrealism and so on in Chicago and a big client of mine, he wouldn't get involved in our museum venture because the Art Institute sort of co-opted him by putting him on the Drawings Committee down at the Art Institute. But some years later, Joe took up the cudgels and became head of the Contemporary Museum, which years had elapsed, and which that occupied what used to be the Playboy Building on—

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh! [Laughs.]

MR. FEIGEN: —on Ontario Street. So then that's when the Contemporary Museum really started, some years later.

MR. McELHINNEY: What year was that?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, let's see. Must have been—

MR. McELHINNEY: Eighties?

MR. FEIGEN: No, no, no, no. No, no. It existed in the—I think it was already there in the '60s, late '60s.

MR. McELHINNEY: Okay. I know the Playboy Building was. But you know—

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, they were in there by then.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MR. FEIGEN: Because they were there when I had my Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley, mayor of Chicago, 1955-1976] Show in '68. They were already there. And then they tore that down and built the new Contemporary Museum of Art later. But that museum was the product really, the Contemporary Museum was the product of the inhospitality of the Art Institute to Contemporary art. They didn't need it. I mean it all could have been under the roof of the Art Institute. But, you know— later on the Art Institute started becoming interested in Contemporary art but not at that point.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, they had a school, and the school was training Contemporary artists.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, but the school was always quite separate from the—

MR. McELHINNEY: The museum.

MR. FEIGEN: —museum, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: What role did the Terra Foundation [Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago, Illinois] play or the Terra Museum?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, they had no role. I don't know when they evolved, but they had no—

MR. McELHINNEY: The eighties, I think.

MR. FEIGEN: They only were concerned with American art.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: And I don't think they impacted in any way on this general cultural scene in Chicago.

MR. McELHINNEY: So as the gallery here grew in scope and size, the staff expanded, you hired, obviously, help. Do you have an in-house accounting office, an in-house communications specialist, a conservator or preparator or anybody like that?

MR. FEIGEN: We have a bookkeeper, we have an office manager who effectively supervises the bookkeeper. We do no conservation. That's done by specialists.

MR. McELHINNEY: All contracted out?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, we use the best. Conservation's important to me, and I use the best people for the specific type of work we're talking about.

MR. McELHINNEY: Understood.

MR. FEIGEN: Paper conservation. There's the conservation of early, early paintings and British paintings and borrowed paintings. Each one has got conservators who have a special feeling and background in these things that we use. Preparators, we have two, you know, who pack and—

MR. McELHINNEY: They do the crating and the building of crates.

MR. FEIGEN: Some of it. A lot of the crating, you know, is rather a specialized thing. We have it done by specialists. But we do some of it here, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: And hauling. You don't own a vehicle? You contract out?

MR. FEIGEN: We have a truck.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MR. FEIGEN: But, you know, and we do our own hauling within driving distance. But there's a limitation on size. So if things are too big for the truck, we have to use professional truckers.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And so at what point, I guess, did the gallery really make that leap from being you and a hired individual to, you know, more of a multi-tiered operation with people with specialized tasks?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't know. It began— We added people as—not in a very methodical way. For instance, here we need a receptionist.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Because when people come in, when we have an exhibition, we need someone downstairs. And I need an assistant, and my colleague, Frances Beatty, who's vice president, who's my sort of sidekick, she needs an assistant. And then we have a research director who's a highly-trained art historian, a doctor, you know. And she's one of the really best art historians in the country. And she does a lot of the research and prepares a lot of fact sheets and the work. The library grew and grew and grew until finally now it's about three stories of library. So everything kind of proliferated. But when we became involved in more and more important Old Master paintings, it requires more and more research. So we—

MR. McELHINNEY: Establishing provenances or handwriting as you said.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. And making as accurate— I mean a lot—what developed is a large part of our business became a museum business. We do a large part of the business with museums. So because of this, we have to be very, very careful in what we're doing, what we're buying, what we're selling, what we're—the state of preservation, the authorship. I mean all these things become very, very critical, and we're super careful about all this stuff. And, of course, the files grow. And so we have huge amounts of files.

MR. McELHINNEY: On each piece or on each artist?

MR. FEIGEN: Every single paintings has its file, and it's grown enormously.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, since you were in college, the field of art history has expanded enormously. So that there are many art historians in academia and in the museum world writing about everybody. And every year it seems like someone's trying to unearth a new angle or a new wrinkle or a new insight into the work of almost any artist who ever worked. And it seems to be that your audience has all these expectations. So if you're going to authenticate a piece, you're going to have to really do the diligence. But how often do you encounter fakes?

MR. FEIGEN: We don't encounter them very often because things are not—are most frequently not fakes. They might be studio work. They may be copies.

MR. McELHINNEY: Misattributed.

MR. FEIGEN: Or misattributed. We have to be very, very careful. I'm very, very let's say—careful is not a strong enough word. I don't want anything to go out over our label that isn't exactly what it purports to be or there are any problems with it. I don't want that because I'd rather—I go around to most of the major museums in the world, and I see things that pass through my hands. That makes me pleased. And I don't want anything to go out of here that isn't exactly as it reports to be. So we want to be very careful. We do a lot of homework on everything. And we're in touch with almost all the scholars in the world. I mean either my research director, Anne Guité, or I or Frances Beatty know I would say almost all the scholars who are involved in the fields we're active in.

MR. McELHINNEY: What's the name, again, of your research assistant?

MR. FEIGEN: Dr. Anne Guité. Anne G-U-I-T-E with an accent.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, Guité.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. So I'm particularly diligent about all that. Come up with any questions about anything, it'll never pass through here.

MR. McELHINNEY: Have many of the people who worked as employees established their own galleries or have evolved in interesting ways in the art field?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, we have a— You know I'm rather pleased with our alumni because they often, my assistant, some of them have graduate degrees, but very often they go out and pursue graduate studies or postdoctoral studies. And we have a lot of alumni in museums all over the world that have worked here. And my assistant, for instance, gets exposed to all kinds of scholars who pass through here. So usually I'll see them standing in the doorway listening because there's a lot of information that circulates around because a lot of these academics are friends of ours. They come in here, they talk, they look. And so I think it's a good— And we have a lot of interns coming through here.

And then, you know, I'd say these jobs are highly sought after because essentially the galleries only have one or two of these jobs. I mean there are a lot of people out looking for this kind of exposure, and damn few galleries can offer that. And I'm very proud of the scholarship around here.

MR. McELHINNEY: And do you do a lot of publishing?

MR. FEIGEN: We publish catalogs.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, that's what I meant—

MR. FEIGEN: A lot of it as far as catalogs go. And we try to be pretty careful about the scholarship.

MR. McELHINNEY: The content. Do you ever hire scholars from outside, you know, to work on exhibitions or a particular piece or—?

MR. FEIGEN: Not on a particular piece. We do from time to time have catalogs that are like the introduction is written by a scholar. Not too long. Usually I write these myself because usually what we do is are things that are of interest to me. You know although we basically cover some 700 years of art history, I'm not interested in everything. So there are—I don't try to be encyclopedic in a sense. There are great lacunae in what we do because frankly there are certain periods and certain artists that don't much interest me. For instance, we do very little with the sort of 17th century Dutch, I mean the sort of Rembrandt School, genre paintings, and still-lives. Mainly because it isn't of commanding interest to me. Yes, Rembrandt [van Rijn] is. Yes, Karel Fabritius and [inaudible] and some of the ones that are more—are sort of weird—interest me. But the standard genre paintings and still-lives don't interest me.

MR. McELHINNEY: Jan Steen, those type of people.

MR. FEIGEN: Jan Steen doesn't. I mean they don't interest me tremendously. So we've had them from time to time. So they're not things I would find myself having to write on. Eighteenth-century French art, except for [Jean-Baptiste-Siméon] Chardin on, until you get up to the neoclassic don't interest me a lot: [Antoine] Watteau and [Jean-Honoré] Fragonard, I mean I respect their work. It's just that it's not a compulsion of mine. So I don't find myself having to write about those sort of Rococo French artists.

MR. McELHINNEY: So how over the years has your own taste evolved. It started out with a keen interest in German Expressionism, art of Germany. And then how did that evolve? How did you move from German Expressionism into an interest in early Italian painting?

MR. FEIGEN: It didn't really move. I mean I still—probably my greatest let's say expertise, if I can call it that, is

in the 20th century and German art as one phase of it, which I really have had a lot of experience. My interest hasn't changed. It's just that it has distilled into a concentration on let's say Max Beckmann. Because of all the things I had—all the [Ernest Ludwig] Kirchners and the [Max] Pechsteins and the [Karl] Schmidt-Rottluffs and even Franz Marc and things like that, [Erich] Heckel and [Alexi] Jawlensky and all of them; I had a lot of these—I finally focused on Beckmann being the one I really felt was the giant and an artist I have a large number of them myself. So I didn't grow out of that. So the things I have, some of them I have go back 55 almost 60 years, that I keep, that I have at home.

MR. McELHINNEY: The wonderful paintings of his, of himself [*Self Portrait in Dinner Jacket*, 1927], up at the Busch-Reisinger Museum [Harvard Art Museum] at Harvard.

MR. FEIGEN: The *Self Portrait in Dinner Jacket*, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: I've known that painting forever.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I mean I knew it when I was at Harvard and so on before that. And the self-portrait with the French horn [*Self Portrait with Horn*, 1938] that I bought at auction for—that's hanging up—for Ronald Lauder and another collector, and it's hanging in my gallery. This artist is—well, put it this way: I'm sort of identify with Beckmann. And probably if someone were going to bid on a Beckmann, they might ask me to bid for them, if for no other reason than they'd take me out of competition for it myself. I couldn't compete for that; the portrait was too expensive. But other things became of interest. It's not that what interested me then is no longer of interest.

MR. McELHINNEY: No, no, no. But evolved to—

MR. FEIGEN: But things just accreted.

MR. McELHINNEY: To include other things.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. I mean for instance I became very interested early on in British landscape painting from 1750 to 1850, with particular focus on [Richard Parkes] Bonington.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: So I have the biggest group of Boningtons after the Wallace Collection at Yale just because he's an artist I particularly love. And other of the British landscape painters which I feel is an underrated period, a very influential phase in the evolution of the landscape and leading ultimately into Impressionism. So that became another passion of mine. And other things that don't seem to— I mean, for instance, Dubuffet, another passion. And Joseph Cornell. A lot of these don't seem to relate to each other. Yves Tanguy, Max Ernst.

And then I would say in relatively recent years, let's say the last I don't know about 15 years, I've gotten really passionate about these early Italian paintings, going back really to the time of Duccio.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is there a relationship to Expressionism as in their sort of simplicity and, you know, blunt, forceful use of volume and space? I mean Giotto.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, not so much to Expressionism because I don't know that the emotional content is so strong, and all of it varies. But there is that what you call simplicity and kind of Contemporary feeling that you get from the really—the authoritative early paintings that are not derivative.

MR. McELHINNEY: Like the cartouches in the Cappella degli Scrovegni, the episodic frames that are very packed with these forms.

MR. FEIGEN: Oh, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Like lined wood altarpieces or something that are packed. Which is very much like the Beckmanns, which are packed pieces.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. Well, Beckmann looked back not so much to the Italians but the early Germans. But I think what excites me is really the kind of passion of innovation, the cutting edge, the risk-taking by the artist. That as I become more conversant with these earlier schools, I can sense that presence of innovation, which I find exciting.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Now I didn't really look carefully enough at these early Italian pictures in the beginning. I didn't really understand them. I didn't look at them carefully enough. And that came to me I'd say relatively late. I don't know when I first sort of got it. But it was much later than a lot of these other things. It was, as I say, probably maybe ten, 15 years ago. I don't know. Time goes by so fast. But the fact is when I got into it, I could realize even in a thing like the Duccio that the MET bought. I mean there are things in that that are on the cutting edge.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: It's such a strict formula that you have to know what the other things look like that were being done at that time to understand how far out that was. But that passion, that emotion that innovation arouses in me probably is the—well, let's say if there's one unifying element in what I have, which wouldn't really be let's say obvious, is this element of taking a chance. The artists that I like take chances. They're not painting in their rearview mirror. They're painting through the windshield. That's the one thing that ties them all together.

MR. McELHINNEY: I think it's easy for an untrained person to look at a Duccio or a Giotto and see old paintings because they don't know what those things were created against, what the norm was. And so Duccio or Giotto had enormous influence in their own time. They were, as you said, innovators, and it was new art at that time. It was exciting and influenced hundreds of artists.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. I mean it's like the Brancacci Chapel [Church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, Italy], I mean the influence was tremendous. Now sometimes I've come to sense that—although I'm not sure what it is, you know, that I'm looking at—before I can identify the artist. It happened with a Fra Angelico that I bought that I did not buy as a Fra Angelico. I did not know that it was Fra Angelico. But there was something in it that was pretty far out. I mean, you know, if you have a sort of an antiquarian streak, you can basically tell when and where something was executed. So if you knew when and where this thing was painted, between the period of, let's say in Florence, in the period from 1425 to 1430, then you say, My God! How did this happen? This guy is talking about spaces that were only really developed by [Filippo] Brunelleschi at that time. And where could he have dreamed this thing up? I did not see all this when I bought it. I just, you know, was excited by the painting, bought the painting. And then got it home and was increasingly puzzled by these questions. And then my friend Larry Kanter identified it as the missing element in this predella which is now—

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, wow!

MR. FEIGEN: —on loan at the Kimbell [Kimbell Museum, Fort Worth, Texas]. But, you know, sometimes I like things, and I don't quite know exactly why. And the more I look at them, it becomes more and more apparent. But I have a kind of viscera, it makes my viscera churn around, and I—

MR. McELHINNEY: Might it be like reading the painting, you're able to get into the head of the artist in some way, and you sense that you're watching something being discovered?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. That might come later. In the beginning I just—I'm just turned on by sort of ineffable risk-taking which I sense in a painting. Even if it's a painting that's 700 years old, it's there. It's there in that Duccio. Because let's say at the MET, I mean nobody, no artist was having a child so gently touch its mother's cheek or a [inaudible] parapet like that. Or the sort of ribbon of the mother's robes and things like that. Those were brand new then in 1300.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: So that taking a chance is an exciting thing. And then you can tell that that painting had to be acquired—that was after they paid too much—they had to have it no matter what it cost. I've never felt money, you know, was paper. They print it in Washington; they can print as much as they want. And they're printing a billion—a trillion two hundred million or two hundred billion—they can just print it endlessly. Whenever I've ever had any money, and even when I didn't, I had to have a painting, I bought the thing and worried about where the hell I was going to get the money later. I never had enough money to buy what I wanted to buy.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you're a risk-taker.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, yes. But I don't—I don't consider these things as a risk. In other words, if they are so expensive that there's no way that I could ever imagine laying my hands on this money, then I have to act as a — I still have to— If I can't participate in involving myself with this object or placing it but I know it's beyond me, I can't have it, so I have to kind of suppress my acquisitiveness.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you ever go shares in works of art with other dealers?

MR. FEIGEN: I do. I go in shares when one of two things happens: Number one, when the amount of money

involved is beyond me alone. And number two, when a colleague knows more about that than I do. I can't, you know, I don't—there's a lot of stuff I don't know. So I frequently find myself in partnerships. But only with colleagues who I feel know—are preeminent in that field where I'm not. Or talking about a sum of money that I can't afford, largely I've come around to only really wanting to buy things that I would like to own myself because those are the things I don't make a mistake on. When I start using my head and thinking I've got a client for it or I can sell it somewhere, that's where I've made my mistakes, when I use my head and not my gut. So a lot of times, increasingly, I find myself wanting something and being approached by colleagues who are interested in the same painting or in the same field.

And very often I say, you know, you're going to have to be on your own because it's something I want for my own collection. Otherwise I'd love to be your partner. But I don't want it for business, I don't want it for money; I want the object. And therefore I have to buy it. Now sometimes they realize that it's hopeless, you know. I tend not to want to have my bluff called. And if I say I'm going to buy it, I'm going to buy it, and that's it. And I don't want it be proven, you know, that I've put somebody else off it and then don't buy it. But when I want it and it's within even my vaguest imagination to be able to afford it, I buy it, and I don't want partners because I don't want to be tied into having to sell it.

So I mean I took a partner in on this great Andrea Mantegna *Christ's Descent Into Limbo* [1468] when I bought it at Sotheby's, I don't know, must be 35, 38 years ago or something. And I regretted having a partner because I would've loved to have kept that painting. It's a magnificent painting. I'll never have anything like it again. And I was therefore forced to sell it. I could, I suppose, have bought the other partner out at some point.

But the fact is that I really prefer to buy, not to sell. My real interest is in collecting. I'm really only a collector in dealer's clothes, not the other way around. I mean that's what I really like to do is buy. And if I had enough money, which I've never had, I would simply buy and not sell. I'd only buy things for myself and never sell a damned thing and not be an art dealer. And I've always felt that being an art dealer has— I wanted my ability to — A lot of things I could've accomplished I can't because I became an art dealer, a sort of irreversible step. But I can't have any role in governance of institutions or influence on their policies or their mission.

MR. McELHINNEY: Because of the conflict of interest that they're also your client.

MR. FEIGEN: No. That's not the point. It's easy to eliminate a conflict of interest. I mean I could simply say, Look, I'm not going to do business with this institution. But dealers can't be or usually haven't until recently been trustees of the museums. They can't have a say in what—the direction they ought to go in or what they ought to do or not do, or buildings built or not built, or architects chosen or not chosen.

So a lot of the expertise in this field is denied to museums simply because they feel there's some kind of inner prejudice against dealers, or that they think there would be a conflict of interest. It would be a very easy thing to eliminate any conflict of interest. We could simply say, Look, I will foreswear any commercial involvement with the institution. But they would get the benefit of a lot of professional input if they took advantage of it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Surely, surely. Well, you're involved with Yale a little bit, you said.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. But I'm not on their governing board.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I'm simply trying to, you know—

MR. McELHINNEY: Pro bono advisor.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, yes, I'm not even an advisor. I'm simply a Yale alumnus who would like to— And you know, think the present president, Rick [Richard C.] Levin is more, I think, susceptible to believing that the arts have a serious place at Yale. When I was there, the place focused on English literature and history and not much on the arts. That's why, basically, this lack of oversight in the gallery.

MR. McELHINNEY: As the art school came into more of a robust condition under the guidance of [Josef] Albers, who arrived, I guess, after you left—

MR. FEIGEN: Oh, yes, Albers wasn't there when I was there. But I don't know. That's a whole different thing. The actual art school is a different thing than the gallery and the Art History Department.

MR. McELHINNEY: This might be a good time to interrupt our conversation.

MR. FEIGEN: Okay.

MR. McELHINNEY: Because it seems like a lot of issues have been addressed. It's been a great conversation.

And we're going to resume it on Tuesday.

MR. FEIGEN: Good.

MR. McELHINNEY: I look forward to it. Thank you, sir. It's a pleasure.

MR. FEIGEN: Thanks a lot. If you think of any other stuff we can talk about— ?

MR. McELHINNEY: I will. And if you do also.

MR. FEIGEN: Okay.

MR. McELHINNEY: Thank you.

[END OF CD 2.]

MR. McELHINNEY: I have to look for the counter because— Good, we're rolling. Good afternoon.

MR. FEIGEN: Hello.

MR. McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney with Richard Feigen at his gallery on Sixty-ninth Street in New York City, on Tuesday the 13th of January, around quarter of three in the afternoon.

How are you today?

MR. FEIGEN: I'm well, thanks.

MR. McELHINNEY: Good. Did you enjoy our last conversation?

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, I did.

MR. McELHINNEY: Good.

MR. FEIGEN: I did indeed.

MR. McELHINNEY: Good. Well, I'd like to continue a little bit with maybe— I know a lot of this is unfolded in the memoir that you wrote and the books that you wrote. But I think that these interviews, these sort of real-time interviews, as we were saying earlier, have the opportunity of unlocking and making connections in a different way, a more spontaneous way. So I'm going to ask you a few questions that would try to answer maybe a couple of the questions that emerged out of our conversation last time and maybe explore a few new areas.

The art world, however you define it, when you got into it, when you became involved in it as an active player, how do you find it? What was it like then for you?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, there wasn't really an "art world" in the 2009 sense. It was very small, and there were not people on the fringes who wanted to be part of the art world. Because the art world itself, such as it was, had no cachet. It wasn't a social index of any kind of social rank or success. At that time there wasn't really a world. I mean you had academics, you had museum people, you had a small handful of collectors, you had artists. But basically there was no art world in the sense that people have recently almost made a career out of involving themselves with this so-called art world. The museums have formed groups of trustees and—

MR. McELHINNEY: Friends of this collection or that collection.

MR. FEIGEN: Friends of this collection, friends of that collection.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: There is practically not a single European cultural institution does not have an "American Friends of..." And a lot of people will attach themselves to a museum simply to be transported around the so-called art world, to gain entrée to art fairs and to be put high on their list for artists who are—Rich [inaudible] whose work can't be obtained; they gain access because the curator of the museum takes them around and gives them access, which is one of the perks for belonging to these groups and paying the money you pay to belong so that you are part of this so-called art world.

MR. McELHINNEY: So they're involved in acquisitions and—

MR. FEIGEN: Collecting themselves.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: The museum uses them for funding its activities. None of that sort of thing existed when I started out in a professional way in 1957. I was collecting for probably 15 years before that. But none of that. But it was a very small world. And you could inform yourself of what was going on in terms of the creative community easily because there were very few galleries out there. Let's say you were interested in Contemporary art at the time. You had a small handful of galleries that were let's say on the cutting edge. Now there are hundreds and hundreds. There's no way that I can possibly figure out what's going on unless I devoted myself entirely to that.

So as art became, I would say—I mean particularly since art became monetized, I would say starting in the middle eighties, where it was no longer treated by the financial institutions or the press as a luxury—all of a sudden it becomes monetized. As such, the constituency expands broadly, and it becomes the basis for speculation; people are speculating in art. So there's a vast difference. And there was a time, let's say in the sixties, when art was used as a springboard for social status. New York had begun emerging as a plutocracy. So that power was derived from money. And there came a time when, up to a certain point, if you came to New York with a certain sum of money, you were automatically solicited to be chairman of this ball and this gala and this and that. That meant you achieved a certain status. But pretty soon the ante rose, the numbers rose, and if someone, let's say, didn't have enough money to generate that kind of power, like the Sculls, they acquired that kind of social cachet by attaching themselves to the artists who had just recently become movie stars. So they collected the artists. And that gave them status.

So all of a sudden this art world started expanding because it became useful for various reasons; other than simply of looking at art and enjoying art and understanding art, it became something much broader. So the art world today, I don't much like it. I mean I don't like the whole art world such as it is. I mean I like art, and I like some of the people involved in art. But I don't care to run around to all these events and becoming part of this art world.

MR. McELHINNEY: So you could almost say that the art world, as most people assume it to be now, is an invention of the last half century?

MR. FEIGEN: I think the art world as it exists today is really the product of I would say the last—almost the last 20 years. I think it started changing gradually. But I think it really blossomed as a world unto itself since the—well, at least, let's say, since the economic disaster of '87. That may have been the beginning of this new kind of thing we call the art world.

MR. McELHINNEY: So that was a time when a lot of galleries closed, a lot of, you know, the downtown scene reshuffled, and people started questioning how art was being valued? Or was it something in the community of collectors, artists, dealers, and institutions? Or was it just opportunities in the economic markets to use art as a marker of value or wealth, something to be traded like a racehorse or a stock certificate?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I think that the thing, as I say, began with art being treated as a fungible asset. Now I think that gave people the confidence to go into it and use it as a trendy thing to do. I think that if people didn't assume at some point or other that, speaking in more or less today's terms, if having a Damien Hirst or a Jeff Koons—

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: or—a [Takashi] Murakami or a complex of all these and others like Richard Prince and [Marlene] Dumas, all these people, if that wasn't the trendy thing to do, they wouldn't do it. But it became trendy to do it. At the same time they labored under the misconception that their money was solidly invested therein. Therefore it wasn't such a big or expensive a risk to be trendy. And there also was a tremendous amount of speculation. Again, a lot of the people involved in this never were around when anything went down. They only saw things go up. So most of them were involved post-1987 and even post early nineties. And all anything ever did was go up.

So people could say, Look, I'm going to buy this Richard Prince *Nurse* [2003] for six or seven million dollars, or this Peter Doig or something, and I'm going to be trendy and with it in the art world. And then when I want to turn around and put it at Sotheby's, I'm only going to make a profit. It's like this was happening with apartments at 15 Central Park West. The building was going up, and the building was getting a certain kind of buzz around about it. And so on and so forth. And different people were competing for these apartments. So you'd sign up for two or three of them, figuring you'd punt out of two of them at a profit, make two, three, four million dollars, and maybe live in one of them. But it was trendy. Nobody ever thought these things could go down. That's why I think right now we may have witnessed the bubble bursting. I've been talking about this bubble bursting now for, you know, a couple of years. But I never knew exactly when this was going to happen. I was sure it would happen, but I didn't know when. Now it may well have happened.

MR. McELHINNEY: So the people driving all of this, the people who were the collectors for Koons, Hirst, etc., and

sort of the post-[Andy] Warhol artists, commerce people, these are not the same individuals who were in there in the eighties fueling the excitement about art in the eighties when there was a lot of—it seemed like there was a lot of activity of a different sort. You know the neo-Expressionists and—

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it wasn't exactly of a different sort. It was the same kind of motivation. Okay? They were buying David Salle. They were buying—

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: They were buying Julian Schnabel and all these things. And then all of a sudden came the bursting bubble in '87, and these things then became very hard to sell. And the artists themselves were in pain. I know because one of the major artists, who shall go nameless, had to sell his most prized possession, gave it to me to sell, a work by a major master. And they were pushed to the wall. Now—and a lot of galleries failed. It was the same kind of thing now. Those things were trendy then; those things gave them a certain cachet then. There was a period when there was a cachet attached to all these German artists of the sixties, seventies, eighties: [Gerhard] Richter and [Sigmar] Polke and—

MR. McELHINNEY: [Jorg] Immendorff.

MR. FEIGEN: [Georg] Baselitz. I mean all these people. Interestingly enough, in my view the most interesting of them all, Anselm Kiefer, is not the most trendy at all.

MR. McELHINNEY: No.

MR. FEIGEN: But everywhere you went, certain cities, you saw only these things basically. If you go to Dallas [Texas], everybody's got this lineup of Germans because that was the trendy thing.

MR. McELHINNEY: [Inaudible].

MR. FEIGEN: Because the director, Jack Lee, introduced it. And St. Louis [Missouri]. Okay? And these artists were the trendy things at that time. But those things went south. But the new people who came along now after let's say 2000, they weren't around then. They didn't see this stuff go south. They thought things would only go up.

MR. McELHINNEY: They had no knowledge of the events of 1987?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't know if they had knowledge of it. Or whether they were just simply oblivious.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or they just said it couldn't happen to us.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, or it couldn't happen to us. That sort of thing. This is going to happen now. There are going to be people who are burned with a whole bunch of Damien Hirsts, and there'll be a new crop coming along. Now whether things will ever get that touted, that trendy, that expensive again—or even whether having these things is going to lend any kind of social cachet—in my view is doubtful in the future. Because I think there's been a sea change here, which we didn't see before. And I think that we're never going to see the kind of leverage in the financial market that we've seen here. And I don't think we're ever going to see 65-, 70-million-dollar apartments at Columbus Circle again. I could be dead wrong. I just don't think so. I mean a lot of this, in my view, is based on leverage. Not direct leverage in the art market so much as leverage with the hedge funds and the private equity funds and all these things which then led to this kind of almost obscene slew of bonuses and salaries and people walking—kids walking—out of Wall Street with ten-, 15-, 20-million-dollar bonuses. Of course they would go to the galleries down in Chelsea, and some of them would buy art. And a lot of them would buy apartments, these, you know, hugely expensive luxury condominiums. And I don't think, I don't think we're going to see that again. I mean I would doubt it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you think this kind of behavior was mostly an urban thing, just a New York thing, or an international thing?

MR. FEIGEN: Oh, I think a lot of it was, you know, international. As far as I know, and this is not my field of expertise, but I think we exported this kind of reckless behavior abroad. I think the over-leveraging and the sub-prime mortgage manipulations, I think spread abroad. I think we spread the disease abroad. In a sense I think our economy kind of influences the rest of the world. And I think we had in a lot of these newly affluent areas, I think we had a lot of this speculation and trendiness. I think it spread to weird places like the Gulf and like Asia. And I think people were there buying with their ears and not their eyes, and I think they will have been sorely chastened here.

MR. McELHINNEY: One hears stories about paintings being sold to people who send them straight to a warehouse. They never hang them on the wall. They're not collectors in the sense that they're trying to express their aesthetic through what they acquire.

MR. FEIGEN: I think that's true. I think a lot of these people are not collectors. And a lot of them, if they put them in a warehouse, they may just be on their way to the auction. No sooner do they buy them, they send them to another auction. You see these auctions now with things up for sale in 2008; and you look in the history of painting in the catalog, and you'll see it was sold in an auction in 2006. You didn't use to be able to do that. Now they figure they can turn right around and make a profit. Now, I don't think that's going to happen. The auctioneers aren't doing guarantees anymore. And I shouldn't think they will in the future.

So whether art returns to a more traditional role and people actually buy things because they like them, you know, use their eyes in buying them and they exercise some kind of taste, whether we return to that, I don't know. Will we, let's say—? Artists come along, I meet them frequently, who are looking for a place to exhibit their work. And there really isn't a place because what's happened is that number one, the galleries now, their overhead is so high, that the objects have to cost in the upper five or six figures to make it possible for the galleries to survive. So a young artist would have a difficult time finding anywhere to hang his work. And there are thousands of artists looking for a very limited number of spaces.

And then the galleries—I remember when I opened my gallery down in SoHo, I had a gallery in SoHo which I opened in 1965. And at that time there were For Sale signs on almost every building down in SoHo. The neighborhood was totally deserted at night. It was a neighborhood of rag merchants and so on, who were leaving the city for New Jersey and the outer boroughs, and the buildings were for sale. And you could buy up the whole neighborhood for somewhere between 50 and 100 thousand dollars a building with only 10 percent down, and the balance on a 6 percent purchase money mortgage. I had contracts on Bob Rauschenberg's building, a whole lot of things. I owned three of them. It was obvious that this was the place that something was going to happen. But again, you didn't know when. But you could rent a floor of one of those cast-iron buildings of let's say 2500 feet for \$100 a month. So you could start a gallery. And if you were running it yourself, or you and your girlfriend, and you didn't pay yourself a salary, and all you had to do was send out a little mailer once a month, you could show the work of an artist that would sell for five, six, seven, eight hundred dollars.

What happened was that all of those buildings—I had a building on Wooster Street that I sold for \$105,000. I'm talking about a building probably nine stories high. Now, I don't even like to look at it. I'd go around that street because it makes me sort of sick to my stomach when I think—and every floor in that building is or was like a couple of million dollars. And I had two more on Green Street. And I tried to get this old friend of mine in Chicago because I'm not a real estate dealer, I tried to get him to move to New York and go into business with me and buy up masses of these buildings. They were obviously too cheap. But the fact is that you could run a gallery then and show the work of an unknown artist and have a small nucleus of clients who listened to you, who trusted your eye, and went there and used their own eyes and liked these things and bought them. Today that's impossible. Now you can't have a gallery where things are selling for less than many thousands. And even then, even if you're writing invoices until midnight every night, you still can't sell enough to keep your doors open.

My Chicago Contemporary gallery moved to New York I guess probably around maybe the year 2000 or 1999. And they were early. They got a very big space down in Chelsea. Well, that lease expired in seven years. And the landlord quadrupled the rent. Now that gallery was just about breaking even with the old rent. After many years when I plowed literally several million dollars into it, they were losing money, and finally they were breaking even. Now all of a sudden the rent goes and multiplies by four times up. And they had to—they found a smaller space. But, you know, those galleries now are going to go out of business. I don't know how they're going to stay in business.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, it seems like there's been a rumored sort of end of the whole Chelsea scene anyway since '06. Everybody's saying the leases are coming up, and they won't be able to renew them because, as you're saying, the landlords are just multiplying them to unaffordable height.

MR. FEIGEN: I mean several of these people, like Paula Cooper and [Larry] Gagosian and people like that, they bought their buildings. But most of them didn't. And these landlords are just gouging them. Some of these guys bought these buildings—most of them, a lot of them, were bought by Iranian refugees after the Shah left. And there were several Iranian families involved in owning these big buildings. And they just, you know, sent the rents into the stratosphere. And I don't know. If these galleries go out of business, where is a young artist going to show his work? The prices in Williamsburg [Brooklyn, New York], everywhere shot up. And even in Harlem. I don't know where they will be able to show their work. If somebody wanted to go out there— I mean one of the, let's say, the positive side of this thing would be that all the Murakami buyers and people like that will have been disillusioned and move out of the so-called art market. The art world will have lost its glamour.

And you could see a new group coming along of younger people that have not a lot of money to spend, a few thousand dollars, could go around and look at some new art and maybe see some exciting stuff. Because in my opinion, some of the most expensive stuff is among the least exciting. Because it existed in huge numbers, it was able to be promoted. In other words, scarcity was not an index of value. If you needed an Andy Warhol or a Koons or a Hirst or a Murakami, you had factories making the stuff in order to make enough to be able to be

promoted all over the world. And then you had the auction houses assisting in promoting all this and making it trendy. The museums pitched it and made it trendy. The Metropolitan Museum goes and puts this Damien Hirst shark on view. I was much opposed to this. I told the director this is a mistake, I felt. But the museums were playing ball and making these things even more commercially valuable.

Well, I think now that whether that Damien Hirst shark is allowed to permanently putrefy and not be replaced by a new shark, it may end up just putrefying and disappearing because in my view it has no artistic merit except to shock you, which is not enough in my view; it's too easy. Damien Hirst's skull, which I stood in line to see because if I was giving a talk, I didn't want someone to say, Have you seen it? And then I would have to say, No, I have not. So I went there and stood out in the rain like a whore waiting in line to see this thing, pulling my coat collar up around my ears so that nobody would see me standing there. And I speculated in an article I wrote that the value of that in years to come might really be in the melted-down value of the platinum and the diamonds, although I was told that platinum is very difficult to melt. But a lot of this stuff is going to disappear. The Metropolitan Museum there is stuck showing for I guess three years this shark of Damien Hirst. I think it was a big mistake to ever put it up.

MR. McELHINNEY: In the eighties, Robert Hughes compared the height of the art world to like the Dutch tulip madness of the 1600s. Is that an apt comparison?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, first of all, Bob and I agree on most things. I just did a television thing with him shown on the BBC, and we were in the same place on most of this. He knows more about the tulip mania in the 1660's than I do. What triggered it—I don't know whether it was a matter of fashion or whether it was a matter of financial speculation or both. He would know. He probably has done research into it. But, yes, I think that there again it may have been a similar kind of mania. People are competing for these things, you know. But I would be very surprised if the next round of auctions does not prove to be a great disappointment to this so-called art world.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, there have been reports about lots being pulled because they weren't expected, you know, to—I mean a lot of stuff being pulled because it was not expected, you know, to reach a price that would not somehow undermine its value. So more of that happening. I also heard that there have been huge layoffs at Christie's. They let go 60 people.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, it was in the paper this morning.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Both by Christie's and Sotheby's.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't know how the auction houses, which basically expanded exponentially on the basis of this kind of market, how they—what they're going to do to survive. Because the art market, the real art market, the market for real art—and a lot of this I don't consider art—but real art is a dying business, in my view. A dying business. What I do is a dying business, and what the auction houses should be doing is a dying business.

MR. McELHINNEY: Why is that? Is it because the cost is so exorbitant? Or is the audience shrinking? Or lack of interest?

MR. FEIGEN: Neither one. They even in the— Particularly in the most affluent times, when there's the greatest liquidity, art having, as I say, been monetized—and I don't think that's going to be reversed—the consideration of art as an asset class on the part of the financial institutions and the press, I think that has been irreversibly—that has happened. So what you have is an expanding demand and basis for funding purchases. Because the liquidity expands, the United States government gets out its printing press and prints more green paper or we borrow more of it from China. So the demand can be expanded infinitely, but the supply is diminishing. Because, you know, you have increased belief in this asset class all over the world. It may ebb in one place and flow somewhere else. It may flow in Japan, and all of a sudden in mid-1990 it ebbs because they had been using borrowed money and so on and so forth. But then it will flow in Singapore, or it'll flow in the Gulf or somewhere. If it ebbs there, it'll flow somewhere else.

So that demand keeps expanding worldwide. But the supply keeps diminishing because it's a finite supply, and nobody can make any more of this stuff. So what happens is that museums proliferate. And you have museums in China, in Beijing and Shanghai—and I was involved in a project that's sort of stalled now in South Korea—and in the Gulf and everywhere. Plus these dozens of American museums which are building new buildings, all based on this expansive idea of the art world and of the infinite supply of money to fund these institutions. So there's hardly an American city that hasn't recently built or isn't building a new multi-centered, million-dollar edifice all over by the same menu architects.

Now all those are going to need things on their walls. And when they acquire something, it goes off the market. So we end up with a diminishing supply. You have more countries deciding all of a sudden that they're going to protect their patrimony. So Italy lets nothing out. And Spain lets nothing out. And France controls exports. And England controls exports. And so the number of objects diminishes, and the demand increases. So what happens is you end up with ultimately higher prices; though this hasn't happened in many instances now because the big money is focused on the trendy. So Old Masters have basically remained, with some exceptions, much under priced. But that won't last forever. And therefore, what is going to be a source of supply for this vast empire of art purveyance all over the world, what is going to supply it?

The auction houses have buildings on the Avenue Machinaut, and [inaudible] all over the world. They cut down their staff to a certain extent. But they've spent hundreds of millions of dollars expanding to service this so-called art world we're talking about. And if the art world no longer exists in those terms, what the hell is going to finance it? How are they going to get the food to feed the monsters that they have bred?

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, if as you say the bubble has burst, what happens next?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I'm not saying it's burst. I think it may have burst.

MR. McELHINNEY: If the bubble has burst, if the comet has hit the planet, if this is really the end of this sort of ever-expanding system of wealth and art, I mean what do you foresee as being the condition into which it's going to reorganize?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't think anything is going to totally change the role that art plays or the perception of art. I think what'll happen is that this whole scene will contract. I think that there will continue to be some kind of let's say art business. You know things won't come up as frequently. The frequency of meritorious objects will diminish. But there will always be something around.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: There will always be exhibitions to be mounted as museums. The problem— And by the way, there will always be important artists. It varies according to the period. Some periods are more productive of significant art than others. But the last great painter hasn't been born yet. So there will continue to be significant art made. Also performed and so on. First of all, I don't think you're going to see these obscene sums of money very soon again. So I don't know how this international complex of art purveyance will be funded in the future, okay? There will always be serious art made and serious art exhibited. The question is: Will it be able to be exhibited as it is today? Because for instance to do an exhibition, a major exhibition at a major museum is so costly now that museums are beginning to look to exhibiting their own collections in different, more or less imaginative contexts. Being able to borrow these things, first of all there's an increasing reluctance to lend. Insurance costs have gotten astronomical. If it weren't for federal indemnities, they wouldn't be able to have these exhibitions most of them. So we're going to still have art, and we're still going to have exhibitions and so on. The question is: Will this whole world of palaces and things they've created be able to be funded? I don't think so.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, they can always use them for events, weddings, community— I mean this is what's happening anyway is a lot of the regional art museums are rented out on an almost daily basis for events.

MR. FEIGEN: Look, I don't know the arithmetic.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't know if you can go and build a Renzo Piano palace and get enough revenue in to fund the amortized expenses or even the current expenses for renting it out for a dancehall. I don't know if you can do that. I don't know enough about that kind of business. But the fact is we have over-expanded.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: We have over-expanded in all kinds of ways. And the expansion was based on, whether it's Eli Broad out in Los Angeles buying a \$20 million Jeff Koons's or what, but to accommodate all this it's expanded. If that bubble has burst and we're not—the Jeff Koons isn't \$20 million anymore, and the young artist coming along is three or four or ten thousand—how are they going to finance all this stuff they've built? I think they so over-expanded, there's going to be a lot of casualties here. And, as I say, with the auction houses, I don't know how they're going to fund themselves because they expanded exponentially based on this loaded Contemporary market.

MR. McELHINNEY: If you knew for certain that you were going to be continuing in the business for another 50 years, how would you—how do you think you would conduct yourself in the future? What would you say, well, in

my career, you know, I've done this, that, and the other thing? If I had another, you know, half century, what would I do differently? How would I—what would I pay attention to in a different way? What would I— You know just speaking about the potential implosion of this art scene that exists now, what would, you know, not addressing that specifically, but just, Richard Feigen, if the clock is going to give you another half a century of health, vitality, business, where would you go?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, that would depend—and in my case it always has—how much money I had available. If you want to join that 50-year fantasy with a unlimited pocketbook fantasy, I know exactly what I'd do.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, then, let's say you've got all the money you need to operate.

MR. FEIGEN: Now just to operate, to gird my loins for the future?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: I'd go out and buy every great work of art that came along. And even if it didn't come along, I'd go and tap on every door on every stately house in England and see if I couldn't talk them out of flogging a masterpiece. I'd make a list of every house and its contents that wasn't in the National Trust and buy up every great object that I could find and put them away for the future, for conducting this business into 50 years hence. I'd buy them now.

MR. McELHINNEY: Many a mossy lord or lady who probably could use the money, too.

MR. FEIGEN: I'm sure they could. And England is overloaded with now responsibilities to protect their patrimony. So right now there's probably a window to get things out of England. So that is what I would do. If I had unlimited money, I would try to plan some exciting exhibitions for the future. I could borrow things, even if I had to end up paying rent to the museums, which they may end up doing, to have exhibitions. And I'd wished to make some statements, and I wanted to put some ideas out there, I'd plan exhibitions with my great, vast sums of money.

MR. McELHINNEY: What kind of ideas would you like to advance if you had endless resources?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I would like to try to open people's eyes to other kinds of things. Like we did this exhibition last year called—I can't even remember the title of the exhibition. But I juxtaposed 14th-century paintings with Mark Rothko and Barney Newman and things like that. And, you know, I put the lights on low. These things work beautifully together, and I wanted to let people know that they could look at earlier things as well. I mean to keep their eyes open and not just their ears. So I could make some statements like that. I mean there are a number of statements I would like to make that would juxtapose early things with contemporary things and to show that they are in fact compatible. A lot of these ideas. I couldn't do this with a limited budget because of where I wouldn't be able to produce the income to make these statements.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: But there will be—I mean there'll be some kind of an art business. I'm just simply saying that it's going to get increasingly difficult.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, what would you hope the public would be able to come away from an exhibition like that with? With what kind of understanding about painting? Like, you know, the juxtaposition of Giotto, Italian painting, or, you know, painters from Siena or from Florence, and Abstract Expressionists in the same, you know, hanging in the same space. I mean what kind of conclusions or what kind of epiphanies would you hope that a visitor to the exhibition would—?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I mean we had—I'm not saying we had epiphanies all up and down the street, but a few people said: Wait, that really works together. It's beautiful. Let me look at other things than what I'm just accustomed to looking at or hearing I ought to be looking at. This is something worth thinking about. I have one client who saw it, and he bought a quite important 14th-century painting and although he's a collector of so-called Contemporary art. Now, that kind of statement I would like to make. This exhibition we did, interestingly enough, the Contemporary stuff—I mean Contemporary, I'm talking about now post-World War II to Rothko. I had to borrow the Rothko from Christopher Rothko. I had to borrow the Barnett Newman from I.M. Pei. I mean the Contemporary stuff was unavailable. I just had to twist arms and everything else to borrow it. The only things I had for sale were a few of these—like a Bernardo Gaddi and an Angolo Gaddi and things like that. Those were the things, although they're terribly scarce, there's practically no demand. But Barnett Newman? I had to get on my knees and beg I.M. Pei to lend me one. So I would like to make those statements. But they are not statements that would be able to be funded unless I had a lot of money.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I was running a kind quasi-museum.

MR. McELHINNEY: And they would not be enterprises that would be terribly profitable either.

MR. FEIGEN: It wouldn't be profitable.

MR. McELHINNEY: Not at all.

MR. FEIGEN: I mean but the profit factor is, you know, as I say, is sliding into the past here.

MR. McELHINNEY: We were talking about great art or even good art. And talking about sort of the trendy artists, art-as-commerce crowd, as being something that you wouldn't deem to be good art. So 50 years ago there were people around like John Canaday who could write a review, and things would sell as a result of it. Or I've been told this. I was not around then.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't know. You know John Canaday, whom I mean I agreed with some of what he said and not with other things he said, because it was like Hilton Kramer. I agreed with a lot of what Hilton said, although other parts of it were highly reactionary. The same thing with John Canaday. I don't know that what either one of them wrote caused people to buy art. That was always a question. I don't know.

MR. McELHINNEY: I've heard it alleged, that's all.

MR. FEIGEN: If my memory serves me, I don't believe any of it made anyone buy any art. Maybe Clem [Clement] Greenberg because he set up this more or less, you know, kind of integrated, vertically integrated marketing system. And was so didactic in his opinions that he probably maybe did influence people to buy. But certainly not Canaday or Hilton Kramer. Maybe Tom [Thomas B.] Hess did. You know I don't know. But the market then was very, very small and the number of sales minimal.

MR. McELHINNEY: A lot of what is heard around the galleries and among artists even is sort of a lament that there's a lack of any kind of sort of critical, real compelling critical voice or position that seems to be, you know, proposed for the moment. It seems to be all about money and not about the ideas behind the art. I don't know. Is that something you'd like to see return in a bigger way?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't know that—maybe it's something to do with this country. I don't think the criticism ever was very influential. I think it may be more on the continent; I don't know that it was here. And I don't know that people pay much attention. Or if they do, it's more preaching to the choir. I don't think these trends read much. I think it's more what they hear. And so— And I don't know in the old days, let's say before World War II, when people like Julien Levy were doing sort of groundbreaking exhibitions or Chick Austin [Arthur Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr.] up at Hartford [Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut], whether any criticism really influenced the small art market that existed at that time. I suppose that if somebody wrote a review of Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*, that people learned that it was going on up in Hartford, that people might go up there to see it. But we're talking about a very small audience then.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: An accessible audience. Today I don't know what criticism does. I mean, yes, as far as music's concerned, if I read a review of a concert, and all of a sudden they unveil a brilliant young new talent— And even in years gone by. I remember when Afgani Chissum gave his first concert in New York, and I read the review. Immediately I wanted to go and hear one of his concerts. I was on the board of Music Festival Caramoor [Katonah, New York] at the time, and I pleaded with the director up there to hire this guy to find him and hire him. So there is, I think, in the performing arts, there may be some kind of influence of criticism. I don't know that it exists in the visual arts.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is it like access and audience? You know you can see a concert or an opera or a play for, you know, under a couple hundred bucks, as opposed to acquiring a work of art requires thousands, hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, apart from requiring it, I don't know whether—I suppose people read reviews and go to see exhibitions. I don't know that it influences anybody to buy anything.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't think so. But, you know, I think we're going into a period here where it's going to be a major contraction of all the arts, of their exposure. Our government now obviously has much bigger fish to fry at the moment. And I'm sure that the funding proposal for the arts would probably get nowhere even if it involved a rather small sum of money. I think right now even to get remotely adequate funding for the National Endowment [NEA, National Endowment of the Arts] would be extremely difficult to get through Congress now, anything. But

it was difficult before when there seemed to be unlimited money out there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: We ended up with the stultifying effect of the dumbing down of the whole country. And this is what I hope we're going to start turning around now because the whole country has dumbled down. We've got people running around saying that if you've got an education, then you're an arugula eater and a latte sipper. And it doesn't matter how humble your origins are, if you acquired an education, and if you had a brain, then you were an elitist. And you were prey to the Sarah Palins of this world. She, the other day, came out with this wonderful line about how—something about running for the Senate or something like that is a mark of a privileged background.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, apropos to Caroline—

MR. FEIGEN: Caroline Kennedy.

MR. McELHINNEY: Kennedy Schlossberg.

MR. FEIGEN: I don't really know what was so privileged about the origins of the incoming president or the first lady, what was so privileged about this? The mere fact that these people have brains and an education. So for a large part of the country, these so-called base, the proper origins would be five so-called universities, which basically in my view are not universities at all, gone through in order to get a simple bachelor of journalism degree; and where a mark of achievement is in fact to be able to swill a jigger of bourbon and chase it with some beer, and run around in a pickup truck, and talk about how granddaddy took one off shooting. And not how anybody took you to the orchestra to hear a symphony orchestra or anything else. So I hope that this country will have, let's say, overcome the ignorance of this so-called face, and we get back to valuing the cultural product that we make. Hopefully the Obama [Barack Obama] Administration may be the first one since [John F.] Kennedy to value this. I'm hopeful, but I'm not sure. But they seem to be so inclined.

[END OF DISC 3]

MR. McELHINNEY: What role do you think the government should play in giving access to art—in giving access to art for the public or population, community? Earlier when we were speaking about, you know, pie in the sky, you have endless dough, you could mount an exhibition that would be a juxtaposition of historic and contemporary artwork in a major museum, and that that would cost a lot of money. Is that the kind of thing the government should be doing?

MR. FEIGEN: No. I think our system of private foundations, which all of our museums I think except for one are, I think that's an idea that should be continued. I think if we recognize that it would be dangerous in our kind of democracy with these sort of quasi-religious origins, be it Calvinism or Catholicism or whatever, it would be dangerous to have the government directly involved. We don't have a history of intellectual—of valuing intellectual achievement very highly. At least a large part of the country doesn't. So that the last thing we want is the Congress to be involved in deciding what should or should not be shown. Like Mr. [Rudy] Giuliani decides that he's going to close down—

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, the "Sensation" [Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1999-2000] show.

MR. FEIGEN: —Brooklyn Museum because of an effort to garner votes with a Catholic constituency by trying to ban this *Madonna* [sic] [*The Holy Virgin Mary*, 1996] of [Chris] Ofili. Now, we could have had that with the Senate. Jesse Helms could have gone in and said: I don't want this to be seen. I don't want that— And you're using taxpayer money to show this nude or whatever. So we don't want that. And we have long since been at a point where the National Gallery in Washington [DC], which notwithstanding its name, is not a public foundation—it's a private foundation. But they only have five regular trustees—apart from ex officio trustees, five. Which clearly is not adequate to generate funding from all over the country.

But Paul Mellon couldn't envision this kind of situation: where he wasn't funding the whole thing, and they'd have to reach out all over the country for funding; he couldn't imagine that. And I don't think he could've imagined this kind of political influence that could be brought to bear. So clearly they need a bigger board. But they can't get it without an act of Congress. And an act of Congress, you're going to have every kind of group lobbying for the seats on that board. And the independence of the institution would be history.

So we have a problem in even funding the National Endowment for the Arts. It wasn't so long ago that the National Endowment for the Arts was funding individual experimental artists. So that means some guy has an idea down in Mississippi, and they could fund that artist. Now maybe four out of five would be flops. But the fifth might turn into a national treasure of talent. Okay? But they stopped funding this kind of thing because of an experience in San Diego where some performance artist gave out ten-dollar bills to illegal immigrants, and some

performance artist up in Minnesota had HIV/AIDS and whatever performed something on the stage that they didn't like. So basically it became a tremendous political football to be kicked around by so-called religious right.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, they exposed themselves to calamity by basically alienating the people who kept a lot of these small arts organizations alive, being middle-class mostly or affluent people who thought art was worthwhile, had value. And then during the whole Helms thing, which I recall when I was in Virginia, it was as if all of a sudden all these art spaces had become sort of act-up headquarters. And it was all about HIV/AIDS, it was about gay rights, it was about all kinds of other issues apart from the central issue of defining to what extent, you know, the government needs to patronize art. And as a consequence, a lot of these organizations lost membership and it closed.

MR. FEIGEN: But that— Look, the point is, the question was a question of funding—

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: —by the National Endowment. And they had peer groups that would rule on these grants.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Juries.

MR. FEIGEN: Juries of their peers.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Now, it wasn't the locals; it was the Congress that controlled that money. Now we now have I think \$130 million a year allocated to the NEA, \$130 million, which was up from—it got down to in the nineties. France, I understand, provides three and a half billions for the arts. And I don't think anybody over there is monitoring the sexual content or anything else.

MR. McELHINNEY: Or political content.

MR. FEIGEN: Or political content. The fact is that you're going to end up with four out of five or eight out of nine or whatever misses. But you're also going to make the one hit. Otherwise you end up doing what we're doing now, and you're funding theater repertory. You are taking the position— And frankly this whole concept was, I believe, fostered by somebody who actually—like Joan Mondale. But her idea was—I think she was head of the NEA—to spread the art around to the masses. In other words, it wasn't to create anything; but it was to expose —

McELHINNEY: Access.

MR. FEIGEN: Access. Alright. Now, access is fine. I think that's great. But to me the critical thing is the creative act. And those acts are rare, but they are precious. And I'd rather—rather than fund, as great as I think the New York City Ballet is or the Houston Opera, I'd rather find one kid down in Mississippi who could become a great dancer. Look for him, fund him. Than to provide money to the whole organization, as wonderful as it is. We should do both. And we should have a facility in the State Department; we should have an assistant secretary or somebody who is in the business of telling our ambassadors all over that guess what? The New York City Ballet's in town. So he can have a gathering and invite the members of the Paris Ballet there so they can mingle. You know our ambassadors, I've talked to some of them, they don't know who's in town. If Jasper Johns blows into town, they don't know it. Somebody ought to be there to tell them that one of our great artists is in town, and we should expose him with pride to those other countries. Not just a swaggering bully of a country saying: Do it my way or the highway. But say, Look, here we are with our cultural product, our most credible product. But nobody's organized it, no unions, nobody in government, to this vast body of workers, of set designers and carpenters and all these people work in this industry. And it's our most credible export. And we—it's unorganized. And our government down there probably thinks it's arugula or latte, a bunch of elitists. I'm sure that they have big plans for Sarah Palin in 2012, and God help us!

MR. McELHINNEY: So you mean we need an art czar.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, we could use one, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, yes.

MR. FEIGEN: But somebody who has credibility down in Washington who they listen to. But they have to believe this is significant. I hope—I think the Obamas do think so, and I hope someone is close enough to them to help organize this concept. Because it's, in my view, just as important, or more so, than trying to democratize the world with this sort of neocon concept of our way is the best way, and we're going to teach everybody how to do it our way. Which, in my view, has been a disaster!

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, would you say that the consequence of the last election is that they've been all sent to time out for a long time, they're done? The country has, in essence, given them an F?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, a large number of us have. The whole country hasn't given them an F.

MR. McELHINNEY: Not the whole country.

MR. FEIGEN: And I'm frightened enough of the Dick Cheneys buried in their bunkers ready to come out like some kind of—burst forth like festering sores. Or the [Paul] Wolfowitzes and the [Richard] Perles who have gone underground. Or the Douglas Feiths. But I'm not certain they're totally down and out. I hope it's permanent. But the fact is that a lot of people measure this country in terms of its GNP [gross national product] and/or its muscles. And that's not the way I would measure the value of our civilization. We aren't going to be judged 500 years from now on the airliners we built or the bombs we built or the high-rise buildings we built, which by then will be nothing but ruins, or our political influence, our economic influence; we'll be judged by the works of art that we've left behind us. That's my belief.

MR. McELHINNEY: What would you say are the most significant cultural achievements of American art? I mean if we needed to think about American art, what is the best that we have to offer? Historically and now, what do we really need to celebrate, need to support, need to encourage?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I mean what do I think, who do I think are the great artists we've produced, or what?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, I mean what is the best thing that American art as a distinct personality on the world stage, as part of this global culture—what makes us special artistically?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I think if you mean how do we identify a strain that is American, let's say, in the visual arts—

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes, exactly.

MR. FEIGEN: How do we identify it? Okay. This is only my opinion. But I think that one thing that identifies it is a strain of the anecdotal. I detect in American art that I consider of international and historical significance, there is a common strain of the anecdote in much of it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Example?

MR. FEIGEN: An example being the pre-British work of [John Singleton] Copley. You're going to see Paul Revere looking at a silver bowl that he made.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] In shirtsleeves.

MR. FEIGEN: In shirtsleeves. You're going to see in what I consider our greatest painter, Winslow Homer, you're going to see him bring anecdote just to the edge of nostalgia and stopping short. You're going to see an Indian scout on a ridge, but it won't go where [Frederic] Remington went into nostalgia. You'll see that element of anecdote. I don't know that I could—I certainly could see it in the work of Joseph Cornell.

MR. McELHINNEY: [Edward] Hopper?

MR. FEIGEN: Hopper absolutely for sure. Even people like Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley. And I would be stretched, but maybe even in Barney Newman and maybe in Rothko. I mean I would be stretching it. But I'm not sure that it's not there, even in [Jackson] Pollock, you know. But there is a strain in American art that's identifiable. And I think our art has matured sufficiently for there to be a strain. Some art, you know, some countries have not reached the point where they've assimilated all the influences and emerged into their own idiom. Good example would be, for instance, Israel. I think there are too many successive, contaminatory influences. So that they haven't been able, as far as I can see—except maybe in photography; I'm not sure—been able to identify a national strain. China, you know, they had it, but now it's gone, and it's all derivative. In my view derivative even of Soviet and Nazi Social Realism.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Certain countries uprooted their traditions like the Soviet Union—like Russia, Japan, contaminated. Definitely had an identifiable national idiom, but that's gone because the West came and contaminated it. But I think our art is mature enough, and we have a strain in this country. And I think it existed even back into the 18th century because essentially the country, although it didn't exist as a country, it did assimilate the influences of British painting of the 17th century and so on. So by the time Copley came along—and this certainly was not true of other artists like Benjamin West who remained derivative. But Copley was an artist of sufficient stature where he did have a definite idiom which I think then became contaminated when he went to England, where he became a very good but not particularly creative—

MR. McELHINNEY: He became more stylish.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, he became a British portrait painter.

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes. But there were these other peers of his or people who were in the generation ahead of him, people like [John] Smibert or like Ralph Earl, you know, who had that same kind of concrete—yes, anecdotal is a good word.

MR. FEIGEN: So I think that it would be a valuable mission of this country to try to unearth some of this native talent of ours, encourage it, and publicize it as a proud national product. I don't see our—I mean we've been through several administrations which would have been oblivious to this. Hopefully we'll have seen their backs imminently in the next week.

MR. McELHINNEY: In our conversation last week you expressed very strong, I'd say almost passionate, opinions about the merits of stewardship: Art is something you take care of. Architecture you take care of. You spoke about the loss of the building that you occupied on East Seventy-ninth Street. Have you any opinions about the recent sale of arguably two of the best pictures out of the collection of the National Academy [National Academy Museum, New York, New York]?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, you have to address the sources of funding for these institutions and the significance, the relative significance, of the institutions. I was much more distressed by the sale by the New York Public Library of their pictures.

MR. McELHINNEY: *Kindred Spirits* [1849] by [Asher] Durand.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, *Kindred Spirits* bothered me less because that painting came relatively late in the 19th century to the library. I would not have sold it. Had I been a trustee, I would not have approved of that, because I believe that atmosphere and ambience is a very important stimulus to ideas. And a number of these objects had a history with that institution, and the institution had a history with the city and even the country. Now, I was distressed in 1956—much distressed—sitting in an auction room at Parke-Bernet and watching the New York Public Library sell their two [J.M.W.]Turners, which had been acquired by the founder of the library, and one of them bought directly from Turner, when the British were not buying Turner but we were here in this country. And a number of our Turners came here—that one in 1841—came here in the 19th century when the British thought Turner was mad. So I thought that that was a mistake, a dreadful mistake. They got \$75,000 for the two Turners. One of them was a major picture called *Staffa, Fingal's Cave* [1832].

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Which went to England, but now later was reacquired by Yale for the British Gallery up there.

MR. McELHINNEY: Paul Mellon Centre.

MR. FEIGEN: Hmm? Yes. But I thought that was quite shocking. Whatever their need for money, it couldn't have been much satisfied by \$75,000 in sales to allegedly buy books with. Then recently they sold, among other things, the Munro-Lenox portrait by [Gilbert] Stuart of George Washington [circa 1800], which is arguably the greatest image of Washington. The painting having been acquired by James Lenox, founder of the library, from John Jay [Munro]'s nephew, Peter Jay [Munro]. And it went up for auction, and it was unsold. I got a friend of mine to buy it mainly to help the library, and hopefully it will end up in—it's now on loan at the Metropolitan Museum, and hopefully it will end up in the public domain. They sold Alexander Hamilton's Stuart portrait of Washington, three-quarter length, along with [Giuseppe] Geracchi's bust of Hamilton in marble, both of which were kept by his widow's side all her life, and she lived a very long time, and later bequeathed to the library. For these they got \$8 million for the two-- marble and the portrait.

That, as far as the Durand, I mean whatever they sold, my view, with the kind of money that was being coined by the hedge fund guys and the private equity guys, this was peanuts, the money they got for those paintings. And how they couldn't go out and put their hand in the pockets of some of these guys, flatter them, romance them, wine them, dine them, light the candles, sprinkle the moonbeams, put a black tie on them, whatever they needed, they couldn't come up with that kind of money, then I think they ought to find a day job in that kind of economy that existed at that time—only about what? a couple of years ago. So I think that that disregard for ambience, for the historical continuum which we live, is, I think, sad. And we've had this happen. I lived in Chicago, and I can tell you they tore down Louis Sullivan buildings. And we tore down Greek Revival buildings downtown below the Brooklyn Bridge to put up buildings the same height, modern buildings. Instead of remodeling the ones downtown and making fancy offices in them, whatever, they tore the whole neighborhood down, leaving a little fly in amber called the South Street Seaport. They didn't have to tear down our history, our maritime history. So we don't have much respect, in my view, for the past.

MR. McELHINNEY: Is it a national thing? Do you think it's a New York thing?

MR. FEIGEN: No, I don't think—I think it's a national sort of a matter of consumption. I mean if you can build something and make more money on it, fine. We just had a big fight up on the corner where I live, on the next block on Madison Avenue, against a huge 37-story tower that would've dwarfed everything in the neighborhood and created a precedent for tearing down things all up Madison Avenue. Every developer was sitting around waiting for that to succeed, because how could you deny him the right to do that? It would be prejudicial and so on. So we have to fight. It wasn't just my building on Seventy-ninth Street. They're going to tear down everything, these developers, everything that'll put money in their pockets. And history be damned!

And I mean Chicago didn't have landmarks protection at all. And even one guy who was protesting the tearing down of the stock exchange, some guy who was photographing, was killed in the destruction down there. I had to—I was asked by the Art Institute to appraise the rubble, the detritus, the objects that were torn out of the stock exchange building so that they could reconfect this thing, this ruin, in the Art Institute as a kind of an entertainment room, all the sconces and all the Louis Sullivan elements. They all were taken by the destruction company, and he wanted to get a tax deduction. And I was the one that had to appraise it for the Art Institute. It's a tragedy to tear down the stock exchange, that great Louis Sullivan building.

MR. McELHINNEY: Of course there's the room at the Art Institute where all of that is housed now.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. That's all the stuff I appraised. But the fact is it never should have been destroyed in the beginning.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: But there was no protection, no respect for this.

MR. McELHINNEY: You spoke last time about all of the younger people and others who came through here as interns or as employees and that have since evolved into careers of their own. What kind of wisdom do you hope the experience here imparted them? What kind of values?

MR. FEIGEN: Well—

MR. McELHINNEY: If they could only take away one important thing.

MR. FEIGEN: Look, as far as values are concerned, I don't think they would've been here unless they had values that were similar to ours.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: They wouldn't have wanted to work here. Now we have a lot of people that want these jobs. Like there are very few of these jobs. I mean all the art galleries, they're like mom-and-pop shops basically; they have one or two people working. Maybe a couple of preparators but you know— And why are they here? They're here because, I assume, number one, there are works of art hanging around. And secondly, we have all these scholars that come in and out of here all the time. And they talk, and they look, and these kids hopefully they listen. They seem to be listening. So they're here because they feel that this is a place where they can kick off maybe some kind of a career. They can go on to graduate school and so on. Quite a number have gone on to curatorships and even directorships of museums. I think they feel that their exposure is less let's say—is more generalized here and less specialized than they would be, for instance, in an auction house, where they would be in a single department. Here we're involved in art that goes back over 700 years and all up to now. And then there are artists that pass through here. They get to meet them and listen to them. And I would think it was a valuable kind of environment to work in.

MR. McELHINNEY: Do you represent many contemporary artists or any contemporary artists?

MR. FEIGEN: I don't represent any now. I did, but I don't anymore. And we represent the estate of one dead artist, Ray Johnson. We have a lot of contemporary—a fair number of—contemporary artists that come here, but they're friends of mine; like Jim Rosenquist stops in a lot and people like that. Or they come and see the exhibitions. There's a very good reason why I don't represent living artists. There was a time when—way back when I started out sort of, I don't know, 50 years ago—when you saw an artist's work and you thought a lot of it, so you would take on his representation. And you would plan an exhibition, and he would be aware of us, and he would plan this exhibition as well. And all of a sudden, along would come the exhibition. You would do some kind of a catalog or a mailer, send it out to your mailing list which wasn't that huge. And you would send out notices to the press, and they would come in, they would review it, and people would be on notice that this was happening. And they'd come in, and they'd look.

Sometimes the public wouldn't much look. I mean for instance my Francis Bacon Show in 1959 in Chicago, I don't remember much of the public coming in. I do remember a lot of the artists coming in. And I remember that this impacted a lot on the artists: They kept coming back, people like Golub and so on. And that was sufficient. But all of a sudden, you end up with, I don't know, a thousand galleries or 500 galleries, all of them doing exhibitions, all of them sending stuff out in the mail. The mailing list getting huger, bigger and bigger and bigger. And how do you get this noticed? You end up making it trendy. Somehow you have the skill to do this and the inclination. And pretty soon the word gets out, and I don't know what. And the tom-toms start beating. You've promoted this thing, and it's trendy. And you end up like Larry Gagosian with every single show sold out. And the public knows that unless they get there and they get their name high on the list, they're not going to get one. And the prices soar, and you end up with this atmosphere of the trend. And people hear about this artist, and they want to get in on it because they figure out that if they buy one now, it's going to be worth three times as much in a couple of years.

Well, some people, number one, believe in doing this. And secondly, they are capable of doing it. I am neither. Neither do I believe in making things trendy, nor do I believe in my ability to do it. I don't have that ability. I didn't have it back in 1965 when I shared my SoHo gallery with Leo Castelli. We shared a building. First gallery in SoHo, even before Paula Cooper who was then on LaGuardia Place; so she was a scant little bit north of SoHo. So she wasn't technically in this area south of Houston Street. We were the first one. And Leo was there. And I was unable. Leo could do it. Leo could dress like a gentleman. Didn't have to act like he was some kind of an inhabitant of Far-outs-ville. I mean he dressed in suits. He was impeccably dressed. I think I once proposed him for the Best Dressed Men's List or something like that. Universally respected. And impeccable reputation. A selfless promoter of his artists' work. And I think that image helped him a lot.

I remember feeling like a chameleon. I had a gallery downtown, a gallery uptown, and I couldn't go running back—if I had a black-tie thing uptown, I could go down in a black tie. I had to go and put on some kind of a hair shirt. [Laughs] Run uptown and change clothes. And, you know, I never was able to do it. My image must have been too old-fashioned or I was involved in earlier things. Or I remember once when I represented Bridget Riley. And I remember at that moment when I bought the great [Richard] Serra *Poseurs* at auction at Christie's, which cost just over a million dollars in 1970, just as the art market was cracking. And I remember Bridget coming to my hotel, the Connaught, and raising absolute hell with me that I would pay this kind of money for a demised artist. Notwithstanding the fact that the greatest influence on her work was Serra. Her early work looked like fake Serras. But I was involved in all this. I couldn't say I'm not interested in early things or only interested in this.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Leo's power was that he was absolutely focused and therefore was credible. I was all over the place, and I wasn't credible. Now, I couldn't—I was totally incapable of making anything trendy. It didn't matter that I showed all these guys in Chicago, right? I mean the fact is that I had Jasper Johns and Roy Lichtenstein and [Claes] Oldenburg shows and Rosenquist I represented. You know what? If I still represented those guys, you never would have heard of them. You wouldn't. I mean they all were just as good then—important. But I didn't represent them when they became stars. Because had I done that, they would never have become stars. I mean it's sort of like my history with politicians. I mean very few have survived any of my fundraisers. The fact is that I can't do that. So therefore I am not able to promote them. And that's why—a long-winded explanation of why I don't represent living artists. I don't want to run around feeling like I've failed all these people.

MR. McELHINNEY: What would you say then your strength is?

MR. FEIGEN: My strength is—how do I say this without sounding arrogant?

MR. McELHINNEY: You don't need to be modest. This is for the record.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I don't want to be arrogant. I have a very good eye. I have very, very good taste.

MR. McELHINNEY: How is the discernment?

MR. FEIGEN: I wish my knowledge were as acute as my taste. And that's my fault. Because if I hadn't gone to Harvard Business School and instead I'd gone across the river to Harvard History of Art Department, I would know more than I know now. I've learned a lot on my own, and I've learned a lot thanks to my academic friends, you know: Lawrence Kanter and Keith Christiansen and people like that; I've learned a lot. But I haven't learned—I mean I still for certain dense scholarship I have to depend on my friends in academe and in the museums.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I mean certainly for some sort of arcane points of attribution or something. But I think taste or discernment or having an eye, that's a gift. You have a lot—you've got an amazing library.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, you know, we've been building. I've been building a library now for, you know, more than 52

years because I had books before I went into business.

MR. McELHINNEY: You explained how when you were at Yale, you used to acquire artwork in a bookshop in New Haven.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes, well, I mean my acquisitiveness for art had little to do with scholarship. It had to do with acute desire to own things that I considered beautiful. It happens that my eye has been very true, and that I was very early with a lot of things—often too early. I mean by the time they got accepted or acclaimed, I no longer had them. But I still was always there very early.

MR. McELHINNEY: Ahead of the curve.

MR. FEIGEN: Way ahead, yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: If you were to be able to project yourself a hundred years into the future and read a book about Richard Feigen, what would you hope the author would say about you?

MR. FEIGEN: Taste. The one thing I find most flattering, when someone says you have good taste. Not prescience or anything like that. But just taste.

MR. McELHINNEY: Taste.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes.

MR. McELHINNEY: You've helped a lot of other people understand taste. In relationship to clients like that, where artists, you say, artists who are friends, where have a look at a new piece and speak about it, read it?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, you know, I—because I don't think that taste is something that you can learn. I think it can be developed, cultivated. But there are people that just don't have taste, and I don't think anything can change that. You can see by the way they dress, the way they act, the whole thing. You know not a lot of people have taste. I know people who have it that weren't born with it, but it was there. They were born with it, but it was latent. You know we've heard about all these big players in the past who came along and married some lady who was a I don't know what, an airline stewardess or something else. And these people became— They were referred to as, what's the word for a rich man marrying a—?

MR. McELHINNEY: A trophy wife?

MR. FEIGEN: Trophy wife, okay. Now it's interesting to watch because some of these so-called trophy wives stayed sort of brassy trophy wives. Some of them learned. And all of a sudden they looked very elegant, and they are very subdued and very—and they dress and they decorate themselves. I won't mention names. But there are some who obviously had latent taste, and some didn't. And some—not these people—but some would damn this, would say whatever. You know give us the old refrain of arugula and latte and all that.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. Elitism.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. I'm sure that Sarah Palin couldn't learn taste. I don't think she has it, and I think she would damn it, and say this is, you know, elitist. It's not American. To them, American wouldn't be tasteful.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, I'm sure a lot of Europeans would agree. But, no, I—

MR. FEIGEN: A lot of Europeans don't have taste either.

MR. McELHINNEY: Oh, I know. [Laughs] I know. But it's a difficult thing to quantify. I guess that looking at art maybe is one place where people might be able to discover whether or not they have it and care about it.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, looking at art, they're not going to— Well, they may find that they have curiosity.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: And therefore they wish to look at things that they don't already know about. I never would want to have exhibitions or make statements—or were I a museum—to simply dish up what people want to see.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right.

MR. FEIGEN: Or if I were involved in music, for instance, I wouldn't want to ask them what they want to hear. Because they're going to tell me *Sound of Music*. They're going to tell me something they already know about. And it would be my job to show them something exciting they don't already know about. So if they have no

curiosity, if they're like George [W.] Bush, or maybe his wife, you're not going to see any paintings on the wall. You're not going to see a [Claude] Monet like on the wall like the Kennedys gave to the White House. You're not going to—you're going to see what the common man likes. You're going to see what they already know about. And this is—I mean the worst treason that you can perpetrate on this country is to not sponsor, not develop its cultural resources which are considerable.

MR. McELHINNEY: Not just play to the crowd.

MR. FEIGEN: No. You don't ask people what they want to hear, because what are they going to say? They already know—what they want to hear is what they already know about. When I was on the board of Caramoor, for years I wanted them to go for the gold. And Andre Previn, who was music director, just simply wanted to have emerging talent and show off his own minimal talents, and that was it. And if I said, you know, I'm just warming a seat here, I'm not doing any good at all. If you want to go for the gold and if you want to be a Cliburn [Van Cliburn Foundation, Fort Worth, Texas] or a Salzburg [Salzburg Festival, Salzburg, Austria], then count me in. I'll go there, and I'll ring doorbells, and I'll pound on the doors and try to raise money and do all this stuff.

But when I was told that after Itzhak Perlman came up and played the Mendelssohn and we sold the place out four times over, and I said let's do more of this, and I was told, Well, NYNEX sponsored this, and we don't have any more sponsors, and we can't afford it, I said, Well, if we can't afford it, who can afford it? We've got on one side of our property, we've got George Searles. Across the road we've got Ralph Lauren. And next to him we've got Martha Stewart. And across the street we've got Matthew Bronfman. And over here we've got Michael Steinhardt. And over there we've got Leon Black. And I don't know anywhere in the whole world where you have so many billions of dollars within a half a mile of this music festival. And if we can't raise the money and arouse pride in the tummies of all these gazillionaires around here, then we are in the wrong business.

And I'll tell you what. I said, If you want to go and have a season with nothing but great concerts, okay. And you want to sell season tickets and not individual tickets, and if you don't have a season ticket you can't get in unless somebody returns a ticket, and I don't care what they cost. Because I have to buy tickets every summer to Salzburg because my wife is the director of the Salzburg Festival Society. And those tickets cost me five, six, seven hundred dollars apiece. And we come 5,000 miles for this. So I'm a unreconstructed elitist. If we have to pay five, six hundred dollars a ticket, so be it, if it's excellent. And people have to come from all over. And if the locals don't want to pay it and they want to hear lullabies, well, this will be the wrong festival for them. Now, that got me absolutely nowhere. And so I gave up my seat on the board to someone who felt they wanted to have a local festival. They didn't want to be a Glynewarne or a Salzburg. But I just believe in going for the gold, and that's it. Okay? And I don't believe in mediocrity or playing to the crowds or whatever you want to call it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Well, excellence is not a bad word even though it may not be politically correct.

MR. FEIGEN: To hell with political correctness, you know.

MR. McELHINNEY: [Laughs] Five-year plan?

MR. FEIGEN: Mine?

MR. McELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. FEIGEN: Ah! Well, I guess—I mean I have no desire really to do anything other than what I'm doing. I have an extraordinarily able sidekick. So if I said I wanted to write another book, which my wife is encouraging me to do, I can't say that I don't have the time because I could make the time. So I don't do it mainly because of laziness. The least welcome question that anybody can pose to me is are you still working? Because I hope I don't slither into my dotage. I mean I'm doing what I do. I don't feel much differently than I did 20 years ago. The only difference is the stuff I like to work with is scarcer and scarcer. I find less and less of it. But my five-year plan— My passion is collecting. So obviously I hope to just go on acquiring. To what purpose, I really do not know. Except I'm trying to make sort of mini-statements within my collection.

The acquisitiveness, I don't know. I guess I was born with it. My wife doesn't have it. She appreciates the art, she loves looking at the art. But she doesn't have to have it. For some reason, I do not know what it is, I need to have it. So my interest in things that I can't have, although often substantial, is not anywhere near as powerful as my desire to own these things. So I guess I would go around— Oh, yes. If I didn't—if I had endless money, and I've never, ever in my life had the money that I needed to buy some of the things I wanted to have. I mean I always had to not buy certain things I desperately wanted simply because not only did I not have the money, but I had no realistic way of acquiring the money. If I had unlimited money, I would probably leave my business in the hands of my colleague, Frances Beatty, and I'd go out and bang on doors and try to buy things that are not available on the market. That's what I would do. That would be the fun of it.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: And maybe my daughter would decide to come into this business. She certainly has the background and academic training and appreciation to do it. But as long as I don't have all the money that I need to do what I want to do, I have to continue to, let's say, involve myself with these objects. That means that if a painting comes along tomorrow that costs \$10 million or that I could go and make an offer for \$10 million, and I know a few things like this, right now I do not have \$10 million to spend on it. So I know I couldn't deal with it. Therefore, at least maybe I could get this thing on consignment and sell it to a great museum. I might be able to be an intermediary, involve myself in some way.

MR. McELHINNEY: To pass through your hands.

MR. FEIGEN: To pass through my hands. There are certain things—I mean there are certain limits I've had at each stage of my life, beyond which I dare not venture.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: I've always extended myself beyond what I could afford. I've never bought a great object for myself that I could afford. I never knew where the money was going to come from. I managed somehow to conjure it up. But there's a certain point where I couldn't—it's beyond my capacity. And this happened not so long ago with a real jewel by Fra Angelico that came kind of floating into my hands. And it was a sum of money. The owner raised the ante a couple of times. And in the end, he named a price from which I could not walk away, but which I somehow felt I could manage. Not that I'm sitting with that many millions of dollars. But I could figure out how to get there. And so I bought it. If it had been another couple of million dollars, I wouldn't have been able to handle it, and I would've said, okay. Let me have this thing for a month. And I would've gone over to the Metropolitan Museum and sold it to them. And at least I would be able to walk in there and say, Mmmm. You know that's one of my kids. You know I see this in museums all over the world now.

MR. McELHINNEY: Must be satisfying.

MR. FEIGEN: Well, there isn't a major museum in the world I don't see something—almost none—where I don't see something that I was involved in. So having my little business here enables me to continue my involvement with things that I might not otherwise be able to have. Also, we can do exhibitions of Ray Johnson, which is the estate we represent, who was an artist, I think a major artist, where we can make a statement. People come in, and we are presenting it to a larger and larger audience. So I can do certain things running my business that I couldn't do if I were a simple collector. On the other hand, if I were a simple collector, and I had the raw material I needed, meaning money, I could do a lot of things I can't do now.

MR. McELHINNEY: What advice would you offer to a young collector, somebody—or to yourself half a century ago—somebody coming up?

MR. FEIGEN: Well, I would certainly encourage them to see what area of collecting was of interest to them. I mean that means that I would probably walk them through the Metropolitan and maybe the Museum of Modern Art [New York City], and see what things, what really grabbed him. And then if he really were accessible in that sense, and really were able to be turned on, I would probably take him in to introduce him to the curator responsible for that area if the curator was really committed himself. A lot of curators are not. But I would probably take him in and let him be exposed to some kind of stimulus.

Okay. Let's say someone came to my apartment and walked in to my dining room, which is where I keep all my early Italian paintings on panel because it's humidified and so on. Let's assume all of a sudden he got—he said, Oh, these are beautiful. I really like these items. Well, then I would take him up Thursday to listen to Lawrence Kanter's graduate seminar on connoisseurship of early Italian paintings, which I dutifully go up every Thursday. On the other hand, this Thursday he just called me to tell me that he was teaching this term. And I, unfortunately, have committed to my wife and friends to go to the opera that night. And if I go, his seminar starts at three-twenty this term, which is later than the last term, and therefore— He didn't teach it in the autumn—in the spring. Which is too late for me to—I mean I wouldn't get out until five-fifty, and I wouldn't get back for the opera. So I have to miss it tomorrow, which is very painful for me because he is a genius, and I don't like missing these. So probably if I'd known that he was teaching now—he said I was supposed to get some kind of communication which I didn't get—I might have excused myself from the opera. Now it's too late. But the following Thursday, every Thursday, I will go up there. I will take the train at 125th Street, the New Haven, and I will listen to one of these magical seminars because there are these people around who are, you know, they can light the match.

MR. McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. FEIGEN: And that's what I would tell somebody to do. Now if it were in—they really got turned on in the Contemporary field, I'd have to see whether they, what they responded to. But then I would expose them to somebody with a real touch, see if they could turn them— That's what I would do. I wouldn't have them listen to

anybody about what they should buy or what's trendy or what isn't.

MR. McELHINNEY: Just try to develop their own eye.

MR. FEIGEN: Right. See if it's there. And if it's there, get it developed.

MR. McELHINNEY: And if it's not, find that out, too.

MR. FEIGEN: If they're not excited by this, then I wouldn't recommend that they collect because they'll then make mistakes. I found out that my mistakes—and I've made quite a few—have almost invariably been in things where I felt that I had a client for this or I had made some kind of a discovery. And I was using my head and not my gut.

MR. McELHINNEY: Right. You spoke about this last time.

MR. FEIGEN: And that's where I've made mistakes.

MR. McELHINNEY: We're almost out of space on the disc. So this might be a good time to conclude.

MR. FEIGEN: Okay.

MR. McELHINNEY: If that's all right with you.

MR. FEIGEN: Yes. It's been fun.

MR. McELHINNEY: Thank you, sir. I really enjoyed myself. I hope you did.

MR. FEIGEN: Thank you. I did.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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