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Oral history interview with Robert M. Light,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Robert Light on 2008 April 25. The interview took place at Light's office in Monticeto, California, and was conducted by Gail Aronow for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Art Dealers Association of America.

Gail Aronow has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. 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

GAIL ARONOW: This is Gail Aronow interviewing Robert Light at his office at 1224 Coast Village Circle in Montecito, California, on April 25, 2008, for the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number one.

Mr. Light, hello.

ROBERT M. LIGHT: Hello.

MS. ARONOW: Would you care to talk about where you were born and when, and your early childhood, your parents, your education?

MR. LIGHT: All right. A rather brief overview of the unimportant parts of my life: I was born in 1929 and grew up in Fairfield County in Connecticut. My family was not particularly interested in the visual arts, though they cared for music a great deal. And some of my earliest memories are of going to numerous concerts.

One of the amusing things about where I lived, which was South Norwalk, Connecticut, is the fact that a man by the name of Freddie Schang lived in South Norwalk, and he was at Columbia Concerts and the head of the Community Concerts series. And because of that fact, we got run-outs from all the great artists who were under contract at Community Concerts for recitals in the local high school auditorium. And they included many of the greatest musicians of the day, who are, at this point, legends, such as [Ignacy Jan] Paderewski [L.C.] and Joseph Hoffman and [Sergei] Rachmaninoff and [Jascha] Heifetz and Fritz Kreisler. All these people—many great singers—all these people I heard in the local high school auditorium. And I was very interested in music at an early age.

MS. ARONOW: That's impressive.

MR. LIGHT: And, parenthetically, Schang figures in the art world in a very small way, insofar as he had a really quite fine collection of Paul Klees.

MS. ARONOW: How interesting.

MR. LIGHT: And you saw them all, when you were in high school?

MR. LIGHT: No, no.

MS. ARONOW: Were you interested in art at that point?

MR. LIGHT: Not particularly. And I didn't know him. My parents didn't know him. I think my father golfed with him occasionally. But no, I didn't grow up surrounded by art, nor did we know collectors particularly. That was a part of the world that I knew nothing about. I pursued my interest in music, and in fact, went to Oberlin College [OH], enrolling in the conservatory.

MS. ARONOW: It was a great conservatory, right?

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes. It was one of the great music schools. And one of the things that appealed to me about that was that they gave a six-year course leading to Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Music, which I enrolled in. As it turned out, I really wasn't good enough for what I wanted to do in the music world—in other words, be a concert performer—and in my sophomore year, I started concentrating on the Bachelor of Arts and became aware of, simply by students, friends of mine talking about it, that there was a marvelous course being given at the art museum, which I took the next year, on the history of printmaking.

And this was the first exposure I had—and first influence I had—of that great wave of Jewish and non-Jewish

German refugees who left Europe before the onslaught of the Second World War. And Oberlin had a great German scholar who had taught at Göttingen [University, Germany], by the name of Wolfgang Stechow, whose field was Dutch 17th-century Baroque—Northern Baroque—and had a great interest in prints, and had a great influence on me.

MS. ARONOW: Could I interrupt one second? What musical instrument did you play?

MR. LIGHT: Violin and voice.

MS. ARONOW: Oh, ambitious.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. And it was through the course I had under Stechow that I became aware of the history of prints and became quite fascinated by them. The first time the concept of being an art dealer came to me was, one day, I was asked by one of the lecturers at Oberlin to go out and help a man unpack his car out on the street corner on the side of the museum at Oberlin. And I'm trying desperately to remember his name.

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MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: The first time I became aware, in the flesh, of an art dealer was when I was asked by a professor in an art history course I was taking at the Allen [Memorial] Art Museum in Oberlin, after the hour ended, to go out and help Mr. So-Be-So—whose name I will come back to later—to help unpack his car. And I got out to the curb and saw an old four-door Cadillac and was absolutely stunned—opened the back door and out poured a cornucopia of paintings by [Georges] Braque, [Georges] Rouault, [Nicolas] De Stael, [Pierre] Soulages, and other artists of that school. And when I asked him who he was, he said, well, my name is Ted Schemp, and I'm an art dealer.

And that was the first time I remember that I ever ran into a real, living art dealer, and it absolutely fascinated me. And I remember thinking to myself at the time, what a wonderful profession. If you can't afford to buy these things to form a collection, at least, as a dealer, you can have the pleasure of having them pass through your hands, and enjoying them and then passing them on to people and help them form collections.

The fascination of that, in part, lay in the fact that Ted Schemp—as was the case with myself—had been a student at the Oberlin conservatory. He studied piano and then went to Paris to continue his studies, and while there, made a living by buying, or getting on consignment, paintings, which he would then bring to the United States to sell. And at one point he was quite successful doing loan exhibitions at Knoedler's [Knoedler & Company] in New York. Two that I remember were Hajdu, the sculpture of [Etienne] Hajdu, and the paintings of De Stael. And I believe that Ted was one of the first people to bring both these artists to the United States.

Parenthetically, he also had become quite a good friend of Heinz Berggruen—which was the first time that I was aware of the name of Heinz Berggruen, who since, of course, became famous as a collector and a donor. Well, at that point I got a minor in art history. And after a diverting time, one year at Harvard Law School [Cambridge, MA], I walked across the street to the Fogg [Art] Museum with the intent of getting a graduate degree in art history. Consciously, with the intent of building a background that would be of use to me as an art dealer.

MS. ARONOW: Do you want to say anything about Harvard Law School?

MR. LIGHT: No.

MS. ARONOW: And what you didn't like?

MR. LIGHT: No. [Laughs.] It just wasn't for me. The reason for going to Harvard Law School is I've come from three generations of lawyers. And there was no parental pressure put on me, but it was pointed out to me that if I did want to become a lawyer, it would certainly be an easy thing to do, since I had a practice of several generations that I could walk into and take over.

MS. ARONOW: Was your father an attorney of any particular kind or specialization?

MR. LIGHT: No, generalist. This was in a small town in Connecticut. But his father had been attorney general of the state of Connecticut—

MS. ARONOW: Do you know under which governor?

MR. LIGHT: No. No I don't. That was a very long time ago. That was at the beginning of the century, of the last century. [Laughs.]

MS. ARONOW: Yes. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: In any case, an amusing aside to enrolling at the Fogg was that when I asked if I could apply to enroll for a graduate degree, I was interviewed and asked what my career intent was—that's not quite the way they say it nowadays—career goals were. And I didn't answer very quickly, and then was asked if I wanted to teach art history, and I said no. And then I was asked if I wanted to go into museum work, and I said equally, no. And then when asked what I wanted to do, I said, I want to build background information in order to become a good art dealer.

And at that point—and I'm sorry to say, I don't know who I had the interview with—I was given to understand that it was highly unlikely that they would accept me for graduate work at the Fogg. And because I knew socially some of the people at the Fogg, I raised a little bit of a fuss, and then discovered after the fact that both Agnes Mongan and Jakob Rosenberg, who was the curator of prints at the Fogg, and before the war had been the curator of prints in Berlin, both said that was absolute nonsense and they should re-contact me and say, yes, they'd like to have me as a student. Parenthetically, it's understandable, because Jakob Rosenberg was the brother of Saemy Rosenberg, who was the partner of Rosenberg and Steibel [Gallery] in New York.

MS. ARONOW: Okay. I had heard that Rosenberg's brother was a dealer. I wasn't sure whether it was Rosenberg and Steibel.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: Great. Samuel? Was that his name?

MR. LIGHT: No.

MS. ARONOW: Or Sammy?—

MR. LIGHT: I'm not sure, but I think it's probably S-A-E-M-I. If you'd like to check that, call Eric Steibel in New York and get the spelling of Mr. Rosenberg's name. Then I was told, only quite recently, that, in fact, Jakob Rosenberg tried dealing for a little while but didn't like it. When he came to this country, I guess he went to work for his brother, but only for a very short period of time.

MS. ARONOW: So you could fulfill his fantasy, or his dream. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: But it's interesting, in my college years I was exposed to influences beyond the range that one would expect. And, again, I go back to this concept of the great brain drain that occurred in Europe just before the rise to power of Hitler. In California we know it for musicians and scholars and writers, but also art historians. And it's very interesting, looking back, that during the war years Frits Lugt was in Oberlin.

MS. ARONOW: I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

MR. LIGHT: And this happened before I got to Oberlin—I think they were returned before I got there, which was in '46. Very few people realized that the Morgan Library Rembrandts [van Rijn] were stored at Oberlin during the war years.

MS. ARONOW: Fascinating.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. And it was kept very quiet. When they were first sent out, nobody was able to look at them.

MS. ARONOW: So the fear was they might be bombed?

MR. LIGHT: New York might be bombed.

MS. ARONOW: Of course, we're all aware of that kind of preparation in Europe. But I'd never heard that—

MR. LIGHT: Well, that's why the [Sterling and Francine] Clark collection landed in Williamstown [MA].

MS. ARONOW: Really?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Quite definitely.

MS. ARONOW: Where was it removed from?

MR. LIGHT: New York City. And at first—this is the brother, and I've gotten the names mixed up. The Clark in Williamstown is—

MS. ARONOW: Sterling Clark.

MR. LIGHT: Sterling. He at one time was going to send his collection to Canada for safekeeping during the war years, and then was prevailed upon to go to Williamstown, which was sort of equidistant from Boston and New York, so that scholars could come out from both places to view the paintings and whatnot.

MS. ARONOW: I thought it was just an idyllic place. I grew up in New England, too. [Laughs.] I never knew that's why. That's riveting.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: Another great accident of history.

MR. LIGHT: In a way. Yes, yes. Well, I spent a year and a half at the Fogg Museum doing graduate work and then was drafted, and was in the army from '52 to '54, and in Korea and Japan, although the war in Korea was just about coming to an end when I got there, so I didn't see any action.

MS. ARONOW: What did you do there? I mean, what was it like? Can you offer any specific recollections?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, but it had nothing to do with art. [Laughs.]

MS. ARONOW: Well, that's okay. We want to know about you for posterity here, you know. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: I was a buck private. And I slogged in the trenches along with the rest of them over a cold winter.

And then, fortunately—and this does have an effect on my later life—the brigade headquarters that I was attached to was moved back to Japan, to a small T.B. sanatorium, interestingly enough; of course, the T.B. patients had long since left. But it was in a small town called Shingasaki, which was on the main railroad line from Kyoto to Tokyo, and only about an hour outside of Tokyo. And so I was able to get into Tokyo frequently, weekends and sometimes even in the evenings. And I gradually accumulated a large number of friends in Tokyo and had great chance to see the various museums with their collections as they began to come out of storage, and was sort of adopted by an American couple by the name of Grilli. G-R-I-L-L-I. I don't know whether you know that name or not.

MS. ARONOW: Sounds Italian.

MR. LIGHT: But there's their son, Peter Grilli, who is active in the arts, I believe.

MS. ARONOW: Sounds familiar but—

MR. LIGHT: In any case, Mr. Grilli had gotten de-mobbed after the Second World War and stayed in Japan. And his wife came over, and they were bilingual after a few years.

MS. ARONOW: De-mobbed, you said?

MR. LIGHT: Well, he got his separation papers from the army.

MS. ARONOW: Oh, I see. I'm just not familiar with the lingo.

MR. LIGHT: And he was the music critic, and she was the art critic, for the leading American newspaper in Tokyo.

MS. ARONOW: What a wonderful introduction you had.

MR. LIGHT: And it was quite wonderful, because they took me to openings and they introduced me to people.

MS. ARONOW: Did this help you later? I know you went to Japan—we can come back to that—in the '80s. Or maybe even earlier?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. But it meant that I enjoyed my time in Japan enormously. I tried very hard to learn Japanese, and really liked being there. And I was there for about seven or eight months.

MS. ARONOW: How did it go, the Japanese?

MR. LIGHT: It went fairly well. And then I came back and started to look for a job in an art gallery.

MS. ARONOW: What year was this now?

MR. LIGHT: This would have been '54.

MS. ARONOW: To Boston you returned, or to the Fogg or?—

MR. LIGHT: No, not to the Fogg.

MS. ARONOW: To Boston? Or Cambridge?

MR. LIGHT: As a matter of fact, I first thought I should perhaps try to find a job in New York. And I was interviewed by Ms. Dickinson, who was a famous character that ran Weyhe Gallery.

MS. ARONOW: The famous Weyhe.

MR. LIGHT: The famous Weyhe. I don't remember meeting Mr. Weyhe, though I must have. And she said that she would love to hire me but they just didn't have a vacancy at the time. So then I went back up to Boston to visit friends and, while I was there, decided I would try what I could find on Newbury Street, and was hired by Charlie Childs, C.D. Childs.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: The Childs Gallery on Newbury Street. And there I came across—all of this connects one way or another—I discovered, within a day or two of being hired by Charlie Childs, that he was hiring me to fill the job that had been held until six months ago by Ray Lewis, the print dealer. And Ray decided that he wanted to go back to California with his wife, where he came from.

MS. ARONOW: I didn't understand that he was originally from California. That's interesting.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: From Santa Rosa, too, or San Francisco maybe?

MR. LIGHT: I don't remember. I don't remember. And in years to follow, Ray and I were always rather amused that we both started in the same gallery, which really doesn't have much to do with prints today.

MS. ARONOW: Initially, did Childs cover all topics? Was it an Old Master gallery, too, and then it switched to American? Or was it always American?

MR. LIGHT: No, that's not quite true. Charlie's great love was Americana. And one of his main clients was Maxim Karolik. And he sold a great deal to Karolik.

MS. ARONOW: Right.

MR. LIGHT: And I believe it was Charlie—or Charlie and Karolik—who really rediscovered Fitzhugh Lane.

MS. ARONOW: And a lot of his paintings are in the MFA [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA], is that correct?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Yes. But Charlie realized that although his great love was American pictures, even by that time, by the mid-'50s, it was getting very difficult to find great American pictures.

MS. ARONOW: Regarding Karolik, there's a furniture collection, too. Am I correct? American.

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Yes, Karolik bought great American furniture, too. And that's another story. The money was Ms. Codman's money. He married a Ms. Codman of Newport, and he talked her into allowing him to buy great works of art and not-so-great works of art, but building a great collection of the mid-nineteenth century and then earlier, as well.

MS. ARONOW: Did she encourage the furniture collecting? Is that why you thought of her?

MR. LIGHT: No. But, yes, the Karolik collection at the MFA is the person I'm talking about. And—I've lost my train of thought.

MS. ARONOW: So we were talking about going to Charlie Childs's gallery, and he was selling paintings at that point, I guess.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes. You asked me whether he dealt in a broad range of things.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: He worked very closely with Harry [Shaw] Newman of the Old Print Shop [New York City]. And in fact, Charlie had started off as a print man when he was much younger, working for George Goodspeed, of Goodspeed's up on the Hill [Beacon Hill] in Boston. So he knew about prints and liked them but became more interested in paintings, and he also worked quite closely with John Mitchell in London. And he'd make numerous

trips to London and come back with English 18th-century pictures, as well as American. He got interested in Treaty Port paintings, and he had a number of those.

MS. ARONOW: Which paintings?

MR. LIGHT: Treaty Port paintings. Those are the paintings by Chinese and English artists done at the so-called factories in China.

MS. ARONOW: Yes, I know what they look like. I just never knew what they were called.

MR. LIGHT: And there was always a department of prints in the lower level of Childs. But even from the beginning, I found it somewhat disappointing, because I didn't think the level of stock was very good, and, in fact, it wasn't. But it was the Saturday rounds that certain dealers like Arthur Vershbow and Louie Black and others would make. And occasionally we would have things that would be of interest to them, and I began to meet local collectors that way.

The level of quality of the prints in the boxes downstairs and my lack of enthusiasm about them can best be demonstrated, perhaps, by a story of one day [when] the intercommunication squawk-box announced that Hyatt Mayor was upstairs and would like to come down and see the prints. And I panicked because I didn't think there was a single thing in the whole place—[laughs]—that I could show with any degree of pride. And I don't know whether I tried to discourage him, but it was too late; he was already on his way down. And I'll never forget.

MS. ARONOW: [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: I sort of introduced myself and started off by saying, I don't really think we have anything that would be of interest to the Metropolitan [Museum of Art, NY].

MS. ARONOW: Oh. You apologized. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: And I was apologizing right and left. And I remember Hyatt saying, oh, no, no, I'm sure that there might be some interesting things, taking off his coat—and he was wearing red suspenders—[laughs]—and he just dove in and spent a couple of hours looking at things. Unfortunately, I don't remember whether he bought anything. I can't remember.

MS. ARONOW: What was he like?

MR. LIGHT: Hyatt was a charming man, absolutely charming.

MS. ARONOW: Did you come to know him much better?

MR. LIGHT: I did. I did over the years, [in] later years, while he was still curator at the Metropolitan, I would sell them things. And he and his wife had a place in, I believe, in Gloucester [MA].

And there's one wonderful story about Hyatt that must be—must've been written down by people someplace. But it's a marvelous anecdote. When Hyatt retired, his position was filled by John McKendry, who was a very nice young man who had come out of the plains of Canada, the midwest of Canada. And he was terribly nice, and I suspect he'd worked at the Met in the print department and Hyatt thought that he should succeed. And rather quickly he began to travel with a social and high-flying set. And he married Maxime de la Falaise and ended up having a rather grand apartment, if not in the Dakota, someplace else.

And I'll never forget being invited to dinner at their house one night—and this is the gist of the story, the tie-in with Hyatt—and it was a very mixed group of people. There were some entertainment people; there were some art history people; Hyatt and his wife were there, and I was there, and various other people. And because I was catching a late flight to Boston, I excused myself before most of the people had left, and Hyatt and his wife said they thought it was time for them to leave, and they came out and got into the elevator with me. And we chatted about how nice a party it was, and Hyatt said how much he'd enjoyed talking to the young man next to him, who really seemed quite interested in prints and knew a fair-ish amount about them. And he went on this way, and I turned and looked at [laughs] Hyatt and I said, Hyatt, are you pulling my leg? No, he said. Why? And I said, well, the person sitting next to you was Mick Jagger. [They laugh.] And Hyatt didn't know who I meant.

MS. ARONOW: Really?

MR. LIGHT: Really. [Laughs.]

MS. ARONOW: Well.

MR. LIGHT: But I was seated next to Bianca on the other side of the table. [Laughs.] But Hyatt was a charmer; he

was a very nice man. And you know he used to say in a quite serious way, you know, my job is not to buy the great landmarks of printmaking, because William Ivins bought all those when he was curator. And my job is to fill in the chinks in between.

MS. ARONOW: And he could.

MR. LIGHT: Yes. And he bought great collections of all sorts of material, but not the great landmarks of printmaking. Oh, he occasionally did from time to time, of course, but he was quite a different man than William Ivins, whom I didn't meet. I was not on the ground that early.

MS. ARONOW: He was before us all. But, of course, we read his books, right, or his one—what's the name of that elementary book that everyone reads?

MR. LIGHT: I forgot.

MS. ARONOW: —*How Prints Look* [: *Photographs with a Commentary*. New York, 1943; Boston: Beacon Press, 1987.]—

MR. LIGHT: Yes, something like that.

Well, anyhow, after two years, Charlie Childs asked me if I would like to become a partner of his and was, I think, somewhat surprised and rather disappointed. I'd asked him, well, what does that entail, and what are the potential benefits? And one of the things he said was, well, I think you'll have to buy half of the inventory, a half-share of the inventory. And you don't have to pay for it all at once, but we'll figure out what it is and we'll work it out over some years.

And I went home and thought about it, and I went back and said, I'm flattered and thank you very much for asking me, but I really don't think I want to do this. And he said, why? And I said, I don't really think your inventory is very good.

MS. ARONOW: What did he say?

MR. LIGHT: Well, I couched it in more polite terms than that, but I wiggled around and implied that and said that I really wanted the challenge of going out on my own. And so at that point in—let's see—'56, I formed R.M. Light and Company, Inc., and began in business by myself. So I've been a dealer under my own name for, oh, 50 years plus.

MS. ARONOW: And when you left Childs, did you immediately begin working under your own name?

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: Right away?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Right away.

MS. ARONOW: In Boston, as competition more or less, or maybe you immediately had better stock, I would bet.

MR. LIGHT: Well, yes. Well, there were two things which I'm very much aware of in retrospect. I was very much aware of them at the time. I had two great pluses, which a young man becoming a dealer today wouldn't have at all, and that is, in '56 I gradually became aware of the fact that there were older dealers who had considerable numbers of prints of very good quality which they simply weren't trying to sell.

And I remember visiting Bill Collins, who was the print dealer in residence at Knoedler, who tried to discourage me, saying, there is no market for black-and-white prints. And I misunderstood at first, and I said, oh, you mean the English and Scottish school, [James] McBeys and [Muirhead] Bones and [James] Whistlers and things of that sort. He said, no, I mean everything from Old Masters on.

MS. ARONOW: Interesting. But they had been there for so [long] and they cared about paintings.

MR. LIGHT: And his history is such that he was trained by Fitzroy Carrington in the days when you would take a solander case and go out and sell a history of printmaking to one collector at one go. And he just didn't think there was—nobody was interested in them any longer. Well, this, remember, was after the Depression days, and the art market, particularly for prints, didn't really pick up very much before the Second World War hit. So it was really from the late '20s, for almost 30 years, that the print market had been in the doldrums.

MS. ARONOW: And so?

MR. LIGHT: And so I discovered—because even when I was working for Charlie Childs, I would go down and visit other print dealers and learn as much as I could from them. I went to Knoedler's, I went to Kennedy's [Kennedy Galleries], I visited Colnaghi in London, and various other dealers around the world. And I was fascinated to see that they had, you know, 100 Rembrandts, or 50 [Albrecht] Dürers or—

MS. ARONOW: There was a lot of inventory.

MR. LIGHT: And they were all perfectly happy to consign it to me.

MS. ARONOW: It's very interesting, isn't it?

MR. LIGHT: So that I could get inventory without having to buy it, and I could go through and pick out what I thought were the best things. I remember I started off with Collins, saying, would you be willing to consign this one Rembrandt to me for two weeks? I think I have somebody in Boston who might buy it. And he'd say, take 10, take 15, take 20.

MS. ARONOW: It was not urgent to them.

MR. LIGHT: As soon as they got to know me, which they did quite quickly, they trusted me, and so I built inventory quite quickly by getting it on consignment from old dealers. And [for] young people today, that's absolutely impossible.

MS. ARONOW: Because, for many reasons—

MR. LIGHT: There isn't that much around. I have to scramble today to get any single print I think is worthwhile. And the other thing, which was a great advantage to me, is that it became apparent very quickly that institutional clients were very important.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: And as I started going around the museums, I realized that, time and time again, I would run into friends from the Fogg Museum. So I would go and make an appointment and be greeted by a friend, and if he wasn't the print curator, at least he would introduce me to the print curator. And so I got a head start.

MS. ARONOW: And so the Fogg made a nice introduction for you?

MR. LIGHT: Absolutely.

MS. ARONOW: And I'm interested in what happened to you in those couple of years at the Fogg, or year and a half at the Fogg, with Jakob Rosenberg and prints. You must've had a pretty good start, if you could judge the Childs inventory was not so great.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Sure. No, I took courses in prints, and I took courses from Jakob and Agnes Mongan, and the regular panoply of art courses, you know, one-by-everybody sort of thing.

MS. ARONOW: Did you start collecting when you were at the Fogg?

MR. LIGHT: No, I didn't have the money to do it. I started in business for myself with a loan of \$5,000 from my father.

MS. ARONOW: That was good.

MR. LIGHT: —and then gradually became more and more successful. I think, you know, in the '50s, a lot of prints were dirt cheap compared to what they are today, and I suppose in the first few years I may have sold a total of \$100,000 worth of prints.

MS. ARONOW: That's amazing for that period. That was a lot of money.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: Were there many refugee dealers who had left Germany with prints under their arm?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, there were—there were some. There was—again, one of the dealers that I went to visit, and I, frankly, cannot remember how I met him—was a dealer who was something like out of [Charles] Dickens, because he had a little office on the second floor of midtown Madison Avenue. His name was Helmut Wallach, who couldn't have been nicer. And he had some really wonderful things, and he would consign them to me. And

it was many years later that I realized that he was a great friend of Richard Zinser, who was undoubtedly the greatest private print dealer in the United States, who had come over after the war with great contacts to Colnaghi, Vaduz [Liechtenstein], a number of the ducal collections in Germany. And parenthetically, if you do a sort of a survey of the great 15th-century and early 16th-century engravings in the American collections, 70 percent of the best ones came through him—through Zinser.

MS. ARONOW: Wow.

MR. LIGHT: He was enormously important. And he was always a private dealer. Never had a gallery.

MS. ARONOW: Was he from Berlin, or where—do you remember?

MR. LIGHT: I don't remember. I don't remember. What I do remember is—like anybody else who comes over as a refugee—he had a little trouble getting started. And it was [art collector] Walter Bareiss who helped him get his feet on the ground.

GAIL ARONOW: Very interesting.

MR. LIGHT: Walter once told me that story. I asked him how did he first meet Zinser and he said his father had bought some outstanding Old Master paintings from him, including a late Rembrandt. And he can remember when he was in short pants going through museums with Richard Zinser, who took the trouble to explain why this was important or this was important to him, which is a side of Walter that one doesn't normally think about.

MS. ARONOW: Remind me who he is. I know his name, of course.

MR. LIGHT: Walter Bareiss was an industrialist who had factories in Germany. Don't ask me in what. But his family was sort of bi-national. They always maintained houses in Germany and in the United States. And I think Walter went to Yale [University, New Haven, CT]. And he was a born collector. He collected everything. But he was a great donor to Yale.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: And he was a donor to the Museum of Modern Art [NY]. And how you may know him, at one point when, after Alfred Barr left and there was some monkeyshines of one sort or another going on at the Museum of Modern Art, he was on the board. And he actually stepped in as a temporary director of the Museum of Modern Art for a short period of time.

MS. ARONOW: Yes. That's why I know his name. You're absolutely right. Because my sister's father-in-law is Gifford Phillips, and I might have heard him talk about it.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, really?

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, that's interesting.

MS. ARONOW: Of course, he was on that board for a good long time with a lot of other important people.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, I knew Giff Phillips slightly.

MS. ARONOW: He's in Santa Fe [NM].

MR. LIGHT: Is he still alive?

MS. ARONOW: Yes, he is.

MR. LIGHT: How old is he?

MS. ARONOW: He's going to turn 90 soon.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, I met him through Bob Rowan, who was a great friend of his. They're two of the people who tried to turn the Pasadena Museum [of California Art, CA] into the Museum of Modern Art of the West.

MS. ARONOW: Yes, it was a noble effort defeated by a mightier soul. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: But we could talk about that. Anyway—

MR. LIGHT: All right. Where are we? We've gone up through Charlie Childs, and I've started a business by myself on my own.

MS. ARONOW: And German exile dealers, a little bit—

MR. LIGHT: Well, I started traveling abroad because I realized that one had to do this, and I met the dealers in Paris. I met the fathers of the dealers who are current now. People like Hubert Prouté, I knew his father.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: And the old-timers at Colnaghi.

MS. ARONOW: Paul Prouté, right?

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: The real Prouté. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: Yes. And in Switzerland, I met [Alfred] Frauendorfer, who was the great old dealer at L'art ancien. And I met August Laube and his father, who had built a great business in Zurich. Although interestingly enough, his father's business was helvetica, not fine prints. And it was Gust who kept nagging his father to go into fine prints, and then built the reputation of having major fine Old Master prints. And Laube became a great colleague of mine and a great close friend.

And I also started going to the auctions in Europe. And at that point, and for many years after, although Sotheby's [New York City] and Christie's in London [England] had occasional sales and there were a couple of sales houses in Germany, I didn't go to the Paris sales because I didn't feel comfortable in French. But I started going to the [Galerie] Kornfeld auctions in Bern, in Switzerland. And I went every year from, sort of, the late '50s until a few years ago, to the Kornfeld auctions.

MS. ARONOW: Those were really important.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, they were. And in the old days, it was old Dr. [August] Klipstein.

MS. ARONOW: I wondered who the Klipstein was when I was looking at your archive the other day. I know the name vaguely, but—

MR. LIGHT: There was a Dr. Klipstein who had started off—I'm not sure of this—maybe in Vienna, as a rare book dealer, but I'm not sure. I remember meeting Frau Klipstein, who lived in the house where the auctions were held. [Eberhard] Kornfeld was the young assistant—

MS. ARONOW: Wonderful.

MR. LIGHT: —and then gradually, because Ebbie Kornfeld was an extremely bright and hardworking man, he became a partner of Dr. Klipstein and then Klipstein and Kornfeld [gallery]. And then when Klipstein died, it was Kornfeld.

MS. ARONOW: I see the letterhead in your archive was "Kornfeld und Klipstein" in the '60s. Is that correct, I think?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. That would have been right. And I have almost a complete run of their catalogues, because they're so important.

MS. ARONOW: Those were the ones I prized when I was executive director of IFPDA [International Fine Print Dealers Association, New York City]. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes.

MS. ARONOW: They're great.

MR. LIGHT: They're very good, yes, yes. And, of course, the other great firm was the firm of C.G. Boerner in Dusseldorf [Germany]. Those were the great dealers. Klipstein, Kornfeld, and Laube and Boerner.

MS. ARONOW: Did you have an office in Cambridge first, or did you deal out of your apartment?

MR. LIGHT: I dealt from my apartment. I never had a gallery.

MS. ARONOW: Ever?

MR. LIGHT: Well, except for one, two brief forays into galleries. I happened to be in Arizona one year in the winter, and it was so beautiful that I thought I might open a gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona, which is a suburb, of course.

MS. ARONOW: I saw that on the letterhead. It said Boston [MA] and Scottsdale—R.M. Light and Company, Boston and Scottsdale.

MR. LIGHT: And I hired somebody to run the gallery in Scottsdale. But they weren't ready for me, because I was showing Old Master prints, and there weren't many people who were interested in buying them there. But I had a couple of nice winter visits out there.

MS. ARONOW: Well, that was always a good thing to do. Did that last two years, less? Do you remember? I know it was early.

MR. LIGHT: It was a few years. I can't remember how many. And then for a few years, I used to commute. While doing my business in Boston, I commuted to New York, got it down so I could leave my house in Back Bay, Boston, and be in the gallery in New York in two hours. And I shared space with Helene Seiferheld, who was a dealer in Old Master drawings. And Helene was great fun and very elegant and quite pretty. And she had some pretty good clients because she was great fun; she was vivacious. She knew what she was talking about, and people like [collector Robert] Bobby Lehman and Janos Scholz used to come and visit her all the time. And I'm not sure that Lehman bought much from her, but—

MS. ARONOW: He bought from you, did he? Or no?

MR. LIGHT: No, I never sold to him.

MS. ARONOW: You showed him something, maybe a drawing or—

MR. LIGHT: Perhaps. Maybe he bought something from me, but he didn't buy prints.

MS. ARONOW: And Janos Scholz was mostly drawings, right?

MR. LIGHT: And Janos Scholz—well, again, he didn't buy prints. I think I sold him a drawing from time to time.

MS. ARONOW: I had a class with him once.

MR. LIGHT: But he and I would talk music together. And he was a very jolly old man. I liked him enormously.

MS. ARONOW: Yes, and that fabulous apartment with the ballroom was really great. We would sit on these little *sgabelli*—those little 15th-century chairs—and pass around drawings when I was a graduate student.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. He was marvelous. And so I would commute down to New York for a couple of days each week. But then that was a lot of work, and I just stopped.

MS. ARONOW: And am I correct that you did sell some rare books or at least some libraries concerning prints?

MR. LIGHT: Early on, one of the first large transactions that I ever became involved in was due to my friends at the Boston Museum. And that's something else I should talk about.

There was a great collector of prints who was a major supporter of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the print department, called Russell Allen. W.G. Russell Allen. I've forgotten whether he was a banker or what, but he was an omnivorous print collector who formed large collections. And when I knew him, there was a room in the print department at the Boston Museum for his collection.

MS. ARONOW: That's exceptional.

MR. LIGHT: Because it was always understood that he was going to leave it to the Boston Museum. When he died, they discovered with horror that the will had been written in general terms, so that Boston got the Old Master prints, and his niece, Lydia Tunnard, had first crack at the modern prints. Now, I think that's what the problem was. But there was no definition of terms. So is [Francisco] Goya modern or Old Master?

MS. ARONOW: I see. How interesting. That would be a disaster for them.

MR. LIGHT: Fortunately, Lydia Tunnard couldn't have been nicer, and more or less let the MFA have whatever they wanted.

MS. ARONOW: Well, that was good.

MR. LIGHT: She was a fascinating woman. She was Russell Allen's niece. She married Christopher Tunnard, who was a distinguished—city planner is the wrong word—urban architect on the faculty at Yale. And practically every year for Christmas, Allen and Paul Sachs, who was a great friend of his, and who liked Lydia, would give her a present of an Old Master print. So she had some quite wonderful things. And I got to know her, of course. And after Russell Allen died, she asked me if I could sell his library.

MS. ARONOW: I see.

MR. LIGHT: And so I said I'd be glad to do it. And I published a small catalogue. Regretfully, I didn't have the financial capability of simply saying I'd buy it, because I should have kept practically everything. But I couldn't afford to. I kept some things and paid her for them. But a lot of things I sold.

MS. ARONOW: Was it a big library?

MR. LIGHT: It was a very big and important print reference library.

MS. ARONOW: With every sale catalogue and reference?

MR. LIGHT: Well, not so much as I remember, not so much in the sales catalogues. The standard catalogue raisonné of every artist. I have a comparable library now. But I built it up over a long time. And it would have been wonderful to start with that library. But I simply couldn't afford it.

MS. ARONOW: What did you do for a library in general when you were starting out? Use the Fogg?

MR. LIGHT: This is what I meant when I said, well, I'm missing one important element in getting started. I knew and felt very comfortable going into the print department at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. And if I remember correctly, under the curatorship of Eleanor Sayre I was in there often enough that I could even pull boxes off the shelves myself.

MS. ARONOW: Great.

MR. LIGHT: And simply look at things.

MS. ARONOW: She was a big expert in Goya, am I correct?

MR. LIGHT: Goya, that's right.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: But she also had a very good eye for Old Master prints, and I learned a great deal from her. And parenthetically, I hadn't realized this, but in retrospect, I was asked to speak at a memorial service some years after Eleanor died, and as sort of a background for this, I went through my old files to see what I had sold the Boston Museum, and I was absolutely stunned. They were by far my largest client.

But I had a gentleman's agreement with Eleanor that I could go in and do research there, and I was very happy to give her first crack at the things I had. And I sold her all sorts of things, running from 15th-century woodcuts to a set of trial proofs of a very important Picasso.

And they bought a great many, very important things from me over the years. I was very happy to sell to them, and I feel that I got the better part of the bargain in a way, because I learned so much having the Museum of Fine Arts print department as an available resource.

MS. ARONOW: And she knew an awful lot, right?

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes. And she would point things out to me, but it was up to me to get out comparable material, other impressions, and see the difference for myself. And the people at the Boston Museum were absolutely wonderful.

MS. ARONOW: It's a great resource to have when you're starting out as a dealer. What a privilege.

MR. LIGHT: If I had lived in Santa Barbara [CA], I wouldn't have known as much as I learned about prints, and I wouldn't have had the clients.

MS. ARONOW: I'm beginning to understand why your knowledge is so deep.

MR. LIGHT: Yes. It was absolutely fantastic.

[END TR 02 DISC 01.]

MS. ARONOW: This is disc two, with Robert M. Light, on April 25, 2008.

So we were just starting to talk about [art dealer] Sylvan Cole. Would you like to pick up there?

MR. LIGHT: Well, I'll get back to Sylvan. We talked about the Boston Museum and the tremendous advantage it was to me to have the resources of the print department of the Boston Museum to use as my research center and make comparisons. And as a result, over the years, I sold a great many things to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. That may lead one to wonder what about the Fogg Museum, because, after all, I did go to the Fogg. And I'll back up just a little bit to say, when I took a couple of courses of Stechow at Oberlin, by natural course of events, I learned a great deal about the northern Baroque, because that was Stechow's specialty.

And, of course, if you're interested in Old Master prints, you've got to pay attention to Rembrandt, obviously, but more than having to pay attention, I found that I was really quite captivated by the whole Dutch 17th-century school. And then I took a course with Jacob Rosenberg at the Fogg. And, of course, he was a great Rembrandt scholar. And in the later years at the Fogg, I was friendly with Seymour Slive, who was a great [Franz] Hals and Dutch specialist. And [Egbert] Haverkamp-Begemann, again another Dutch specialist. I felt very comfortable talking with these people and learning from them, and it's a field that I became very interested in.

MS. ARONOW: How did you meet Begemann?

MR. LIGHT: He was at the Fogg one year, on the faculty. After I'd been collecting or dealing for a few years, I began to realize that even in contemporary terms or relative contemporary terms, one of the underpriced areas was that of Dutch 17th-century landscapes outside of Rembrandt and [Hercules] Seghers, the great rare Dutch 17th-century printmaker. Anyhow, I started collecting Dutch 17th-century landscape etchings. And I had put together over a few years a group of 30 or 40, and I remember writing to Oberlin and asking them whether they might like to have them on long-term loan and an eventual possible gift. And they said they would. And I said, that's fine, because after all, my interest in this field really began under the teaching of Stechow. And I sent them.

Then I didn't collect for a while—I've forgotten why—until an album of such material turned up at a sale in London. And I thought, well, I might start again, collecting in this field. And I wrote to Oberlin asking them to return the prints to me because I had a rather hazy memory of what some of them were and I wanted to go over what I owned before beginning to add more to it. And the prints weren't returned. And I wrote again, and they weren't returned. I finally called and said, look, the auction is coming up in a couple of weeks; I really would like to see them.

At which point, they came back in the same wrappings in which I had sent them, which is a rather cautionary tale. And I said in effect to them, well, you blew it. And that's when I started forming a collection at the Fogg Museum, which finally resulted in, I think, over a thousand prints which I've given the Fogg, which, when added to the drawings in the Fogg collection and those given and/or promised by George Abrams, gives the Fogg Museum the finest collection in this country of Dutch 17th-century works of art on paper.

MS. ARONOW: That's quite an accomplishment.

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Yet the Fogg was not as much a research tool for me as the Boston Museum. It was harder to get at the prints physically, and I just somehow felt it was easier and more productive to work with the prints at the Boston Museum. But I became a continuing supporter of the Fogg. And as you may know, for some years now, I've been on the visiting committee at the Harvard Art Museums and am the only art dealer who ever has been on that committee.

MS. ARONOW: Well, that's a kudo.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: There's impressive people on that committee, too. I mean, at some point, if you want to say a few words about them, that might be very interesting, too. I've got a list here. Jerry Cohn, or Marjorie B. Cohn [Print Curator Emerita, Fogg Art Museum], says her first interest in prints is owed to you. She met you, and you had a portfolio under your arm and you were both sheltering yourselves from the rain together. Do you remember that?

MR. LIGHT: I was going up the steps of the art museum at her school. And she very kindly said, let me open the door for you, as we battled the driving rain.

MS. ARONOW: Holyoke, I think. Mount Holyoke [College, South Hadley, MA], is that right?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, I think so. And then she said, well, what have you got? You know, Jerry always had a consuming

curiosity, and I said, well, prints that I've brought to show the curators. And she said, could I see them? And I said, if it's all right with the director and curator, it's certainly all right with me. And she confessed later that it was the first time she ever realized that you could buy a Dürer *St. Jerome [in his Study, 1514, engraving]* to study, that they were being carried around, the landscape being offered for sale.

MS. ARONOW: Of course. Now, she's a great print expert.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: And she credits you with that, or at least firing her imagination at the outset.

MR. LIGHT: That's a very nice story, but the truth of the matter is that her aunt was a print collector.

MS. ARONOW: Ah, well, she told me that. I believed it. [They laugh.]

MR. LIGHT: But maybe she wasn't close to her aunt at that time. In any case, I stayed in Boston, and my modus operandi was to travel a great deal. And I would use Boston as a base, working from home, and would simply get in my car and travel around the country, visiting museums and collectors who I'd been introduced to. And it was a perfectly pleasant and successful way of doing business, in the course of which I met a great many collectors of one stripe or another, and got to know a number of my colleagues quite well, and found that there was no disadvantage to being located in Boston, rather than in New York.

And in fact, I preferred being in Boston rather than in New York, when a point came that I could financially afford to be in either place. I chose to stay in Boston. The pace of dealing was not quite so hectic. There weren't the martinis every afternoon or the dinner parties or openings every night or that sort of thing, which I really wasn't interested in particularly. And I traveled around, as I said, a great deal, and developed places where I would go, the museums that became good clients, and collectors who became good clients.

MS. ARONOW: You went even to the West Coast early on, I gather from reading some of your archive at the [J. Paul] Getty [Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA].

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Not being stupid, I realized very quickly that Los Angeles was the place to be in February, not Boston. So I would usually arrange a trip to southern climes in the West, not the East—I never had clients in the Southeast—and would spend some days swanning around in a convertible—[they laugh]—and visiting clients.

MS. ARONOW: And it was beautiful in those days, right?

MR. LIGHT: And it was beautiful, and I met a lot of friends and had a lot of interesting stories. For instance, I met Simon by going to call on him, Norton Simon. But other people here that I met—but you say, have I been coming out here a long time? One of my favorite anecdotes, which I repeat too often, is the fact when I first went to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art to visit the print curator, who had the incredibly appropriate name of Feinblatt—

MS. ARONOW: Ebria Feinblatt.

MR. LIGHT: —Ebria Feinblatt, I remember that I had to walk through the Mastodon Hall and into the Cabinet of Minerals—[Aronow laughs]—and then up a winding iron staircase into her area, her small little office, the art building being combined—as it was in many museums in the early days in this country—with the natural history museum, and selling prints to Ebria, including a lot of nice things.

But then, for example, meeting people like wonderful old Mrs. Bodman, Julia Bodman. Her husband had been a doctor in Chicago and of some note, I guess, and they lived in a nice house in San Marino. I've forgotten again how I met her. But when I first met her, she really had some very nice prints, I remember, a Rembrandt *Three Crosses* and a *Three Trees* and the major Dürers and whatnot. And I had a portfolio of prints with me. We had a very pleasant afternoon tea, and I said, I'd love to show you some things. She said, well, I'll be glad to look, but I really don't think I want to add to the collection the doctor and I have formed. But we spent a nice hour looking, and then she said, come back and see me next time. So either the next year or half-year when I was back, I went to see her, and she started to buy from me.

And I take some credit in the fact that I saved the Bodman collection, in a way. When I asked her what she intended to do with the collection, she said quite adamantly, she was going to give it to the Chicago Art Institute, or failing that, she and her husband had known a curator at the Metropolitan.

MS. ARONOW: Colta [Ives]? Or before—

MR. LIGHT: No, no, no.

MS. ARONOW: Hyatt?

MR. LIGHT: [A.] Hyatt Mayor. And perhaps she'd give them there. And I said, you know, Julia, if you do that, particularly at the Metropolitan, as nice as your prints are, they're not better than, in most cases, impressions that the Met already has, and they're simply going to go into the solander cases and hardly ever be seen, whereas there are practically no good Old Master prints in California. And she looked rather surprised. And I said, I really think you should consider giving them someplace in California. Well, where should I give them? Well, your property abuts the Huntington Library, why don't you talk to the people at the Huntington?

MS. ARONOW: This is in San Marino.

MR. LIGHT: In San Marino. And the upshot was, starting the next time I came to visit, I noticed that she always had Bill Parrish with her, who was a librarian at the Huntington. And in fact, that's where the collection went. But I think if it hadn't been for me, it wouldn't have ended up there.

MS. ARONOW: So that was a good ending. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: Very nice. Now, was that collection Old Master, you say?

MR. LIGHT: Old Masters, Old Masters only, nothing beyond the 18th century, I don't think. And at the time, of course, at the Huntington—Bob Wark was the curator there in those days and they had great English drawings, 18th- and 19th-century drawings and whatnot and lots of prints that came in various books and whatnot, but prints by Rembrandt and Dürer and things of that sort they had very little of. They were delighted to have them.

Then when I started coming to California, there were also some people left who were, again, that wave of European refugees. And I remember meeting them. Even though prints were not very expensive to my eyes when I was dealing, they were expensive to them, so I didn't sell much to them. But they were very entertaining to visit. And there was a wonderful dealer on La Cienega Boulevard called Jake Zeitlin.

MS. ARONOW: As in Zeitlin and—

MR. LIGHT: —Ver Brugge.

MS. ARONOW: And [Josephine] Ver Brugge.

MR. LIGHT: Who was his wife.

MS. ARONOW: Really?

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: I never knew that.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, Ver Brugge was simply her maiden name. And Jake encouraged print dealing or print buying. He would always have an employee up in the balcony dealing in prints.

MS. ARONOW: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: And so I became quite friendly with Jake. They almost never had anything that I wanted to buy, but I sold to them rather regularly and met people through them. There was another dealer who dealt in Old Master prints by the name of O.P. Reed, who was very knowledgeable and just didn't have the patience to deal with private people.

MS. ARONOW: That's not unusual. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: And he retired early on.

MS. ARONOW: Where was he?

MR. LIGHT: He had an office on La Cienega.

MS. ARONOW: Also La Cienega.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. And then, of course, I met Norton Simon. And I think I wrote him cold and introduced myself and said I would be coming out to Los Angeles and I'd like to call on him. Now, I suspect that he would have talked to the curator at the Los Angeles County Museum to see whether I was reputable.

MS. ARONOW: Ms. Feinblatt.

MR. LIGHT: Ms. Feinblatt. And whether it might be of any interest to him to have me come and call. He never said that in so many words.

MS. ARONOW: By that point, I suspect the museum had gone to its current location, or no?

MR. LIGHT: No.

MS. ARONOW: No, it was still downtown? The L.A. County Museum? Because it moved in '65, I believe—

MR. LIGHT: Yes, it had moved.

MS. ARONOW: —to its current location.

MR. LIGHT: That's right, that's right. I thought you meant the [Norton] Simon Museum [of Art, CA].

MS. ARONOW: No, no, no.

MR. LIGHT: He hadn't acquired the Pasadena Museum by that time.

MS. ARONOW: No, that was later.

MR. LIGHT: As a matter of fact, he was still living in Hancock Park when I went to call on him. And shall I go through the story of what happened when I met him?

MS. ARONOW: I'm sure it would be a great thing to record. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: Well, I went to call on him, and he was very pleasant and he invited me in and asked me if I'd like a cup of tea or whatnot. And he showed me around the house. First were some of the great pictures he had, although at that point, they were mostly French 19th-century. And his way of hanging—he had sliding walls at one end of the living room, and that was all very nice and interesting. And then we came and sat down to have tea or something at a low cocktail table. And I was fascinated because on the cocktail table, there was a Dürer engraving, a lithograph—do you know this story?

MS. ARONOW: Yes, but you should tell it.

MR. LIGHT: A lithograph, a soi-disant ["so-called"] [Jean-Auguste-Dominique] Ingres lithograph, a little [Honoré] Daumier bronze, one of the figurines or maybe one of the busts, related to the *Ventre Législatif* [*The Political Belly*, 1834, lithograph], and a [Edouard] Vuillard drawing, a portrait of his mother done around '92 or '93, I would have guessed. And he said if these were all the same price, which one would you buy and why? And I was rather taken aback, and I thought, boy, that's pretty smart. He's going to learn what I know pretty fast, or don't know. This was like a graduate degree—

MS. ARONOW: Like orals—

MR. LIGHT: Like orals, yes.

MS. ARONOW: —for your Ph.D.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. Well, in fact, it wasn't very difficult. As I remember, I said, well, how was this portrait—it was a portrait of a man—there were two portraits of men on a single sheet. And he said, well, it was described to me as members of the North family, by Ingres and on an uncut sheet and very rare.

And I said, well, yes, it's on an uncut sheet in the sense that it hasn't been cut vertically, so you have two portraits. But unfortunately, the full sheet should have four portraits since it's been cut horizontally, so I wouldn't consider that. And then I turned to the Dürer engraving, and I looked up very carefully and I said—it was one of the Madonna and child engravings of 1510 or something—and I said, well, I don't really think this is good enough quality. And he said, well, how do you mean? Explain what you mean. And I said, well, the contrasts aren't quite good enough, and besides, I can show you what I mean. I just happened to have a better impression [laughs]—in my portfolio, which was absolute sheer good luck. And I brought it out and I pointed out the differences. So I said, so I wouldn't buy this engraving.

And then I said I wouldn't buy the Daumier bronze because it's very nice and appears to be from the first edition, but it is something which was printed in a fairly large edition and you'll get another opportunity to buy it if you like it, whereas the Vuillard drawing is very beautiful and of the best period of Vuillard and an iconic subject for Vuillard, the portrait of his mother, and I would buy that. And subsequently, I learned that, in fact, he bought the

Vuillard drawing and gave it to his wife.

MS. ARONOW: Lucille?

MR. LIGHT: Lucille, the first wife. And so I thought that was rather nice. Well, he obviously was somewhat impressed, or at least he registered what I had said. And then I got to see more of him, and he became a very important and very good client. And I had formed a major Rembrandt collection for a collector in Boston, and the collector decided he had to sell it. And I offered it to Simon, and he bought it.

MS. ARONOW: Do you remember who was the collector?

MR. LIGHT: Cunningham.

MS. ARONOW: That was Charles Cunningham.

MR. LIGHT: Junior.

MS. ARONOW: Was he the director of the Wadsworth Atheneum [Museum of Art, Hartford, CT]?

MR. LIGHT: No. It was the son of the director, and the son of the director at the Art Institute of Chicago, and the son of the same man who, at one time, was the director of the Clark in Willamstown, where he retired. That was Charlie Cunningham. The person I'm talking about is Charlie Cunningham, Jr.

MS. ARONOW: Okay.

MR. LIGHT: And also, I was asked by Philip Hofer to sell his Goya collection. And Philip had the finest Goya collection in the United States, and outside of Sterling—of Maxwell—of Sterling, or do I have it the wrong way around? A Scottish collector. Philip had the finest collection of Goya, probably, in private hands. And one day he called me in and said he'd like me to sell it for him. I remember telling him, you can't do that. He was taken aback. And I said, you know, the Boston Museum has counted on this as a gift for a very long time. And he mumbled and grumbled and said, all right, offer them first opportunity. And I remember Eleanor Sayre bought all the drawings. There were 10 or 15 drawings and rare proofs and whatnot. And then all the rest, including some marvelous proof impressions, I sold to Norton Simon en bloc.

MS. ARONOW: Do you want to say anything about Philip Hofer, or maybe later?

MR. LIGHT: Well, we can get to him. Let me finish with Simon.

MS. ARONOW: Okay, I'm sorry, go on.

MR. LIGHT: And so I helped in a very substantial way, helped form for Simon his Rembrandt and Goya collections, which are extremely important. And then over the years, he began to use me to bid for him at auction, and occasionally when he decided he didn't want prints that he had bought, I would sell them for him. So I became, sort of, his major dealer in the print field.

Parenthetically, Simon, because of his nature, would never allow anybody to make assumptions about his relationship to them. And I was never really quite sure where I stood with Simon, to the extent that when I was asked to be one of the speakers at a memorial service—at the Simon Museum, at the time of the 100th anniversary of his birth—after the symposium, I asked the head curator, I said, there's something I'm dying to know, and I'm being very indiscreet, but would you feel able to tell me, what did Simon think of me as a dealer? And she was absolutely aghast and said, you don't know? And I said, no, actually I don't. And she said, he thought very highly of you; as a matter of fact, we have in our files in several places comments to the effect that if there were decisions to be made about the print collection and he couldn't be reached, they were to do whatever I told them to do.

MS. ARONOW: Well, that's a high compliment from a very difficult man.

MR. LIGHT: And I never knew that, never knew that.

MS. ARONOW: He wanted you to keep striving, I guess.

MR. LIGHT: Well, he used me to buy some major paintings for him, like the Rembrandt self-portrait, at auction. But to show how difficult he was—I liked Simon; he was difficult, but he was brilliant. And I found him absolutely fascinating. But when I sold him the Cunningham Rembrandts, for example, at the time it was the biggest single transaction I had ever negotiated. It was in seven figures, and that's a lot of money for prints, up until recently.

And I thought it was all done and put to bed, when he pulled one of his tricks; he called me at 3:00 a.m. in the

morning in Boston and said, now, I think we should renegotiate this and whatnot. And I had been woken up out of a sound sleep, and I blurted out, you son-of-a-bitch, and I hung up. And then I thought, oh, my God, what I have done? And I practically went into a catatonic state. And within a few minutes, the phone rang, Bob, Bob, this is Norton; Bob, you shouldn't let yourself get so excited; we're only negotiating. If you feel that the price is fair, why, that's what we'll do.

MS. ARONOW: So you defeated him.

MR. LIGHT: In other words, he pushed me as far as he thought he could, and then when he realized he pushed too far, he, in a way, respected me, I suppose.

MS. ARONOW: I think that's what that proves.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes. He climbed back down.

MS. ARONOW: I think that's a victory of some sort. [Laughs.]

MR. LIGHT: And I kind of think that that may have had some bearing on our relationship from then on.

MS. ARONOW: He was easier to deal with?

MR. LIGHT: Well, it wasn't easier, but I think he trusted me. He trusted my eye.

MS. ARONOW: It's pretty fabulous to have Norton Simon trust you, because he negotiated [and] put everybody against the wall. Spencer Samuels used to tell me that; he would say, oh, that Norton Simon, I'm not going to offer him anything else anymore, because he holds the paintings hostage and then he wants to negotiate.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: And that was classic, is that right?

MR. LIGHT: That was a common complaint against him.

MS. ARONOW: But the paintings you got for him are spectacular, no? The [Jacopo] Bassano, the [Giovanni Francesco] Romanelli cartoons, the Rembrandt self-portrait—

MR. LIGHT: And the Rembrandt self-portrait, yes.

MS. ARONOW: And there's a fourth.

MR. LIGHT: Is there? I can't remember.

MS. ARONOW: I have a list somewhere.

MR. LIGHT: No, I was simply following his instructions on this. I didn't sell the paintings to him.

MS. ARONOW: Oh, but you must have known what you were doing in the auction room.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, sure, sure.

MS. ARONOW: Was it difficult to win the Rembrandt for him?

MR. LIGHT: No, no.

MS. ARONOW: Was he willing to go higher than all others?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, he was very smart. He realized that, at least for the first couple of times, people wouldn't have any idea who I was bidding for.

MS. ARONOW: Because you were a print dealer, not a paintings dealer.

MR. LIGHT: Because I was a print dealer, yes. Yes. And as a matter of fact, I think I remember Julian Agnew turning around to me—I was a couple of rows in back of him—because Geoffrey Agnew had been bidding on it, if I remember correctly—this may be a faulty memory, but I think he turned around and asked, who bought it? And when I said, I did, he didn't believe me. [They laugh.]

MS. ARONOW: Now, they bid against you for the Romanelli cartoons, I believe.

MR. LIGHT: I don't remember.

MS. ARONOW: I saw somewhere that you—I guess [for] Norton Simon—you had bought four of them, three or four of them, and then he bought the rest. There was a total of six? And he got the rest from Agnew? Or maybe you did that for him?

MR. LIGHT: No, I didn't.

MS. ARONOW: Those things are pretty spectacular; they're tapestry cartoons.

MR. LIGHT: And that Bassano, that great Bassano, I bought for him.

MS. ARONOW: That was in London, or—

MR. LIGHT: Yes, yes.

MS. ARONOW: So what about the L.A. County—there were some kind of gyrations there, right, when he was somehow involved in building the collections there, and then he backed out, or some story like that. Do you know about that?

MR. LIGHT: I don't know the stories about that. All I know is that the house I live in now I bought from the widow of a man who sat on the board with Norton—[laughs]—at the County Museum.

MS. ARONOW: Ah.

MR. LIGHT: But there are other people who were there as well, like [Armand] Hammer and other people. And it was a very, very difficult board of very rich people who threw their weight around. And nothing changes. I mean, Eli Broad is the same sort of person. And that's why Rick Brown left L.A. County Museum to go to the Kimbell [Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX]. He just—

MS. ARONOW: —couldn't take it?

MR. LIGHT: —couldn't put up with it anymore. Now, as to why and how, at the time, he came to Simon saying, I'm taking all my things back and I'm going to open my own museum. I don't know. I don't know.

MS. ARONOW: Did you have any dealings whatsoever with Armand Hammer?

MR. LIGHT: No, none.

MS. ARONOW: I would have guessed none, but—

MR. LIGHT: None.

MS. ARONOW: I thought it was worth asking.

MR. LIGHT: Indirectly, I had dealings with the man from whom Hammer bought the Daumier print collection.

MS. ARONOW: Who was George Longstreet?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. But no, I had no dealings with Hammer at all.

MS. ARONOW: He was kind of a wild card, too, right?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. But two of the people—another couple—that I knew in Los Angeles and loved visiting were Sid and Francie [Frances] Brody, who had a beautiful house in Holmby Hills. Francie Brody was the sister of the wife of Leigh Block, in Chicago, and both of them, I think, were the daughters of Mary Lasker, the woman in New York who used to plant the flowers down Park Avenue. Her name is well known. Her husband [Albert Lasker] almost invented advertising as a modern concept.

But Mrs. Block and Mrs. Brody were daughters.

MS. ARONOW: And that Block, as in Block Art Gallery at Northwestern University [Evanston/Chicago, IL].

MR. LIGHT: Yes, for years, he was on the board at the Art Institute [of Chicago] and he gave a number of Braque paintings to the Art Institute, and the great [Jean-Honore] Fragonard portrait came from them to the Art Institute. They were very generous to the Art Institute. They were major collectors. And they ended up living in Santa Barbara. But the Brodys were—I shouldn't say were—Francie Brody is still alive. They lived in an absolutely seductive, wonderful, huge house, very modern in feeling, surrounded by absolutely gorgeous 19th-

century French pictures. And she liked to see prints, and I would occasionally sell her prints.

And one day, I went to see them, and she said, can you sell [Henri] Matisse? And I said, sure, it's a little modern for my general run of the mill, but yes. And she said, well, we have sort of a friend who was one of the grandchildren of Matisse, and, you know, all of the grandchildren were given complete sets of the prints. And he—I've forgotten the name—has run through all of his money and he was really quite desperate for money, so we agreed to buy his set of Matisse prints, and we really don't have any use for them—could you sell them? And so over a period of a couple of years, I sold all of the Matisses for them.

But they were charming people. And she was very active in supporting the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles], the—

MS. ARONOW: Grunwald [Center for the Graphic Arts, Armand Hammer Museum].

MR. LIGHT: Well, indirectly the Grunwald, but mostly the art museum there and the sculpture on the grounds there.

MS. ARONOW: Oh, that's interesting.

MR. LIGHT: And, for instance, the Matisse backs, those wonderful backs—

MS. ARONOW: Yes, they're bronze, I think.

MR. LIGHT: —were gifts of theirs, I think, to UCLA, or gifts of theirs and one or two other couples. In their house—and she still lives there—I think one of only two commissioned pieces by Matisse done for a specific location in residences in the U.S.—the one being the paintings that he did for Nelson Rockefeller around the fireplace, and this being a ceramic mural of falling leaves that would have been done about the same time as the chapel at Vence [France]. You'll find it in all the Matisse books. And that's in their house and still is. They've left it to, I think, UCLA or the County Museum when she finally dies, but it's going to be a monumental job of getting it out of the house. It's right in the center of the house, and it's sort of a little courtyard.

MS. ARONOW: Where is the house again? Holmby Hills.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: She still lives there, you say.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: How about any other great Pasadena collectors, or we could go to San Francisco. Did you have clients there? The Achenbach [Foundation for Graphic Arts], you must have had.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, sure, the museum. I know I have a tale out of school about Moore Achenbach. [Laughs.] I went to call on Mr. Achenbach before his prints were at the museum, and it was a cold call. I just called and introduced myself, and he said, come over. And I had my usual portfolio, and I opened it and started to show him things, and after about three prints that I had shown him, he said, well, something to the effect of, now, Mr. Light, I think you probably don't understand my modus vivendi for collecting. You just put your prints away; they're too expensive for me. Let me show you what I do.

And he had a row house—I've forgotten the address—and we went up to the top floor and he said, now, if I'm shown, offered, two impressions of a Dürer woodcut and one is very beautiful and in wonderful condition and at a certain price, and a second one, which is a pretty good impression in not very good condition, I always buy the second, because I know how to repair them.

MS. ARONOW: Great.

MR. LIGHT: And believe it or not, there were clotheslines strung—[they laugh]—back and forth, and he was washing the prints and hanging them up on the clothesline.

MS. ARONOW: Very nice, what you're not supposed to do by any standard.

MR. LIGHT: And this explains the very—let's be fair and say, the spotty nature of the famous Achenbach collection at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. The Achenbach stuff is, for the most part, fairly dreadful.

MS. ARONOW: So-so or worse.

MR. LIGHT: And they collected around it and got things from much more knowledgeable collectors and made acquisitions and whatnot.

MS. ARONOW: They must have been a client for you over the years.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes, sure. But the core of the Achenbach collection was undistinguished. I got to know some of the people in San Francisco who would occasionally buy prints instead of paintings, such as the Haas family—who are related to the Steins in Baltimore, I think. And then there were several people down on the peninsula—I can't remember their names—who were very, very nice, well-educated people who bought some quite beautiful Old Master prints that they gave to the museum. Mrs. Lilienthal, for example.

MS. ARONOW: Regarding other collectors, is it correct that you had something to do with Lessing Rosenwald?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. I sold prints to Lessing. But he was pretty far along in years when I first began dealing. The first time I went to call on Lessing, it was in Jenkintown [PA], where he had lived and had his gallery, his museum. And Betty Mongan was his curator. Did you know that Agnes Mongan's sister was Lessing's curator?

MS. ARONOW: No. Makes perfect sense.

MR. LIGHT: And then she became curator of prints at the National Gallery [of Art, Washington D.C.].

MS. ARONOW: Betty, right?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, Elizabeth [Mongan].

MS. ARONOW: I think I did see the name and wondered. Thank you.

MR. LIGHT: And the first time I went to call on Lessing, I showed him some things, and he picked out two or three and he said, what are the prices? And I told him, and he said, oh, God, I can't believe this. And I was very defensive, and I sort of stumbled around. And then he came out with the most wonderful expression, he said, you know, I suppose it's my fault; I'm the prisoner of my memory, which I thought was brilliant. In other words, he remembered what he had paid for prints 30 years before.

MS. ARONOW: Probably \$5.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MR. LIGHT: And then we had a to-and-fro, and then he said, well, maybe I'll buy this and that, now, what discount can you give me? And I thought to myself, oh, boy. And I said, I'm afraid I don't give discounts. And he said, not even to museums? Everything's going to the National Gallery. And I said, no. And he said, well, then I'm afraid I'm not going to buy anything. So I thought, oh, God. So I went home, and it really gnawed at me. And so I sat down and wrote him a letter, and I explained that I thought a dealer—and, of course, I was a very young, beginning dealer—had a responsibility to buy as reasonably as he could, to buy fine quality as reasonably as he could, and then to price things for his clients as reasonably as he could, again, but having done that, there's no room for discounts.

MS. ARONOW: Fair enough.

MR. LIGHT: And I went on to say—because I remember hearing the story of Knoedler's, who would offer discounts to people, but if they weren't smart enough to ask for discounts, they didn't get them, which I always thought was dreadfully unfair, because the person who didn't ask for the discount was overpaying. And I mentioned this in my letter. And I thought, well, at least I've gotten it off my chest. And back came a letter from Lessing saying, thank you very much, Mr. Light, for your letter and explaining your philosophy. I now understand how you work and please send the two prints down to me; I'll buy them.

MS. ARONOW: You convinced him. Marvelous. [They laugh.]

MR. LIGHT: I've always had good relations with clients. I can't remember ever getting into a fight with a client or a serious misunderstanding. I always considered it was incumbent upon me to make sure that I had done the proper research on prints and then offer them accurately and free of any potential misunderstanding.

I had a wonderful experience once with Paul Mellon. I don't think he would have recognized me if he bumped into me on the street, though I had sold him through his curators in Upperville [VA] some early English lithographs, which were quite rare, and I think once a set of [Giovanni Antonio Canal] Canalettos, but I can't even remember. I was traveling in Switzerland and I went to one of the leading dealers in paintings in Switzerland and made an appointment. And I thought I was pushing a bit to go and see them, because they didn't deal in prints or drawings. I just wanted to see what they had. And I explained who I was, and I said I had

one or two clients to whom I offered a painting from time to time, and if they were willing to do so, I'd be perfectly happy to see anything they might like to show me.

In the meantime, over the desk of the senior member of the firm was that incredible van Gogh portrait of the attractive boy in the yellow coat with the blue hat. [Laughs.] Anyhow, I thought, that's worth gaining admittance just to sit and look at that. And so they said, well, as a matter of fact, we have a self-portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds, would you like to see that? And I said yes. And so they brought it out; it looked very handsome. And they said, well, do you have any clients for it? And I sort of, always being naïve and innocent, blurted out, well, you don't need me to sell that; it's perfectly obvious you offer it to Paul Mellon. And I knew that they knew who Mellon was, and I was relatively sure that they had sold him things.

And then they said something that I should have ticked to immediately: well, we don't know him that well; if you know him, why don't you offer him the picture? I should have smelled a rat, but I was fairly innocent in those days, and it came from a very distinguished family; it came from the Gerstenberg family in Berlin. And so I said, yes, fine, do you have a photograph, a good photograph?

And I sent a photograph to a friend in London who was an agent of Paul Mellon's. And I said, look, I've just been shown this in Zurich [Switzerland]; is this something that PM might be interested in? And this is the price and this is the picture and whatnot, and if you like, the picture can be sent to London for the experts to look at. I was absolutely startled when, within a couple of weeks, a check arrives for the picture. And I thought, boy, that's the easiest money I've ever made. But it wasn't a lot of money, you know. I'm not even sure it was \$100,000; maybe it was \$60,000 or \$70,000 or something like that.

MS. ARONOW: In the '70s, this is?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, probably, or early '80s. And so then the picture was sent to London and about a month later, I get this long letter from my friend, who was an advisor to Mellon, saying, Bob, I'm terribly sorry; this turns out to be a fake. And I said, okay, send it back. And I wrote to the people in Zurich—

MS. ARONOW: Oh, boy.

MR. LIGHT: —and they said, sorry, that's your problem; it's not ours. And I said, I beg your pardon. No, you took the picture; you sold it; that's your problem. And then I realized, of course, I'd been had. They knew perfectly well that it wasn't right.

MS. ARONOW: What did you do?

MR. LIGHT: Well, this is the story, which I think is quite fascinating, and I think of it when I think of this story. I was telling you about—I've forgotten now who we were talking about who acted so very nicely. And so I wrote—

MS. ARONOW: Rosenwald, Lessing Rosenwald.

MR. LIGHT: Lessing Rosenwald. And so I wrote back and I said, please tell Mr. Mellon that I'm terribly sorry that this has happened, and I will make good the cost of the picture, but he should know that I'm going to have to do it because the dealer, so-and-so, from whom I got the picture, refuses to stand in back of it, saying it's my responsibility. Now, this is going to take me a couple of years to pay off, but I will do it; it's imperative that I protect my reputation.

And then I went on to say, however, I do want to point out a couple of things for Mr. Mellon's consideration: A, I'm not a dealer in 18th-century English paintings; I'm a dealer in Old Master prints and drawings; two, the picture was available to be seen before a decision was made, and I offered to send the picture to London for his experts to look at, and I think those were the points in my letter.

Whereupon I get a letter back from Mr. Mellon saying, Mr. Light, I'm equally sorry that this has happened, but I think your points are well taken and don't worry about paying me back.

MS. ARONOW: Extraordinary.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, well, there are wonderful people in this world.

MS. ARONOW: And the people in Switzerland, you could do nothing.

MR. LIGHT: I never went to call on them again. And it's a very reputable firm. They just thought they had a sucker. I'm sure they knew. The Gerstenberg Collection was not known for its English pictures. I should have been suspicious at that provenance, but I was naïve and—

MS. ARONOW: You were playing for bigger stakes with these paintings.

MR. LIGHT: And I never went to call on them again. This shouldn't turn into a story about nefarious dealers, but when I say I'll never go to call on them again, I really am very pleased to tell you this story, because I'm still ticked off at these people.

I stopped in Marlborough Galleries once in London and said that I had a client I had sold a couple of pictures to who was most anxious to find an early [Oskar] Kokoschka portrait, and if they ever got something like that, I'd be delighted to know about it, if it was available.

And Mr. [Frank] Lloyd came down to see me and he said, well, in fact, we do have such a picture; if you'd like to see it, do come upstairs. So I went up into the viewing room, and he brought out a quite nice picture of a man from the teens, the same period as the portrait of Herwald Walden, which was, you know, the great iconic image of Kokoschka at that time. And I said, well, gosh, that might fill the bill; is it available for me to show a photograph to my client? Oh, yes. And then I remember I had the wit to ask, is there anything I should know about the picture which looking at it doesn't immediately tell me? Oh, no, what you see is what you get, or something equally vapid.

And I went home and, of course, the first thing I did is go over to the Fogg Museum and get out the catalogue on Kokoschka paintings. And I went through it. I didn't see the picture. And I thought, that's funny. So I went through it more carefully. Then I saw the man, but he was in the middle of a triptych of three brothers. So I wrote back to Mr. Lloyd and I said, well, I was fascinated to look and find this is what it is, and I'm somewhat surprised when I asked you if there's anything I should know about the picture which looking at it doesn't tell me, you didn't see fit to tell me it was the middle third cutout of a triptych. He said, well, I thought you knew that. And so I—

MS. ARONOW: He's pretty infamous for other reasons.

MR. LIGHT: Sure. And I said, well, I'll show the photograph to my client, but, of course, I'm going to tell him what it is. And then he responded, oh, I assumed you knew it; it's a famous picture.

MS. ARONOW: Now, he's the one who was so involved with the problems with Rothko's estate.

MR. LIGHT: Sure, sure.

MS. ARONOW: Just for the record.

MR. LIGHT: And so I said, well, it may not make any difference to you, but I shall never darken your doorstep again. And then the idiot had the—I think cruelty is the right word—to send his son, Gilbert, who was on a trip to Boston, to come calling on me. And there was a knock on the door, and I opened it and he said, Mr. Light, I'm Gilbert Lloyd. And I must have stood there with my mouth hanging open. He said, my father said when I came to Boston I should call on you because you're one of our good contacts in Boston.

MS. ARONOW: Interesting.

MR. LIGHT: I said, you've got to be joking. And I said, well, come in, I've got a tale to tell you. And I told him the whole story. It went right off his back, like his father. He said, now, who are your clients in Boston? I said, why should I tell you?

MS. ARONOW: That's bizarre.

MR. LIGHT: And this is the way that firm was run.

MS. ARONOW: In a rather strange way.

MR. LIGHT: But to do this to your own son.

MS. ARONOW: Was he a kid or was he—

MR. LIGHT: Well, he was in his late 20s, I guess, or something like that. Appalling. Absolutely appalling. But I found that when you act properly and honestly, that it's a very pleasant life.

MS. ARONOW: And many dealers, upstanding citizens, think it should remain an honest business where you—

MR. LIGHT: Absolutely, absolutely.

MS. ARONOW: —take care of your clients.

MR. LIGHT: I'm not in the minority, God knows.

MS. ARONOW: No, but you know, the world is changing before our eyes, as we speak.

So maybe we should do another disc, should we? [They laugh.]

MR. LIGHT: Okay.

[END TR 01 DISC 02.]

MS. ARONOW: Okay, this is the third CD [disc], with Robert M. Light, on April 25, 2008.

Would you like to talk about your relationship with Vincent Price?

MR. LIGHT: All right. I met Vincent a number of years ago in Los Angeles. Again, I forget what the conduit was that brought me to Vincent Price. I may have just called out of the blue, as I did for Eddie Robinson, Edward G. Robinson, who had a very interesting collection of paintings but never was a client of mine.

MS. ARONOW: Vincent Price was an art collector by then, right?

MR. LIGHT: And Price was an art collector, and as a lot of people don't realize, Price, who was born in St. Louis, actually was studying art history in London when he first acted. He was asked if he would act in some play. And he was at that time a student at the Courtauld Institute in London. And when I met him, he lived in Beverly Hills [CA], in what I considered an actor's house, in other words, a certain amount of opulence. But what was fascinating were the works of art that surrounded him, everything from an Eskimo totem pole, which to my untutored eye looked pretty good, to a Goya miniature on ivory, and all sorts of things in between, primitive art and Italian Renaissance drawings. And I believe he had a [Amedeo] Modigliani painting at that time. But things that he had picked up on his travels very much—rather than being a serious collector going to all the galleries and to the auctions, I had the feeling that he more or less picked things up on the side, as it were, but of very good quality and showing an extremely interesting eye.

And we became friendly to the point, for example, when some years later I was in London and had an apartment because I was staying for some weeks, and decided to have a dinner party. I had heard that Vincent was in London making one of his last fright movies, in which he pointed out that it took longer to make him up than it did the romantic lead. I asked him if he'd like to come to dinner, and he very graciously said he would. This was a small dinner party, seven or eight people, mostly art trade and collectors in London, and they all thought Vincent was absolutely wonderful. He really was very entertaining.

At the end of the evening, having had a wonderful time, he invited all of us to join him for dinner several days later, and he'd coordinate with me as to where, because he was staying at the hotel he normally stayed at. And he called me and gave me the address of the hotel in Chelsea [London, England]—sorry, the restaurant in Chelsea—which I went to, a small restaurant. I didn't see him; I asked for Mr. Price. Oh, yes, they said, he's downstairs. So I went downstairs in obviously what was an old wine cellar, which was a barrel-like room draped in red velvet, and he sat at the head of the table waiting for guests, being every bit like one of the scenes in one of his horror movies, enjoying it enormously. [They laugh.] So we had a great, fun time.

I would occasionally sell him something, though not often, because he had so many sources around the world. He could usually find things cheaper someplace else. But our friendship led to his approaching me one time to see if I would like to secure things for him in turn for Sears Roebuck, when Sears Roebuck decided they'd go into the art world and use Vincent as an advisor and use Vincent's name as a selling point, which we both thought was hilarious. And over a few years I bought a lot of smaller, Old Master prints. And at one point a collection of 100 or 150 [Pierre] Bonnard drawings, which appeared in due course in various Sears Roebuck stores, in the lamp departments usually. As far as I know it wasn't a very successful venture, though Vincent and I had a lot of fun doing it.

MS. ARONOW: Were there Rembrandts as well?

MR. LIGHT: There were some Rembrandts, yes, less expensive ones, but of reasonably good quality.

MS. ARONOW: And is it correct that you exhibited them as a group, the Rembrandt exhibition of the Vincent Price collection?

MR. LIGHT: Well, they were exhibited in groups in stores, but they weren't all pulled together at one time and exhibited in a museum or something of that sort.

MS. ARONOW: How did it work, though, in the stores? Did it travel from one Sears store to another, do you remember?

MR. LIGHT: I think it probably did, though I wasn't involved at that point. And only by chance one time, when I

saw it in a newspaper that the Sears Roebuck store not in Central Square but in Kendall Square I think, outside of Cambridge [MA], was showing Sears's Vincent Price collection, that I drove over to look at it. I was horrified to see that it was hung in the lamp collection department. There didn't seem to be people buying them.

MS. ARONOW: And when they didn't sell, they were marked down, as if they were ordinary merchandise?

MR. LIGHT: Absolutely. And then finally dumped at auctions.

MS. ARONOW: I see. So it wasn't a roaring success.

MR. LIGHT: I don't believe it was, no.

MS. ARONOW: And that was a venture by Sears to do a different kind of merchandising?

MR. LIGHT: That's right. They were trying to get on the bandwagon of an active art market, and they committed the basic mistake of trying to market things without any expertise in the field, which was obviously impossible.

MS. ARONOW: Not easily done. So I believe that was in the late '60s, if I'm correct.

MR. LIGHT: That's right, I believe.

MS. ARONOW: Sixty-six, I saw a reference to that in your archive.

MR. LIGHT: That could be. That could be about right, late '60s. Vincent gradually sold all of his things and gave some to his wife when he divorced her. Mary, who was very nice, very attractive, ended up living in Boston. And then in the latter years—but this is Hollywood gossip—he married Corel Brown, the English actress, who was a wonderful actress. But he ended up his life living in a rather modest house, with very few works of art around him, sadly.

MS. ARONOW: Well, we can remember him by watching *Laura*, the great movie from 1944. Not a horror movie.

MR. LIGHT: That's right.

MS. ARONOW: He was just wonderful.

MR. LIGHT: Through Vincent—talking about Los Angeles, just popped in my mind—through Vincent I met members of the Maitland family, and Mrs. Maitland, who was one of the first serious collectors in Los Angeles, I suppose somewhat pre-dating the famous Hollywood collectors like Edward G. Robinson. And if you go back and look in early catalogues of exhibitions at UCLA, you'll find things borrowed from Mrs. Ruth Maitland.

The Maitland family were fascinating. I didn't know that generation, but I knew the next generation. And they had a family house in the Colorado mountains, which was referred to as a log cabin, but it was a log cabin of the style of the upper New York lake—

MS. ARONOW: Adirondack style.

MR. LIGHT: The Adirondack log cabin. The main room was two stories high. The ceiling was about 35 feet high.

MS. ARONOW: Antler chandeliers, that sort of thing.

MR. LIGHT: That sort of thing. And the first time I remember walking in, they had been buying things, interestingly enough—and here's an unexpected tie-in—from Ted Schemp, who I mentioned as the first dealer I was ever aware of. They had some wonderful early [Maria Elena] Vieira da Silvas. They had some large [Pierre] Soulages, and they had some Old Master prints. They were gradually selling them because Walter, the son, who had inherited the summer house and was an architect but didn't practice architecture for a long time, was trying to make a business out of beef cattle, and it was really not doing terribly well.

MS. ARONOW: This was Walter Maitland? Sounds familiar.

MR. LIGHT: And so he had to begin selling some of his works of art. I remember one day I bought a wonderful little [Joan] Miró gouache of about 1935, and a Dürer engraving of St. Jerome, and a 1950 Bentley, a Hooper coach-built body, of which there were only six in existence.

MS. ARONOW: That's wonderful. Did it work?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. I still drive it.

MS. ARONOW: Really?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. The Maitlands were great fun. But Walter and his wife have died now, and I've lost touch with the next generation.

MS. ARONOW: You can think of them in the car.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, absolutely.

MS. ARONOW: Anyone else noteworthy in Vincent Price's collecting circle that comes to mind?

MR. LIGHT: No, I don't think so.

MS. ARONOW: I wondered if you wanted to comment on the Duke of Devonshire's print sale in 1985, that is, the Chatsworth sale, the renowned auction of Old Master prints.

MR. LIGHT: That's the last really important Old Master print sale or auction to have taken place. What was the year?

MS. ARONOW: Nineteen eighty-five, I believe.

MR. LIGHT: Eighty-five. I don't believe there's been a single auction since that date which had so many important prints, important and rare prints. They had great early Italian prints, some wonderful [Andrea] Mantegnas, at least one of which is at the Metropolitan Museum now. They had some very good early German prints. It's problematic whether the sale should ever have taken place. I suppose people might say that, well, it doesn't really make much difference to the Chatsworths because they've still got so many prints. But it really wasn't necessary to have that sale.

MS. ARONOW: There were Old Master drawing sales. There were three of them, is that correct, by the Duke of Devonshire?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Devonshire.

MS. ARONOW: Around the same time, maybe?

MR. LIGHT: Roughly. There were rumors that the then-current duke was running a bit short of the ready and needed the money, either for repairs of the house or whatever.

MS. ARONOW: Gambling debts is what I heard, whether that's accurate.

MR. LIGHT: That's what I've heard, too, but I didn't want to say it. I don't know as a fact whether that's true or not. But it's one of the great private collections in England, and it's a great pity that it would start to be dismantled in this fashion. Parenthetically, a funny anecdote, I was invited to lunch one day in Boston by a then-acting curator of prints at the Boston Museum, Peter Wick, who was an old friend, he and Kathleen. Did you know them?

MS. ARONOW: I've heard [of] Peter Wick. I don't know him well.

MR. LIGHT: And I got there late. It was in that wonderful dining room on the second floor of the Ritz [-Carlton Hotel], overlooking the Boston Garden. And I was seated next to a very nice lady, and I was introduced as a dealer in prints and drawings, and she then made what I regarded to be a terribly fatuous remark. Drawings, she said. My brother has the finest collection of drawings in the world. And then turned to speak to a person on her right. And I thought to myself, what a very stupid thing to say. And it wasn't until after the lunch on the way home that I realized she was the sister of the Duke of Devonshire. [They laugh.] And she was probably quite right.

MS. ARONOW: That's a good story. I think a lot of people were upset that those sales took place. When I was working in the Getty Research Institute, we had received photographic documentation of the drawings. I don't know if we had the prints.

MR. LIGHT: No, probably not.

MS. ARONOW: I doubt it.

MR. LIGHT: Talking about the Getty and prints, the Getty, as you know, doesn't collect prints, except under the guise of—guise is the wrong word—in the department of the research institute, which does collect prints in a way that I have yet to fathom.

MS. ARONOW: Well, I understand why you can't explain it easily. It's not obvious.

MR. LIGHT: It has to do with relationships to other works of art.

MS. ARONOW: Some kind of documentary value. But it's not clear.

MR. LIGHT: And it's resulted in a strange combination of things. But be that as it may, one of the more interesting things that's happened to me since I moved to California involved Otto Whitman, the retired director of the Toledo Museum of Art [OH], and at that time considered sort of the dean of American art museum directors.

MS. ARONOW: I knew him.

MR. LIGHT: Did you?

MS. ARONOW: Wonderful.

MR. LIGHT: And he lived for a while in Santa Barbara in his last years, and he was employed by the Getty for some years as a sort of an outside consultant.

MS. ARONOW: He was also a trustee.

MR. LIGHT: And he was a trustee. And one day he called me and he said, Bob, would you be interested in drawing up a position paper on the wisdom of the Getty collecting prints?

MS. ARONOW: How interesting.

MR. LIGHT: And he said, be well aware that even if you should suggest that they should collect prints, and even if they do collect prints, this does not in any way give you any sort of an inside track on being the dealer of choice for their formation of a collection. I said, no, I understand that. You can't promise that, and I'm not sure I would want that sort of an obligation. But I'd love to do it because it's a fascinating thing.

I think Otto expected a couple of pages, and I got into it and I produced a white paper of about 30—I'm sure it's not that long, but in retrospect it seems like about 30 single, typed pages and sent it down to him, covering everything from what might be available in private hands that could still be bought, and the fact that it's probably too late, no matter how much money you have, to buy 15th-century engravings in any number because it was just too rare. And what it might cost to form a well-rounded collection from the 16th century on, and what you would need in terms of library and conservation space and exhibition space, and staffing, and everything else. I loved doing it. I thought it was a fascinating challenge.

In fact, their response was, thank you very much, we don't think we'll do it.

MS. ARONOW: But did that go to the board, do you know?

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: My recollection, for what it's worth, because I was working there when he was around—

MR. LIGHT: Oh, really.

MS. ARONOW: —was that he was the lone person on the board really knowledgeable about the art world and especially the museum world. And it was a mixed group at that point.

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes.

MS. ARONOW: So they may not have really, you know, grasped the significance of your proposal.

MR. LIGHT: Basically, as I understand it in retrospect, there were two problems. Not the money that's involved—

MS. ARONOW: That was no problem in those days.

MR. LIGHT: Yes. But it was a question of space.

MS. ARONOW: We're speaking of the mid-'80s, I believe, about 1985, '86, perhaps.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, probably. A question of space. And the fact that there just wasn't enough time left in the foreseeable future to buy prints one by one. In other words, perhaps if I or somebody else had come to them with a specific proposal that enabled them to move forward in the print world in the same way in which they did in the photography world, they might have been interested.

MS. ARONOW: In one fell swoop they bought—you're referring in the big photographic collection.

MR. LIGHT: And in one fell swoop they bought three or four major collections and a curator.

MS. ARONOW: The Wagstaff stuff.

MR. LIGHT: Several collections. I don't know which ones. And complete with a curator they seduced away from the Met, the photography curator at the Met. And if they had been able to do the same thing, they might have gone into prints. In other words, they could have a collection in one burst of activity.

MS. ARONOW: I suspect you're right, because that was the period when Getty's will was probated and the money doubled in two years, I think. By 1986 there was a colossal amount available. They had the most extravagant Christmas parties I've ever been to. [They laugh.]

MR. LIGHT: So that was the upshot of that.

MS. ARONOW: Those were the glorious '80s. I'm wondering if that was a very hot period for the art market, right? It heated up in Japan.

MR. LIGHT: It did, yes.

MS. ARONOW: If I recall. And I think you went to Japan? You had clients there, perhaps?

MR. LIGHT: When I had first been in the army and went to Japan, I loved it. And then, as time went by, I got rather fearful about going back because I thought it couldn't possibly live up to my memories of what it had been like when I was there. And in going to auctions in Switzerland, as I did every year, as the market began to boom in Japan, of course, Japanese dealers start showing up at auctions in New York and London, and the Kornfeld auctions in Bern, Switzerland. You'd sit at table with various people, and I met two or three of the Japanese dealers and we got along quite well. One asked if I'd be interested in consigning an exhibition to them for the coming season or something. I've forgotten what they suggested, Rembrandt or Dürer or whatever I could get enough together of.

I decided to do it, but I decided to do it in slightly different way than what had been going on internationally. There had been a common consensus that whatever things were worth in the United States or in Europe, you could certainly ask a great deal more in Japan, and make it. I thought that was not planning for the long term. So I made an undertaking with this dealer that I would produce things of first quality and describe them and price them exactly as if I were selling them in the United States, and the prices would be exactly the same.

Well, that went over extremely well, and he asked me for another show the next year or so. And then I finally smartened up and I said, no, I won't consign you any more shows, but let's form a partnership and have a business in Tokyo.

MS. ARONOW: Who was this dealer?

MR. LIGHT: His name was Aoki. Unfortunately, he's now dead. He had something called a Nantenshi Gallery in the Ginza. And we started working together and business was very good. I would go over three or four times a year and spend a week or 10 days at a time. And we sold to 10, 12 Japanese museums, and he was able to generate some private collectors, and it was a good business.

And then the slump came in the Japanese economy. And I hung on a little too long. I should have gotten out a bit more quickly, but it became apparent after a couple of years that it was going to take a long time to come back, and the business wasn't good at all. So I finally closed the gallery.

MS. ARONOW: So you had an open gallery, public gallery?

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: With him. Did he have a gallery before you became a partner?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. And as a matter of fact, it was another floor of this same building, so he could man it with his staff.

MS. ARONOW: So how long did that last, that heyday?

MR. LIGHT: It lasted for about five years, I think.

MS. ARONOW: Probably in the mid-'80s.

MR. LIGHT: Yes.

MS. ARONOW: So did you find Japan how you had remembered it from the Korean War period, or was it changed?

MR. LIGHT: No. It had changed a great deal, but I still like Japan a lot. I like it enormously.

MS. ARONOW: Have you gone back since then?

MR. LIGHT: I haven't. But I enjoyed very much going over when I did have the business there.

MS. ARONOW: I wondered if you could discuss the art business called Artemis that is based in London, if you want to say anything about its importance, its founding, how it went, if you had connections.

MR. LIGHT: Artemis was born out of discussions between David Carritt and Léon Lambert. Léon Lambert was a very distinguished Belgian. There was a Lambert bank in Brussels, for example, but there were also very distinguished connections with France. One of the great, great houses on the Ile Saint-Louis was Hotel Lambert, for example.

People make the mistake of thinking that Léon and David decided to form an investment company that invested in works of art as sheer investment with a quick turnover. That's not true, and it never was true. They decided to form a bona fide art dealing firm, which they did, and it was based in London; it was based in David's apartment, opposite the Connaught Hotel for a while, but reasonably quickly they found quarters on Duke Street, a building on Duke Street, which I think they made over.

In any case, there was a board of directors, which included David and Léon Lambert and, quite quickly, if not at the beginning, Gene Thaw and, I think, Walter Bareiss and a few Belgian investors, one of which, for example, was the nephew of the woman who still lives in that great art nouveau house in Brussels, the Palais Stoclet.

Gene asked me if I would go on the board of directors, which I did. Oh, yes, and there was a gallery as well as offices, but mostly offices, on Duke Street, manned by several distinguished dealers, who had worked for other dealers. Such as Adrian Eeles, who took care of prints and drawings.

MS. ARONOW: He had been at Sotheby's previously? Or was he still?

MR. LIGHT: He had been at Sotheby's, but hadn't he been at Colnaghi also?

MS. ARONOW: I think so.

MR. LIGHT: And Tim Bathurst, who had started dealing, working for Arthur Tooth. And Tim sat on the board of directors and later Adrian did as well. And Artemis had substantial capital, and they also would spend some of that capital in backing dealers in other fields. There was a dealer of antiquities in Munich whom they backed, and there were other dealers in sort of one-time deals they put up money for.

MS. ARONOW: So they were loaning money?

MR. LIGHT: Taking a position as a part-owner in various works of art. And then it became less profitable, and the directors were less and less happy the way it was going. And some outside directors came on, and they really weren't happy and things started to slip downhill. And then Léon Lambert died. David had died—David had predeceased Léon. And with David and Léon both gone, everything really began to—

MS. ARONOW: David Carritt was a print dealer?

MR. LIGHT: No, David Carritt had started life at Christie's. At one time he had worked for Hans Calmann, who was a refugee banker who became a dealer in drawings of great distinction in London. And David had a great eye, and while he was involved, they made great finds and they had connections to English country houses and it was going very well. But then when David died and then Léon died, it lost its will to keep going, I think.

MS. ARONOW: Was there some event or acquisition that David Carritt was involved in, a famous auction? I think Jim Bergquist mentioned it to me. I can't remember what it is.

MR. LIGHT: He discovered an early [François] Boucher.

MS. ARONOW: That's what I was not remembering, and you did remember.

MR. LIGHT: And bought it, I think, out of one of the Rothschild houses; now we have to check on that.

MS. ARONOW: That sounds like what Jim said.

MR. LIGHT: And he discovered a Dürer watercolor of some importance.

MS. ARONOW: So he had a really good eye.

MR. LIGHT: He had a terrific eye. He had a terrific eye.

MS. ARONOW: So if I'm not mistaken, C.G. Boerner, which was the old, distinguished print dealer in Düsseldorf—

MR. LIGHT: C.G. Boerner was one of the great, great print dealing firms in Germany, and before the Second World War was also an auction house, and the best print auctions in the world were held at Boerner.

MS. ARONOW: I didn't know that. That's interesting.

MR. LIGHT: And it was in Leipzig, and then after the war it moved to Düsseldorf. I think I'm right in saying Leipzig. Yes, I'm almost positive. Then moved to Düsseldorf. Adrian Eeles, while he was at Artemis, rather cleverly came up with the concept—when Ruth Muthmann had gone into semi-retirement at Boerner, Adrian Eeles came up with the concept that Artemis should buy C.G. Boerner to provide a foothold in the German market, not just for prints and drawings but for whatever inventory Artemis held. And they did that, and it worked pretty well for a couple of years.

And then Artemis decided to open a beachhead in New York City. And they opened a two-floor gallery and office on 73rd Street and called it Boerner, rather than Artemis. Now I'm not sure why that decision was made. I'm sure there was a very cogent reason, but I've forgotten. Then gradually Artemis started to go down the tubes, and Armin Kunz, who had come with Artemis, extremely intelligently and very bravely, said to himself, it would be a great shame if Artemis sinks and takes Boerner with it, because Boerner is an old, distinguished firm with a great reputation, perhaps one of the greatest of all the print-dealing firms. And so he was able to go out and raise the money to buy Boerner back from Artemis and to keep it going. And now it's a going concern.

MS. ARONOW: Did he do that alone, do you know?

MR. LIGHT: He did it with a partner, who is a European dealer, a much younger man, based in Belgium, who covers the Paris market and Belgian market. And they were able to do it and keep going both the place in New York and the place in Düsseldorf.

MS. ARONOW: Even now?

MR. LIGHT: Even now.

MS. ARONOW: Good for him. I didn't know that.

MR. LIGHT: And Armin is very highly thought of, and rightly so. He's an extremely reputable and good, solid dealer, and it's a pleasure for me to say that I work with him very closely.

MS. ARONOW: I met him when he was reviewing the print fair in the Park Avenue Armory for the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* [Swiss daily newspaper]. He was an art critic, and we talked about his dissertation on [Lucas] Cranach.

MR. LIGHT: On Cranach, that's right.

MS. ARONOW: That's how I got to know him.

MR. LIGHT: And he's doing quite well.

MS. ARONOW: I'm glad to hear that.

MR. LIGHT: He's a very good dealer, and in a way he has the kinds of clients that I had, sort of, in mid-career. He sells to all the American museums and European museums, and a great many private collectors, and he's doing extremely well.

MS. ARONOW: Do you see him as a protégé in a way?

MR. LIGHT: No. No, that would be presumptuous of me. He didn't need me to get going. I just regard him as an esteemed colleague.

MS. ARONOW: Well, he's exceptional because he started as an academic art historian and ended up a successful dealer. There are a few people like that, but not a lot.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, that's true. Not a lot. Yes, traditionally there are two ways of going into art dealing. One is to be in a family that are art dealers. The old idea—or being an art historian who goes into dealing. The old concept of being a young frame maker, a frame crater who then builds—climbs his way up into an art dealing firm, I think it doesn't happen any longer.

MS. ARONOW: Though, of course, with print dealers, they often were book dealers, right? Rare book dealers, anyway. Those two things went together, especially in Germany?

MR. LIGHT: Prints and books, yes. Yes. But there are not many print dealers that became book dealers that I know of.

MS. ARONOW: No. The other way around, right?

MR. LIGHT: No. Usually book dealers are book dealers and print dealers are print dealers nowadays.

MS. ARONOW: Is Germany still a center for print collecting? Or at least print auctions?

MR. LIGHT: I can't really answer that. You'd have to ask Armin Kunz, because it's been so long since I've traveled in Europe selling. I don't really know. There are a number of museums, certainly, that have good collections. And there are print collectors, but I don't know how many. I think the United States is still one of the major markets for fine prints because you have the city museums and you also have the enormous growth since the end of the Second World War of university museums. Traditionally, one always talked about the five great college museums being Yale, Harvard, Princeton [NJ], Smith [Northampton, MA], and Oberlin [OH], but one forgets that, since the war years, so many of the state university museums have been growing by leaps and bounds, and all of them—or many of them—have fine collections. And a good number of those have print and drawing collections, as well.

MS. ARONOW: Well, the subject of university museums brings me back to the Fogg. I wonder if you want to say anything else about your relationship with the Fogg. For example, sitting on the board of advisors, who was with you, notable museum directors. You were the only dealer, you said, on that visiting committee, which is impressive.

MR. LIGHT: For the last five or eight years I've sat on the visiting committee to the Art Museums of Harvard and am pleased to do so. The committee is made up of museum professionals like the directors of the Boston museum, the National Gallery—

MS. ARONOW: That's one list.

MR. LIGHT: —art historians and major collectors. And I'm not sure how I got in that group, but there I am.

MS. ARONOW: You made a donation of a big collection to them.

MR. LIGHT: Over the years I've been building a Dutch 17th-century print collection for them, with an emphasis on landscapes. And one way or another, I think I'm indebted to the Fogg, and I show that indebtedness through the formation of this collection, to which I add other things from time to time, such as giving them a portrait, one of the Rembrandt, early Rembrandt etched self-portraits, in honor of Jacob Rosenberg. And then was lucky enough to have, in collaboration with Artemis, the only known substantial collection of the original copper plates of the Rembrandt etchings. And I gave the Fogg the plate for the self-portrait that I'd given them earlier.

MS. ARONOW: That's fantastic for a print dealer. That's the optimum thing you can do, right, to have the plate and the print.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, and I've given things over the years to the Fogg, including drawings from time to time.

MS. ARONOW: Do you consult on paintings purchases, too? Or do you just address your expertise?

MR. LIGHT: And it should be clear that being on the visiting committee is not the same as being on the collections committee. I don't really have anything to do with their acquisitions, except as a dealer.

MS. ARONOW: And as a visiting committee—

MR. LIGHT: That has nothing to do with acquisitions.

MS. ARONOW: What does it really mean?

MR. LIGHT: It covers administration and general policy decisions, but there's a collecting committee that both comments on and helps in making actual acquisitions.

MS. ARONOW: So that's a very important role, don't you think? I mean, do you feel that's an important legacy for you, to be part of the management of the Fogg, which is one of the great museums?

MR. LIGHT: Yes. Absolutely. And I'm very pleased to be doing it now because a very old friend of mine, who I knew when I was at the Fogg, Emily Rauh, then later Emily Rauh Pulitzer, is now the chairman of this committee, and she's an old and dear friend of mine.

MS. ARONOW: And did you know Joe Pulitzer?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, I did.

MS. ARONOW: What was he like?

MR. LIGHT: Well, our mutual friend Jerry Cohn is writing a biography of Joe as we speak, so you'll be able to read that book before long and learn all about him. He's a fascinating man, extremely erudite and cultured, and had a very good eye and [was a] very pleasant person.

MS. ARONOW: You've really known a lot of museum directors, haven't you?

MR. LIGHT: Oh, yes.

MS. ARONOW: And some of them through the Harvard visiting committee, and also through your activities?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, but most of them I knew before we found ourselves sitting on this committee.

MS. ARONOW: Who was the most impressive for you, or the most helpful or memorable?

MR. LIGHT: That's very hard to say.

MS. ARONOW: Wrong question? What about curators, was there anyone who—

MR. LIGHT: Well, among curators, I've talked about the various—I haven't talked about museums that have been clients of mine, though, God knows, it's most of the major museums.

MS. ARONOW: Harold Joachim came up.

MR. LIGHT: And a number of minor museums in this country. But one of the people I was fondest of was Harold Joachim, who was the curator of prints at the Art Institute of Chicago, who succeeded [Carl] Schniewind, although there was a funny hiccup. At first he was told that he wouldn't succeed Schniewind, which is when Harold went to Minneapolis, where he was for a few years. And then they asked him to come back to Chicago, which he was only too happy to do.

One of the greatest compliments I've ever received is the fact that Harold approached me as he was—maybe that's why he approached me—he was getting along in years and realized that he didn't have a lot longer. He asked me if I would consider the possibility of succeeding him as curator in Chicago. And I said, no, I wouldn't, because I just enjoy life too much as a free agent. I didn't want to be tied down to an institution.

MS. ARONOW: Well, it's a compliment to you.

MR. LIGHT: It's a great compliment. It's the second time that I was asked that sort of thing. I remember just as I was leaving the Fogg, I was asked if I would go out and have an interview with the former director of the Metropolitan Museum [Francis Taylor], who wrote *The Taste of Angels [A History of Art Collecting from Ramses to Napoleon]*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1948], and who had gone into semi-retirement by going up and becoming the director of the Worcester, Massachusetts, art museum; Taylor, Taylor, Francis Taylor, who was one of the great distinguished directors of the Metropolitan Museum. And he asked me if I would consider going into museum work, and my answer was the same to him. No, I didn't want to punch a time clock. I wanted to be a free agent. And I'm convinced that I made the right decision.

No, I've led a very happy life and a successful one. And one of the things you asked me this morning, one of the things I've been able to do over the years is to go back to music, which is where I began in a way, but this time as an avocation. And music's a very important part of my life and has been for years now. And being reasonably successful as I have as an art dealer has enabled me to support music. I've had over the years, with a friend, Don Outerbridge, with whom I shared my life for 30 years, I had a music foundation that supported music in Santa Barbara in various ways, including free concerts, free to the public. And I've sat on various music boards and organizations.

MS. ARONOW: Locally, or elsewhere?

MR. LIGHT: One of the top—for example, one of the top summer music schools in the United States is the Music Academy of the West [CA], which isn't as big, but has as high a reputation as Aspen [CO] or Tanglewood [MA], or Interlochen [MI] certainly. And I was the chairman of the board of that organization for a couple of years, and I've sat on various other musical boards. One of which I enjoy most at the moment is the Ojai [CA] Music Festival, which is known by lovers of contemporary music. And I've been on that board for some years. But I enjoy going to concerts and I enjoy supporting musicians, and it's something I've been able to do now.

Maybe this is a way of wrapping up with one more anecdote. The reason I stopped playing the violin in the conservatory, where I had been enrolled, was that my teacher asked me what I wanted to do in my music career. And he said, would you want to teach? I said, no. He said, well, would you be comfortable playing in a large ensemble? I said, no. I said, no, and he said, in other words you want to be a concert soloist? I said, yes. And his advice to me was to find another field. Sort of an iron curtain dropped at that point and clouded my memory for years after.

And then one day, soon after I moved to Santa Barbara, I found myself sitting on one of those foolish citizen committees formed by a mayor when she or he doesn't want to make decisions. We were studying economic benefits of increased financial support of cultural events in the town, which is perfectly clear what the answer is to that. And I would rush into meetings, usually late, and rush out early. And one day I got there early and I said to this man who was on the committee, you know, you and I have something in common. And I knew that he had founded the Santa Barbara Symphony and he was a violinist. I said, you know, you play the violin and I did at one time. Oh, he said, kind of interested. I said, I was at the Oberlin Conservatory. Oh, he said, I taught there. And we discovered that he had been my teacher.

MS. ARONOW: Oh, that's wonderful.

MR. LIGHT: And I pointed it out. And he was highly embarrassed. I said, oh, no, you missed my point completely. I'm not telling you this to embarrass you but to thank you for being honest with me, which enabled me to spend my life being very happy and to doing what I want to do, and having music as a beloved avocation. Whereas if you hadn't told me that, I probably would be a disgruntled fiddler in the third desk of the second violin section of some provincial orchestra and ended up hating music. So thank you very much.

MS. ARONOW: Instead of going to auctions in London and Bern. Going as far afield as Japan.

MR. LIGHT: Yes, exactly.

MS. ARONOW: So he did you a favor. You've convinced me.

MR. LIGHT: He did me a favor. He did me a favor.

MS. ARONOW: So I think we've done our three hours almost. Is there anything else you'd like to say, because there's a few minutes left, about your papers at the Getty, which you've recently given?

MR. LIGHT: Yes, I've agreed to give my archives to the Getty. It's called the Getty Research Institute.

MS. ARONOW: They call it the GRI, the Getty Research Institute, which is effectively the library and substantial special collections, where your archive resides now.

MR. LIGHT: When they told me that they were, of course, interested in such things—and it goes back to the days when—who was the curator of paintings who then went into a full-time study of past history of ownership?

MS. ARONOW: Burton Fredericksen.

MR. LIGHT: Burton Fredericksen, yes, exactly. I suppose that all grows out of his original interests. And it was pointed out that they are collecting these things, and, for instance, the archives of some major dealer in Dutch 17th-century paintings in Holland, which surprised me.

MS. ARONOW: Well, they have the Douwes Collection.

MR. LIGHT: The Douwes. Do they?

MS. ARONOW: Well, I remember the photographic archives from Duits, and Douwes, and I'm sure they have a lot of dealers' collections that I haven't seen.

MR. LIGHT: And they asked me if I would consider giving my papers, my correspondence and whatnot, which would be of some importance because I've been a dealer of some prominence for the last 50 years in this country. So I'm getting to be an old man in the field.

MS. ARONOW: Well, your archives reside with other famous dealers' archives, which they actively collect there, so it's not a bad thing to have done.

I think we've done our due here, so shall we sign off?

MR. LIGHT: Thank you very much. Signing off. Thank you very much for coming up and talking to me.

MS. ARONOW: It was a pleasure.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]