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Oral history interview with Mary-Anne Martin,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Mary-Anne Martin on July 8-22, 2009. The interview took place in Martin's gallery, and was conducted James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art Oral History Program.

Mary-Anne Martin reviewed the transcript in 2019. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Mary-Anne Martin at her gallery, 23 West—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: East.

JAMES McELHINNEY: West, East—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: 23 East 73rd Street.

JAMES McELHINNEY: East 73rd Street in New York on Wednesday, the 8th of July, 2009. Good afternoon.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Good afternoon.

JAMES McELHINNEY: May I ask, when was the first time you became aware of being in the presence of a work of art?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I think the first works that I'm aware of were ones I made myself. Because my mother had this book at home which was I think *A Hundred Great Masterpieces of Art*, and I think it was by this man called Craven. Everybody had it, and they were these large reproductions. And I used to turn the pages. I was an only child at the time and was left to my own devices quite a lot, and every so often I'd come across something that I identified with, which was usually a child in a painting. So this "*Las Meninas*", I was obviously interested in this wonderful little girl, you know, the infanta with this great dress. And then there's a Goya of a little boy who has all these little animals around him. And I just got interested in visual things. But, you know, I don't really think that we had—my family was a music family. My parents were involved in opera.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Interesting! So was Richard Gray.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So I made my debut. Oh, really!

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I made my debut as the baby in *Madame Butterfly* when I was about four years old.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow!

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] The opera kids were the ones who—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Here at the Metropolitan Opera?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Actually, my debut was at the City Center at the time. And my father was there, and my parents were opera translators, a team who, you know, they translated about 45 or 50 operas into English a long time ago when that was done. Then they used to do productions in English before super titles. And I was always taken along everywhere they went. And so I had an early introduction to opera. My mother liked art very much and took me to museums. But we really didn't have a collection. But I made things all the time, so [laughs].

JAMES McELHINNEY: So like every child, you're industrious with crayons and pencils and clay.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Very. Oh, yes. And sadly my mother saved them all. [They laugh.] And one day delivered them all. I go through them sometimes and like thin them out. But I still have quite a lot of my childhood drawings.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you grew up here in New York.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I did, in Greenwich Village.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In the Village.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And where did you go to school? Were you in a public high school?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, I didn't. I went to grammar school on Washington Square North, a little school St. Joseph Academy, which was a private Catholic school. And I didn't start school 'til first grade because my mother didn't register me on time for kindergarten. She was so preoccupied that I didn't start until first grade. And then I went to high school very near here, Marymount, which is on 84th and 5th.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Of course. Sure.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And then I went to Smith which is where my mother had gone. And ultimately, I transferred to Barnard where I graduated. And then I went to the Institute of Fine Arts. And then I think a lot of my real art, sort of baptism in fire, came when I went to Sotheby's to replace somebody for a month. I was replacing a secretary; someone was going on vacation. And that was in the Impressionist Department working for David Nash, who was himself 23 years old at the time. And I wound up staying for 13 years. So it was a long replacement job.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It worked out. It was an apprenticeship of sorts.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, it was. And that was the first time in my life that anyone just handed me in a painting and said, "Here, catalog this or—" You know I'd never seen the back of a painting. None of the training at the Institute of Fine Arts or in college really dealt with physical objects. It was all slides.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Still, I think, very few art history programs deal at all with studio practice. There's a little more of that now.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Actually people studying how artists organize themselves to work. Or having to do with, you know, the material culture of art. [That] usually was the domain of the conservator, I guess.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I think it's a very important thing. I mean if it hasn't been addressed yet, then—I don't think you can just look at pictures of art. At the Institute of Fine Art, this is back when they were using glass lantern slides. So after each lecture they would leave them in the library, and we could look at them and take notes. And every so often, you know, you'd break one, and then you'd sort of stuff it under a book or something. Nobody ever admitted it. But I mean that was really the sum of our concern with taking care of art. And then if you went to a museum, and we did go to museums, there was usually a red plush sort of barrier, you know, some kind of a rope that you couldn't—

JAMES McELHINNEY: A velvet rope.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: A velvet rope, and you couldn't really get up to look at paintings closely. I certainly [did] when I started working at Sotheby's. I developed this habit, which I still have, if someone will ask me to look at a painting, the first thing I do is turn it around and look at the back, you know. Eventually I look at the front. But I didn't know paintings had backs, you know, when I started out.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So was anyone a mentor while you were studying in college? Did you have any—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I wasn't an art major. I was an English major. And I got very interested in art history rather late in my college days. And I guess—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Here at Barnard?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know when I changed to Barnard. And I was talking a course with Julius Held.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. Of course.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Who was one of our professors. And he was a great professor. We were in some kind of class that had to do with some sort of Byzantine thing we were looking at. And he asked a question, and I raised my hand. I really don't even remember what the painting was. But I said, "Well, in the painting you can see that there's a hierarchy of elements," and blah blah blah. And he said, "Hierarchy of elements." He said, "I like that." And it was really sort of a moment for me because I thought, gee, I've been taking English literature courses for

years and years and years, and nobody's ever said, Oh, I like that, you know. And just the fact that I got some feedback from him, it really got me more interested.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It encouraged you.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It encouraged me a lot, and I started writing more, and studying more. And then going to graduate school was really a remedial thing for me in order to catch up on all the art history that I hadn't studied in college. But I wouldn't say that I had a mentor academically. I think it was more when I got to Sotheby's that I, you know—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Actually, the person who trained me was David Nash. And in those days things were simpler. I mean it wasn't such a big business then.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And Sotheby's had very recently taken over Parke-Bernet and sent over all their fledgling experts. They left all their number one experts in the departments in London. And whoever the second person was in each department who seemed promising, they sent them over to Sotheby's. Or Sotheby's Parke—no, it was just called Parke-Bernet then. This was around 1965-66. And those people ran the departments. So I went to work for David for a month and wound up staying there. But the way they taught you—or the way he taught me—he said, Okay, I'm going to catalog, and you sit at the typewriter, and I'll dictate, and you take it down. Which we did. And then, you know, there were Monets and Manets, and really wonderful things. And then after a while he said, Okay, now I'm going to type, and you tell me what to say, you know. And so basically I picked this thing up, and I started doing what he had done. And if I made a mistake, he would correct it. But it was a really kind of a medieval system. And you just learned to do it by doing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It was like guild training experience.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, and I loved it. I just—I was absolutely skipping on my way to work because it was just so interesting. And, you know, everything you did every day was really new. And it wasn't, I think, the pressure that they have now there and in other auction houses where there's a lot of attention to the bottom line. And I understand that. But in those days we were just sort of going—there was a receiving area, and we'd just see what came in that day. We weren't going out to get, you know, really soliciting things—at least, at my level we weren't. We'd just sort of see what surprises came in.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The stakes are higher now obviously. And I guess everybody's trying to maintain the status quo.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, if they could maintain the status quo, I think they'd be very happy.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Trying, trying.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I think that there's a lot of sinking going on.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A lot of downsizing. A lot of slimming, organizational slimming?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, even when I was there, which was—I was there from '66 to '68 and then '71 to '82. And it was sort clear that things would be tight, and everybody would be very careful. And then things would get better. And then we'd hire more people. And then the secretaries, we'd get secretaries, and there'd just be more and more business. And all of a sudden, you know, there'd be some kind of a reversal, and we'd all have to let people go, and get permission to make a phone call. Literally. Anyone wants to make a long-distance call, they have to get permission first.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Photocopies.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Carbon paper, any of that stuff back then.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And I mean the real, you know, the crisis came I guess around, for us, '80-81. And when the company was—well, this was now called Sotheby's. But New York was seriously losing money. And we had these—by that time I was a director and an officer. But we had to meet five days a week at eight in the morning, and it was called Profit Improvement Panel or something, to—I learned things like labels on rolls are more expensive than labels on sheets. And, you know, people were throwing away Pendaflex folders instead of reusing them. At every level they were trying, you know, to figure out how they were losing all this money. And

all this money was only \$4 million. But I mean it was because they were losing \$4 million, that [A. Alfred] Taubman wound up buying the company for I think \$150 million. So when you think a painting can easily cost \$150 million now, it's really quite amazing. But I went through all that. Nobody really taught the experts how to be businesspeople. And so you had a lot of people that were very smart about art, but really didn't—I mean I sort of considered everybody from the accounts department an enemy, because they were sort of standing in our way. And they thought we were, I think, a bunch of exotic crazies who, you know, sort of temperamental people that had to be controlled, but humored in some way.

JAMES McELHINNEY: High-strung aesthetes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know. Because they sort of made the company work, but we didn't like any interference.

JAMES McELHINNEY: They couldn't work without you, but they felt ill at ease working with you. I think it's true in every industry, though.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, like music certainly. Museums.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, academic world, museums. There's always a division, I think, between the money people and the creative people. Seldom are they the same people.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, but where I find it particularly painful is when you're, let's say in my position, I'm a dealer, and then, you know, you start meeting collectors who are really businesspeople. And they're not really looking at the art; they're looking at how much am I paying now. What's it going to be worth tomorrow? If I hold this long-term, blah blah blah, you know. If it's short-term, can I flip it? I don't know, it pains me. And I think maybe we've seen the result of that in the sort of slide that we've had for the last year or two. But I mean it's always a joy when you come upon a real collector who buys things because they love them, understand them, and are willing to study about them. You don't see it too much.

JAMES McELHINNEY: One might say, perhaps, that a true collector is a form of artist in their own right? That they express themselves through exercising their taste and wealth in a particular way to assemble this collection?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes I would say or like a curator. Because you really—when people come to me, and they say they want to buy art or collect let's say Latin American art, which could mean anything, I usually like to know what they have already. And even if it's in a different field, if I know what they've been collecting or accumulating, you know, I mean there's usually some thread. I mean you have to sort of understand what appeals to somebody before you can recommend something to them. I am not the kind of person that—some people are famous and every good at it, but you just sort of say, Look, buy this. This is the important artist. This is the right work, you need this. I'm never able to do that. I like to find things where I'll see a work, and I'll say this is exactly what Mr. X is going to want. And then hope that I'm right. But I mean it sort of reinforces my belief in collecting if I can find the right thing for someone and still be happy with it when they bought it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. That's what attracted you first to the business anyway, right? Or a love of art. What attracted you to the business?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: What attracted—!? [They laugh.] You know it's one of those things where, you know, you always say—There's all these young people who say, oh, you know, I'd love to be an art dealer. I'd love to run a gallery. And, you know, you always want to say, Look, come and see me, and we're going to draw some—You know how many shows do you think you want to do a year? And they'll say, 20. And how many works are there going to be in each show? Okay, 25. And how much are you going to pay the artist? And how much do you think it'll cost to do the show? And, you know, you go, how many things do you think you're going to sell in the first show when nobody knows who this artist is? You know how much do you think it's going to cost to advertise and promote this? By the time you get to the end of these little demonstrations, you'd have to be crazy, absolutely crazy to go into the art business and start an art gallery. But people do it. I mean in my case, I had a sort of starry-eyed idea of what it would be like to have a gallery. And, you know, I knew these artists and hoped that some of them would show with me. I just thought it was going to be so beautiful and so wonderful. And after about two years I was really broke. [Laughs.] And I'd spent an enormous amount of money. I mean I was in debt. I wasn't broke. And, you know, I've learned a lot. Eventually I managed to develop a little bit of business sense. But as I said, I had no business training whatsoever. And it's really pretty much like starting a restaurant.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Other than the amount you acquired working in a major auction house.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Except—I mean I have two things to say about that. The auction business doesn't really—more now—but then it doesn't really train you to sell things. It trains you to get things. And I was excellent at getting property from people. I was very good talking to collectors, convincing them to give me things, you know, for the sales and putting the auctions together. I had a good sense of how to arrange the

auctions. But essentially that's like training a horse, breeding a horse. And then you get to that point where everybody's at the starting gate, you know. And then the gun goes off. Then the auctioneer takes over. Basically in those, you know, in that hour or two when the auction takes place, then you see how all your bets went, how your training went. But you're not the one that really is selling the property.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean you do say to people, oh, you know, you should really buy this. Or this is a lovely whatever. But you're not the mechanism for selling it. And, you know, the auction is and the catalog. I mean there's a whole sort of machine there that does that—usually well, sometimes not so well. And as a dealer, it's almost exactly the opposite. Because for one thing, instead of the price going higher and higher, and then, on top of that, a buyer's premium goes on top of that, you set a price, and then the people come in, and if they're interested at all, they want to go lower and lower and lower. So it's not exactly what you're expecting. And then you really have to call people, remind them to come in. And sometimes, like right now, everybody's away. You know everything I do now is by phone or by—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's the summer, right?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's the summer. But you have expenses all year round. But I mean so did the auction houses. But it's a very different thing. I had a friend when I first started my gallery, who was—she was French, and she was interesting. She was the first woman auctioneer in Paris, which was unusual then. I think she worked for Maître Binoche. I mean they just didn't have women auctioneers. Nor did they at—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Her name?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Her name was Marie-Claude Tubiana. Or is. And she's a friend of mine. I knew her from when I was at Sotheby's. And she said, "Mary-Anne, I have to tell you something." Because I think she'd gone private. She said, "Everybody you know now as an auction person is not going to be your buyer. Because these are people who like to buy at auction. Everybody you don't know, those are the people you need to know now. Because the people who don't buy at auction, you don't know at all because you worked at an auction house." So it actually was sort of a rude shock. You know if you don't—I mean there are sort of private people, the people who are put off by auctions or don't want to do that. And I think there are maybe more of them than there are now. Everybody likes to buy at auction now. But it's true. I knew everybody. But they weren't going to be my customers, in general. And so you're starting a business, and you have to really start right at the bottom.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So was there a particular epiphany or moment in time when you woke up, looked out the window, and said: Today is the day I'm going to open a gallery? I mean how did you take steps to launch yourself as an independent art dealer?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I think, getting back to Sotheby's, when we were talking about learning about business at Sotheby's, I did have a wonderful opportunity there, which was that I was senior enough—I was the head of modern pictures; there was no Latin American department. But I started to get interested in Mexican art, and that led to the first Mexican sale, and then eventually to the first Latin American sale, and there was no department. But eventually that became a department. But somehow, again, because things were free and easier then, I was allowed or neglected enough, to start a small business using all the resources of Sotheby's within this larger framework; so I had an advertising department, I had people to pack, I had—In other words I got the idea of doing—it started with a trial balloon, just a little section of Mexican art within one of my regular modern picture sales. And we had 30 things.

I wrote, you know, like just to everybody I knew in Mexico at that point because I'd made one trip, and we had about 20 subscribers. And the 20 subscribers included, I think, maybe four people that subscribed to jewelry catalogs, three that subscribed to furniture catalogs, two to Old Masters, maybe five to modern art. We didn't have even 20 people that were interested in paintings. But those were the people. You know I sent the catalog to all these people and said we have this Mexican section. The way it turned out, the pictures did very well. If you know how they sort of rate a sale after it's over, they have this thing, you know, a BI is a "Bought-In-Work". And the BI rate is that rate of unsold property. So the BI rate for this auction that I'd done was 12 percent; but the BI rate for the Mexican section was zero.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So, every Mexican [work sold. The section -MM] had done significantly better than the sale as a whole. So, then I wrote a letter to every person on our list, and sent them a price list, and then said I was going to be going down to Mexico, and would like to meet as many of them as possible. And, you know, I mean it's a long story, and I've told it before, but I wound up being absolutely [swamped -MM]—there was an avalanche of people. We took a little ad in the *Mexico City News*, saying that I would be there on certain days. And I really—I didn't even bring a secretary with me. So, I was totally overwhelmed by a good number of people

who wanted to meet Mary-Anne Martin from Sotheby's and talk about Mexican art. But I mean that was really the beginning. And then I organized the first Mexican auction in 1977. And then we had one of those every year. Then the first Latin American sale I think was in 1979, which was a benefit for what's now called the America Society. It used to be called the Center for Inter-American Relations. But anyway, little by little it snowballed. And I mean I had been working at Sotheby's for quite a while, I mean 12 years—altogether it was 13 years. But let's say around the 11th or 12th, I began to realize that I had created a specialty for myself. Because although I had really specialized in impressionists and modern art, I wasn't going to go out and compete with [Daniel] Wildenstein. I wasn't going to go out and compete with [Daniel] Gervis. I mean there was no way I was going to go out in the impressionist field or the modern field.

But here I was someone who actually had learned quite a bit about Mexican art and something about Latin American art. And looking around, there really were no—no galleries I think in New York completely specialized in this field. And in the whole country practically nobody. And I thought, well, here's a path out for me because, you know, you have really two choices at a place like Sotheby's or Christie's: I mean you can work there until you're old and gray, assuming you survive, which isn't always—I hate to say it, but I mean some of the people that I started with have been laid off very recently. So, people basically 40 years—worked there 40 years ago; I mean you go there until you're dead or they don't need you anymore.

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is like other lines of work where if you don't rise to a certain level in the organization, you've got to go out on your own or you'll be put there.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, you start getting more and more expensive for them.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Exactly.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, anyway. So I think anybody who has a little bit of entrepreneurship or, you know, an ability to be an entrepreneur, thinks about how could I leave and what would I do? And it suddenly occurred to me, you know, I could start a gallery devoted to Latin American art. And there are all these artists that are not represented here at all. You know if someone would say, Oh, I love this painting by Maria Luisa Pacheco. Where can I see more?" I'd have to say, "Well, Bolivia." And you know we were showing these works, but once a year. And so I started to think about, gee, that would be nice. I could start a gallery, and how would I do that? And then the other thing that pushed me along was that Sotheby's was going through these financial problems at the time, and we were having our profit improvement meetings, and it wasn't pleasant. A lot of people were being laid off. I was at that point, I was on the executive committee, so we were being told we have to lay this—we had to choose what people to let go. But I didn't really enjoy being a hatchet person, and so I just thought, well, this is a good time to leave. So I did. I mean I left in '82 and started the gallery. So the idea, I think, was partly a way of starting the second phase of my life.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I had sort of created a specialty for myself. It's very unusual for auctions to be held in any field where there are no dealers. You know I mean it doesn't go that way. Usually there are a lot of dealers in the field, and then the auction houses say, gee, you know, maybe we should start selling modern furniture or, you know, these silver jewelry sales are doing well; maybe we should get into that. It doesn't usually go the other way. So, in a way I was allowed to create a small business within Sotheby's. And then I used that small business in order to go out and try to do a small business for myself. But unfortunately—and that was all the assets that I had at my fingertips when I worked for a big organization. So it was hard.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you had a lot of infrastructure there to surf, as it were.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You had a lot of resources at your disposal.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You don't realize how much you have when you work in a relatively—I mean this was not a really big company; but let's call it a big company—when you suddenly realize, well, you're now human resources, and you're the travel department, and you—oh, my God, is that how much a ticket costs to go wherever? You realize really what things cost when you have to pay the bill yourself. Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did you write a business plan.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: We did all those things. Yes, I had a couple of people who advised me in the beginning in return for a very small percentage of the gallery. And we all sort of put in sweat equity, I mean really a tiny bit of money, really a tiny bit of money. And, you know, eventually, many years later, I bought them out. So I own all my shares. I think their advice was very helpful. And actually, I've received advice from other people, other businesspeople that I knew, and I think the best advice I received was from a collector who was a businessman,

who said, "Mary-Anne, whatever you're thinking, you can always get more space. So start your business in the smallest space that you can possibly work from, and then see how it goes. And then, you know, you can expand anytime. But don't take some great big place and then saddle yourself with enormous overhead."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Small space. In other words, lower your exposure in terms of cost.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely. When I see now, I mean since there has been such a crisis in the last couple of years, and you see all these younger dealers who have these enormous galleries downtown, or older galleries that, you know, suddenly—I mean I remember reading a couple of years ago where you're just nobody unless you have two galleries or three galleries. I mean you have to have a space here and a space in California, a space downtown, uptown. And, you know, all of these people are either giving them up or pulling—or closing or pulling in again.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Going private.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It just doesn't make sense to—the art business looks very glamorous. But it isn't that profitable unless you're very careful.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So what was your first exhibition?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: And where was your gallery? Where was the first gallery?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: My first gallery was at 213 East 49th Street. It was sort of a good luck thing. But it was in this place called Amster Yard. In the back was a little building that Noguchi had had as a studio. So maybe it was sort of a good luck thing. But it wasn't the best place to have a gallery. Fortunately, I was near this restaurant called Smith & Wollensky.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So you could lure people down for lunch. Because people liked to have lunch at Smith & Wollensky, and then they would come to the gallery. Later on I decided that I wanted to be where other galleries were, and so I moved here in '86. And I've been here ever since then.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Here ever since then?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But with a small space and then a bigger space.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. So the space you occupy now is on two floors?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And we're in your office at the moment, which is on the—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Fifth floor.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, that would be on the fifth floor, and the gallery's on the fourth.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: On the fourth, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And so you have the whole space here, the whole floor?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Up here I have—it's just my library; it's just half of the floor. And then the fourth floor. And, you know, there are obviously limitations to having a small space. But, you know, it's sort of an intimate space. When we do one-man shows or one-person shows, we clear the fourth floor. You know I'm not really equipped to do large-scale sculpture. But it also isn't so much my interest. You know the kind of thing I like—I still like paintings that you can pick up and hold. I'm sort of an old-fashioned person in that sense. And we do a lot of secondary sales and historical, I'm much more interested in curated shows of secondary material than I am in promoting—In the beginning I thought I would be promoting lots and lots of artists. And I did. But I also realized—that was my second epiphany. I don't know what the first one was. But the second epiphany was that you have to—the older artists have to pay for the younger artists. And you cannot have 20 shows of new artists.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Emerging.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, because there's nothing to pay the bills. So, you know, you have to sell a Diego Rivera or Frida Kahlo every so often or even a Botero, whatever. I mean something has to generate enough money to

pay your staff and to pay for the promotion of the younger people because they don't pay for themselves. I mean now—there was this trend a few years ago where everyone was going, you know, buying right out of the art schools. And the younger the artist was the better. But I think that's ending kind of quickly, too.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, that was, I think, of a moment. If you'd agree, I think in the '80s that happened a bit. This happened also in the last ten years. Where somebody comes out of a graduate school, either Yale or Columbia, and then has a lot of attention—and either catches a rocket ship to some high-powered dealer or not. And one wonders where are they now, you know, people who were hot ten years ago and haven't been heard from since. But you're more interested in art that has more legs, more durability.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I'm also somebody—I do a lot of expertise. People are constantly coming to me with newly-discovered Frida Kahlos and Diego Riveras that they inherited from, you know, their aunt or something. So much of what I see is fake. And I'm rather—I'm very intrigued by forgeries and fakes. And I'm always reading books about them. [Laughs] And I'm quite good on some of these subjects and such. I actually have a lecture I give sometimes on fakes, which is illustrated and very funny. I mean I'm not saying that my lecture's so funny, but I mean the fakes are very funny. And, you know, basically, left to my own devices, I would just sit in the library and read my books because that's my greatest pleasure at night, when everybody goes home and the phones stop ringing, is just looking things up.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So how often, when you encounter a fake, is it just so obvious and outrageous that you can hardly believe it. And how often do you actually encounter one that almost fools you?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, the ones that fool you—I mean they're around. [laughs] You know we don't know. I guess to a certain degree it depends on your knowledge and exposure. I mean people will send me things that make me laugh out loud. And yet they really don't look so funny to them. And I'm sure that there are things in other fields that I would say, gee, I don't know, I'd better ask somebody. There are some Olmec jades here that someone sent me photographs of. To me they don't look good. But I'm just not the right person to ask. So I'm sure when I bring them to the person I want to bring them to, he's going to laugh out loud. But, you know, we all have our areas of knowledge. But there is a big sort of cottage industry—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I think so.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —[laughs] in Mexico making, you know, Frida Kahlos and Diego Riveras and Siqueiros'; it's a real morass. And one of the problems is that there really aren't any serious catalogues raisonnés available for most of the artists. And sometimes there will be someone serious doing a serious effort. And that person will meet an impasse. For example, the Rufino Tamayo catalog has been in formation—I forget what the word is—in preparation for maybe 20 years. And there was a very knowledgeable person at the Tamayo Museum who's been working regularly, very careful, very honest. And suddenly he stopped. And he won't do it anymore. And the reason he won't do it is because it's pretty much ready, but there are a few very influential people who own paintings that he doesn't believe are authentic. And he's getting a lot of pressure to include those works. And he won't do it. So at this point there's no book. And this kind of thing happens apparently more than we really want to know. But it makes it very difficult because, you know, there isn't that much very organized what I would call German kind of scholarship to begin with. And when you do see an example of something being done right and then it stops, I mean it's sort of discouraging.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Do you encounter a lot of spurious works by more obscure artists, too? I mean not obviously someone like Rufino Tamayo or Rivera or Orozco. These artists are well known. But somebody like Rugendas, Velasco, Conrad Chapman?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Velasco, yes. There are lots of—it really boils down to money.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean there weren't that many Frida Kahlo fakes until Frida Kahlos started getting expensive. I mean as soon as someone starts, you know, there started to be prices, there started to be more works available. I mean it doesn't really pay you to make a fake of an unknown artist. But as soon as there's a market for an artist, then there just seem to be fakes. But I mean some of these fakes, I've seen over and over again. I just looked one up. Someone asked me about this fake Frida Kahlo, and it's worked its way into—or it had worked its way into—a fairly prestigious exhibition somehow. But I looked in my records, and the first time I had heard of this painting was in 1994. And I actually was asked by a pretty well-known gallery owner if I would fly down to Mexico to examine the painting because they were interested in buying it if it was real. And it wasn't. I mean it was not quite dry, if I remember. [They laugh.] You could sort of smell it. But now it keeps coming back and back and back. And I've noticed because I tend to get consulted about the same things over and over. I mean no matter what it is, they always, well, why don't you ask Mary-Anne Martin? And I've noticed how little by little the provenance for this work has changed. And there are sort of new certificates for it. And they've changed the story a little bit. And it's sort of interesting because they're still trying to market the same painting.

But it isn't, you know, quite the same story.

What I found also is that some of these things—I mean with Frida Kahlo, for example, when I first learned about her or I was first selling them, her work was not designated as national patrimony. So in Mexico they have national patrimony laws, and certain artists are not allowed to have their works exported unless you have permission from Bellas Artes. And most people don't want to—it's like don't ask, don't tell. People don't want to ask for permission because then if they're denied permission, now the government knows they have the painting. So it's sort of a problem. But when we were first dealing with Frida Kahlo, when I was at Sotheby's or later on, her work was not designated national patrimony. So, you know, you could buy one if you found one. But little by little, now they can't leave the country. So that was where I began to notice that the provenance was being changed on some of these fakes. Because in the beginning they didn't have to worry about that. And then after a while, they had to sort of cover up the fact that it was clearly from Mexico and sort of create a new life for it in the United States, in other words. So that suddenly you were supposed to believe it had been here all the time. But it's all very subtle.

[END OF DISC 1]

JAMES McELHINNEY: So what was the first exhibition in your gallery?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know this is the funniest question. I'm wondering if this was it or not. I did an exhibition of an artist who was not a Mexican artist in 1983. He was a Russian—no, the first exhibition I had was just sort of an opening show, and it was in I think November 1982, and it was basically to introduce the gallery. And it was a group show of Mexican and Latin American works. I hadn't thought to do it, but I have checklists and lists of all the shows we've ever done downstairs. So I can tell you.

JAMES McELHINNEY: We can ask you that again next week.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But the first one-man show?

JAMES McELHINNEY: The first one-man show.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Probably Alfredo Castañeda. I know we did a show of his in '83. Then we did him again in '86, '89. I mean every several years. But we showed the work quite a lot of I wouldn't necessarily say emerging, but established but not sacrosanct, you know, sort of working Latin American artists at that time.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Living artists.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Living and, you know, sort of early to mid career. And we had artists from Argentina. Delia Cugat and Sergio Camoreale and Frederic Amat, who's actually from Barcelona but was working in Mexico. And as I said, Alfredo Castañeda. Gunther Gerzso was one of our first shows, and we also published a book on him. Actually, we did a good Gunther Gerzso show at FIAC [Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain] in 1982.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In Paris?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That was sort of our glorious entry into the art market. So that was, in a way, our first one-man show.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How did they receive the work in Paris?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I think it was what they call a *succes d'estime*. But everybody loved his work. But nobody bought anything. But I think that happens a lot at FIAC. I think we sold one painting to one wealthy Mexican lady who's now—she's now actually I think on the board of the MET, Paula Cussi who was then Paula Azcarraga. 1982 was a difficult year in the market.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Economic hardship, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Certainly a difficult year for Mexico. But that was how we entered the scene.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Was that the year when the currency was completely devalued?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, yes, it was. Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, I decided—I had this wonderful idea, you know, I'm going to leave Sotheby's and start a gallery, and everything's going to be so wonderful because I know all these clients. You know I opened up in 1982. And within, I think, four or five months, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, and Brazil all went down the drain

economically. So it was sort of a hard period. And the reason—My business plan, to the extent I had one, was that I would have all these clients that I knew already who were Latin Americans. A lot of the people that were buying in the auctions that I knew were from Latin America. But little by little, as I started doing these shows in New York, I would develop American clients for these artists. And the problem was that almost simultaneously when I opened up my gallery, a lot of these Latin American collectors were, you know, in a bind. And I didn't have any American clients yet. So it made it quite difficult.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How did you find some, American collectors?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] It wasn't easy because everything was sort of against—In New York at that time, it was a big time for American artists and for American galleries. And that was when, for example, Mary Boone had started her gallery, about the same time I started mine. And Saatchi was promoting her. Every time I opened up a magazine, there would be a picture of Mary Boone painting her toenails. I remember this in particular. And then on the other side a picture of Julian Schnabel or David Salle. I mean that was what was really hot.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, the neo-expressionists.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: This was what was going on in New York, and nobody was interested in—no one was interested in Mexican art, Latin American art, anything like that. And the woman who wrote—a critic for the *New York Times* at that time, I mean the one that I had to deal with the most was a woman called Vivien Raynor.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Of course. Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I remember her arriving once when I had sent out a press release. And she was coming to the gallery, and she said, "Well, I'm the person they send when someone has to review a Latin American, you know, a show of Latin American art." [Laughs.] I mean this was sort of I drew the short straw. And she was not very positive, I think, about the field, it seemed to me. And I remember that she reviewed a show at the Guggenheim of Torres-Garcia. It was a show, it had to be '82 or '83, '84.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: In that period. And it was a very good show. And the tag line of her review was—I'm paraphrasing: This show will definitely establish Torres-Garcia as a major minor artist. You know, and I mean that was sort of what we were up against in those days.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, what do you think—how would you explain that.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I don't know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Habitual?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I don't know. I mean a lot of things have changed since 1982. I mean—And I'm not saying all of them are things that I'm—not everything that's happened is good. But I mean we have multiculturalism now. We have political correctness. I mean people I think are much more open-minded as to, you know, what is art and who can paint. We were still, I think, somewhat mind-bound in those times.

JAMES McELHINNEY: When we're in the gallery, having looked at the works—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —that are up on the wall now, we spoke a little bit about, you know, the glass, you know, the jaguar piece that was—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Isabel De Obaldia.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And I'd asked you if you thought that some of these sort of taxonomies of high art, low art, craft, fine art, notions of quality, etc., have started to break down a little bit and being replaced by other ideas about content, quality.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I suppose everybody sort of comes from, you know, their own background. I had prejudices, too. But I think—in the '80s I can remember knowing this woman who made tapestries, you know. She had a loom in her house. And she was very militant in the fiber art movement, you know. And fiber artists did not want to be called craftsmen—you know this is art, this is craft. We haven't heard much about fiber art lately. But I don't really sell glass art, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean this woman [Isabel De Obaldia -MM] is—I mean she's a painter and a sculptor. And she works in glass, and she works like so hard. And, you know, they're not editions. And I just decided that—I mean we probably would have made a lot more money if we had promoted her as a glass artist.

JAMES McELHINNEY: As a glass artist.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: She'd also have to be in a different gallery because glass galleries do different, you know, they have a different way of dealing with it. But I think there is some point where an artist sort of transcends—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, just to go back to the subject of the glass artist.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or, you know, the fiber artist, which was also sort of an intensely gendered realm, as well, I think. Because like relating in some way to, you know, the quilts by people like Miriam, Shapiro. But people like Dale Chihuly and Lino Tagliapietra bringing, you know, the Murano techniques to American art schools, and then evolving it into something like sculpture as opposed to a utilitarian—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, Lino is a very interesting example because, I mean this is like a renaissance person, you know. Like Cellini or something like that. I mean if you become so good at something that in general is craft that people are beating a path to your door, I mean that's the point where it becomes art, you know. I think, you know, it's like that thing about pornography. I mean you know it when you see it. And I think when someone who's an artist as opposed to a craftsman—I'm not belittling craftspeople. But I just think there's a difference.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. And it has to do with going beyond the materials or the expectations of the making of the thing.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, a lot of these artists who worked in, you know, the Venini realm were into iron and into glass and into other things as well. It wasn't merely—it wasn't sort of taxonomized as it is in American art schools. Is that you're going to major in this or that.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I think that shaped a lot of the way that I think at least American artists and Americans in general tend to look at these different realms that are maybe not so familiar to them.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, again, it depends a lot on who's collecting and things. I mean there's lots of paintings that I mean I'm always amazed by let's say these hunting paintings. You know there are these paintings of buffaloes and lions and tigers, and they go for hundreds of thousands of dollars. And I don't even know who the artists are. But, you know, poor me because maybe that's what I should be selling.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You mean like the horse in the pasture with a gentleman in his pinks?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, no, I don't mean that. I mean, you know, there are these collectors of—

JAMES McELHINNEY: *Field & Stream* like the leaping trout.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —hunting paintings, you know. They all go out to these big auctions.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or cowboy art or any of this stuff.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Cowboy art maybe. But I'm just talking about—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or Western art.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —hey, this is the most famous painter of, you know, lions, and everyone collects him. And I say who?

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, I think there are these genres that are very sort of self-aware of them being there for pretty much a commercial reason.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean those people really believe in those things—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —and they don't know, you know. We all have our definitions of, you know, what we think

is correct. I mean certainly I find myself, you know, I'm on the selection committee for Art Basel-Miami Beach. That requires me to go to a lot of meetings and go to a lot of art fairs. And I'm on the committee mainly because of my knowledge of Latin American art. And also modern art. And there are two of us on the committee who do most of the selection of the classic galleries, you know, the galleries that deal in things that happened before last week. But, you know, the entire committee has to agree on everybody, and so we also see a lot of the new art and cutting-edge art and art by the young ones. It's actually a very good exercise because you can just sort of retreat into your own area and not see what's going on now. It's very easy. And, you know, very honestly when I go around, I mean sometimes I don't like what I'm seeing. I'm appalled by what work some people are doing. I see lots of things where I'll say, gee, that happened 30 years ago and 30 years ago before that. I mean things happen over and over, and there are people creating the things now. And the critics are so young that they don't know we've already had happenings or we've already had well whatever. But, you know, I don't like all art that I see now, and I'm still admitting that it's art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, returning to the challenge of trying to find an audience for Latin American art in the mid-'80s, how ultimately were you able to do that?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, what happened—I mean it certainly wasn't just due to me. But I think that starting the auctions, which I did a little bit by chance and with luck, whatever the germ of creativity or of business sense, whatever it was that led me to do that, it did get going. I mean I started a department. Sometime after Christie's watched it for a while, and then they decided to do one, too; at first they thought it would just go away, but then it didn't. And so they then started a department. Then there started to be competition between the two. And as I said, there were no galleries in the field. But I started this little business there. So then I started a gallery. Some more people started galleries. And there started to be more galleries in Florida and LA and places where let's say there was some kind of public for Latin American art because of immigration or whatever. And I really think—the second problem, when I started, was that there were no teachers, and there were very few books, almost no exhibitions. There had been. I mean in other words there had been a lot of interest in let's say Mexican art, you know, in the '20s and '30s and '40s.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, surely.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: In this country. I mean there was a tremendous interchange between the U.S. and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, all of them were here.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, they were here. And we went there. Louise Nevelson, you know, went to Mexico, and a lot of people went down there, WPA, to learn how to paint murals, to come back here. And Rivera and Siqueiros and Orozco all painted murals. And so it was alive, and there were shows. I mean Orozco had a show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1940, and Rivera had one in I think 1931. I mean they were here. They were artists, and they were known. And then the whole thing was sort of put up in the attic. And I think this was because somewhat due to the Cold War and our problems with Communism—

JAMES McELHINNEY: All of these—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —the mindset in this country. Also, the New York School of painting, which somehow made both political art and figurative art look old hat, you know, suddenly you had the action painters and abstract expressionists. So a lot of things conspired or came together to sort of put all this stuff on the shelf. So when I started doing the auctions, I had to build a library. I mean I had to go to these book barns and sift through out-of-print books in order to find anything on the subject that I was supposed to become an expert in. Or I was trying to. And so I would say that it was about a 20-year process from let's say the first Latin American sales and then my gallery and a couple of other galleries and a couple of exhibitions that were seminal. I can make notes of, you know, but there was one out in Indianapolis.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wasn't there a Rivera exhibition in the late-'80s, about '86?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: '86, yes. It started in Detroit. It was the 50th anniversary of the murals. It went to Philadelphia, it went to Europe. But there started to be shows that were opening people's eyes. There were no—I mean I certainly never studied Latin American art because there were no Latin American departments. To the extent that anybody could even—you couldn't major in Latin American art. You might be able, let's say, at Princeton to take a course in pre-Columbian art, something in Latin American affairs, a Spanish course, a Spanish literature course. I mean you could put together a few things. But you couldn't—there were no professors, and there were no, you know, course—

JAMES McELHINNEY: There were no collections either to study.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I know a couple. But really those people were sort of—Barbara Duncan had made a collection because her husband was the, you know, chairman or head of St. Joe Minerals, and so she went all

around—maybe mining—but she went all around Latin America as the wife and started buying art all over the place. There was the Nancy Sales Day collection in Florida, I believe. There were some collections, but very few.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Were they available to scholars and students?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I would say you had to sort of hunt these things out, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And as I said, I taught myself. And Edward Sullivan, who became a friend, I remember he was teaching down at NYU, and he was one of the few professors—I certainly never had a professor like him—but I mean people who actually knew about Mexican art and Latin American art. And I actually asked him, I said, "Why don't you teach a graduate course at the Institute?" And he said, Hmm hmm mmm. And finally—I mean he did it. I mean he started doing it. But until you had professors teaching in graduate institutions, you weren't going to have many graduate students—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —who would come out with a degree who could then teach. This has changed in, I would say, the last 25 years. I mean my library, you can see, I had to hire someone to—I can't contain the number of books that have come out in my field. We can hardly keep up with it, we can hardly—But it's completely different.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's got to be exciting, though, with the understanding that you've helped to—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, it's sort of humbling.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —to inspire this.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, you know, people say nice things. But in the strangest way I just think one thing led to another. I just got curious.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And it goes all the way back to the thing I said long ago when I used to work at Sotheby's. We would sort of go after this receiving bin to see what came in. And I remember one day what came in was two watercolors by Diego Rivera. And one was a little girl, and one was a little boy. And I had never seen a Diego Rivera before in my life. They didn't look like anything else we'd had. And I just kept looking at them. And actually, I didn't know any Spanish at the time either. So, I thought that the girl's name was Nina, you know; it made sense to me. But anyway, and that was almost the beginning of it for me was just seeing something which had not been presented to me before that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What about that work spoke to you? And what about it continued to speak to you?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, what spoke to me was that it, you know, things always fit in. You know I shouldn't say that because I'm probably working against myself. But, you know, we did exhibitions, we did catalogs and, you know, you put the Matisse next to the Léger, and the Léger next to the Picasso, and the Picasso could go next to the Henry Moore. I mean you sort of—you hang an exhibition, you have a—But these, these were just different. I'd never seen anything like it. I didn't know where to put it. Gradually I found friends for it. In a way it just opened a door. I remember this lady, sort of a private dealer who lived in Mexico, coming up and saying, "Do you ever see anything by an artist called Francisco Toledo? Let me know about that." I didn't know who that was. And then it wasn't too long before Eleanore Saidenberg, who was the Saidenberg Gallery on 79th Street, which was a very important gallery at the time; it represented Picasso in the United States. Eleanore Saidenberg called me one day, this is while I was working, she said, "Can you come over, dear? I have some little watercolors by an artist called Francisco Toledo." I don't know if she'd bought them or given a little show a long time ago. But she had us over there. And she said, "Well, can you sell these?" And we said, yes, sure. And I remember that was a name, you know, that I'd heard before. So a lot of it had to do with an awareness.

I can remember being in the—we used to have these little receiving rooms, you know, where clients would come up in with things, and then we would go out to meet them in the little waiting-room. And someone bringing me a work by Carlos Mérida. And I just said no, you know, we don't have any market for this artist. You know it won't sell. So he took it away. And I remember another dealer had—one day come to sell a [Roberto] Matta and a [Wilfredo] Lam. And I took them with the greatest of reservation. This was before I was going the Latin American sort of thing. I said, "Well, not many people know who these people are. But we can try them." You know it all had to do with familiarity. And the more we were able to get and sort of package in a way that enabled us to send these works or these catalogs to people that might be interested, the more we were able to create interest.

And again, money has a lot—once we started doing these auctions and some of them started doing well, then the press started reporting those things. You know nobody wants to tell—wants to write that a well-crafted work made a fair price today you know. But if a Frida Kahlo makes a million dollars, you know, then that's news.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Was there anything in the air at that time? I know the '80s was an age of—well, you were speaking earlier about the Mary Boone neo-expressionist scene that was so robust here.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It was it. Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But I remember also going to a show at the Pompidou called *Les Magiciens de la Terre*, in which many of these same artists, like Francisco Clemente and Anselm Kiefer—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mimmo Paladino.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mimmo Paladino. Were paired with ethnographic artists and people from non-Western traditions or from, you know, Haiti or from Africa.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Interesting.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And it was an interesting exhibition. But it, as I recall, got sort of accused of some kind of neo-retro-colonialism.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But it seemed interesting to me that somebody was trying to broaden the spectrum of artistic possibilities for the public.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, in this country, I think one of the things that was a catalyst was the rediscovery of Frida Kahlo. And there were a couple of things that happened at the same time, or almost the same time. One was that Hayden Herrera, what had been her doctoral thesis, was then recast and published by Harper & Rowe, *Frida: A Biography*. And that was the first English-language book on Frida Kahlo. And it was also a very well-written book. I mean she's a wonderful art historian. So that was one. There was a show at the Gray Art Gallery. At that time Bob Littman was head of the Gray Art Gallery. And it was a show of, I think it had been organized by—I have it right in my library. But it was organized in England, but it came to the Grey Art Gallery. And it was Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti. It was a joint show. And that was around '83 or '84. So that came along just about the same time as Hayden's book. Then there was a little film by this couple, David Cromie and Mrs. Cromie [Karen Cromie]—I'll look up her—and it was a film about Frida Kahlo, a documentary. And I remember taking my—this may have been actually before I left Sotheby's—I remember taking my staff and saying, "Let's go down. There's this little film on Frida Kahlo. Nobody will know about it." It was in some little cinematheque way downtown. And we went down. The show was at seven or something, and we got there, and we couldn't get in. We had to go kill time until nine because there was just this line of people waiting to see this little Frida Kahlo film. And it was very good. And then there was an article in I think *Art in America* by Lucienne Bloch, sort of her memories of Frida Kahlo in Detroit. Anyway, a lot of things sort of happened the same time, and they really—I think they generated a lot of interest. And they also coincided with, I think, the feminist movement which was really moving along at that point. And a lot of people started being very interested in Frida Kahlo.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And she certainly has star quality in terms of her art and her biography. And in many ways it becomes sort of a Frankenstein monster. But it was very important then because—I mean when I started my gallery, I had a little painting which was called *The Little Deer*. I had bought that and I owned it. And my daughter, who was in grammar school, was able to bring her class, you know, for like show-and-tell and show them a real Frida Kahlo painting. And they knew who she was. And college kids were starting to have posters in their dorm with Frida Kahlo. It's very funny somehow. But nobody knew who she was—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Until then.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, except when they were alive. I mean they were very famous.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, in relationship to Diego or Edward Weston.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, they were a very famous couple. And they were sort of like Richard Burton and Liz Taylor at one point. Everybody you know—But then it all sort of faded away. Then it came back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Same thing with Tina Modotti, I guess.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And Edward Weston. Yes. But, so when did you really begin to find a beachhead or an audience that started to grow after you opened your gallery?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] I'm still waiting.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Hung out your shingle and had hung art on the wall and was reaching out to people.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's just been a very steady progress. As I said, all these things started happening, which I don't say they validated me, but they helped me a lot. I mean the auctions kept going, and more and more people started coming up from them. And when they would go up for the auctions, I would have lots of people coming into the gallery. I started doing art fairs. And that's an interesting thing because, you know, when you do an art fair, you really are in many ways introducing works to people who haven't seen them before.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I started doing the ADAA fair; that's a small fair of about 70 galleries. But in the beginning people would just walk right by my stand. I mean nobody seemed to be interested at all in what I did. So, I would just stand there [laughs] with my paintings. But, you know, as it—it changed. You know time passed, and people began to be more interested. Because I think they were beginning to see more, you know, in other galleries, other shows. I found, starting to do art fairs in Miami, again, I got a lot of visibility from that, too. Because it became an area where there were a lot of collectors who were already interested in Latin American art. And just more and more people were coming from Latin America because of various disturbances there. You know people started moving to the Miami area. So, I started having an audience there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it is a magnet for a lot of Latin Americans. I mean it's a big—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —huge city.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean it's like a, you know, North American Latin American city. People can come up here, and the phones work. You know things work. But it's Latin, you know, it seems like Latin America. A lot of people, you know, let's say the younger generation would come up here, that maybe the parents would come and visit.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, when did you become aware of other Americans who were involved with the Latin American art scene, like Rachel Adler or others? Were there others?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, Rachel is a very good—I mean Rachel's gallery is really not a Latin American gallery. But she did have a gallery in Caracas for about 20 years, and she really knew that field, and she handled some major artists there, like GEGO. So here she combines, I think, the best of Latin American art, mostly geometric abstraction, which is her real specialty. And Cecilia de Torres, who was the daughter-in-law of Torres-Garcia, has had a gallery many, many years downtown. And she's also a very important scholar in this field. She's a real expert on the School of the South. She's doing the catalogue raisonné of Torres-Garcia. And I think contributes a lot to the field. There are people around the country, I mean, who—There's a gallerist, William Sheehy, who has a gallery called Latin American Masters, which is out in Los Angeles, and he's been working I would say since the mid- to late-'80s. I can remember him coming as a sort of a young person to my gallery and sort of buying some of his first paintings. But he later on opened up a very serious gallery. There are galleries around the country. There are also a number of sort of schlocky places. I mean not everything—I mean not all American art is great art, and not all Latin American art is great art. And I think it really in the end it has a lot to do with taste, what you show.

I think the biggest I don't know if it's progress, but it certainly is a change and it's important, is that major artists who might be categorized as Latin American artists are now being handled by galleries that are not calling themselves Latin American galleries. So I mean you have let's say Gabriel Orozco or Kuitca or Santiago Sierra. I mean there are—Or Beatriz Milhazes, Teresita Fernandez. I mean there are very, very good artists who are known through art fairs or known internationally, and they're just by the by Latin American. But they're being handled by international galleries. And I think that's really the biggest progress. I mean for me it's gratifying really because I think in some ways I was a harbor for people who couldn't get shown anywhere at the time. But now, you know, now they don't need me, which is good. I mean I think my whole point always was that this is not Latin America art; this is art. And I think that now, you know, you look at the artist, and it's whether the person is good or not.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. Well, you started out stating that you had found a niche. But, you know, the niche can grow, and it can change.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I guess the niche has to sort of, you know, program itself out in a way.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or evolve.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, when I started the Latin American sales at Sotheby's—we'll go back to that—I was doing something—The only way to market—I hate these words—but the only way to market this material was to get it together and present it in a way that people could find it and learn that they were interested in it. But it also had the effect of segregating some artists who felt that they were better off before. So that, for example, Botero, I mean he didn't want to be included in Latin American sales. And José Luis Cuevas said, "I am not Latin American. I am international." And I can understand that. But unfortunately, we needed these big names to create an umbrella for all the others. And in fact, no matter what the complaints were from some of the artists who felt they were better off before, the prices started going up because we started to really create competition for their work.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But now we've come to a point where it's important for these artists to be taken seriously, you know, within the larger framework.

JAMES McELHINNEY: As artists, regardless of ethnicity or national origin.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right. Or anything.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, to what extent in the '80s do you think the tendency of Americans to want to understand things in terms of race or gender or minority status—Because that, as you pointed out, was a great age for feminism; it was also—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, the beginning of, sort of, Hispanic awareness. I mean I think you know—

JAMES McELHINNEY: The Hispanic, Chicano, etc.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean look at all this—we read one, two articles every day about [Sonia] Sotomayor now. She's a very good example of the kind of person that is beginning to, you know, let's say emerge, get recognized. I mean had really I think a struggle at that time. but was intent on being the best.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I guess the question is to what extent do you in hindsight feel that you were challenged a bit by an American tendency perhaps to want to look at Latin American artists as being shaped in some way by these other dialogs about minority status, etc. Because in New York certainly we see a very strong—Well, have a look just at a place like El Museo del Barrio which started out primarily as Puerto Rican focused organization. And has expanded and expanded.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right. And a somewhat disorganized place, you know. Now it's really coming into its own. I don't know. In a way- in a way, I didn't mind at all sort of the obstacles that I was confronting because I wasn't Latin American. And I think—I haven't got a drop of Latin American blood in my body. I sort of look as if I might be from Mexico or Brazil or something. But I'm not. I mean I simply fell in love with the art that I found and that I learned about. I mean not all of it. But I mean I found things that I really identified with and that really spoke to me. And I sort of somehow, going along, doing shows, and running a gallery, just showing things that I really believed in and that I loved, I think it was an advantage for me that I wasn't coming from anywhere except my own inclinations. I mean I think there were some people that found it more difficult because they felt that they were obliged somehow to protest a little bit. So if you were Latin American and you were running a Latin American gallery, you know, that maybe was more difficult than if you were not.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you never succumbed to any kind of temptation to sort of adopt a posture as a Latin American dealer. You were just—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I am a dealer who specializes in Latin American art, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But because you found those aquarelles on the loading dock, and they spoke to you, and the work that you still exhibit speaks to you in the same way?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Well, it could be that in some past life I was down in Mexico or something. I really don't know. But, no, I certainly—I had a long struggle. But I just think it was because it's actually very difficult to open up an art gallery no matter what. It's a small business, and it's very hard. You have to develop some survivor instincts. And, you know, I sort of learned how to run a business as I was going along.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What was the biggest surprise that you had, having looked at the operations, the business, let's say, after a period of five years? Having looked at that point in 1987 and saying, wow, I never expected this to happen or that to happen. What kinds of revelations were you having at that point?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I think that—I don't know if I'm answering your question, but I'm trying to. When you start a gallery or any business, it really helps, although you won't appreciate it if it happens to you, if you start in a bad market. Or you start—Like if you start a business now, in 2009, that's probably the best time you could start a business because nothing is going to be easy for you. You're going to have to watch every penny. You're going to have to really suffer if you want to start a business. And somebody's going to have to want what you're selling because, I mean, everybody's being extremely careful about their money right now. And I started out in a very bad time, too. Consequently—And I also had come out of Sotheby's where I had watched this company that was riding high go into, you know, a really difficult time. So, I noted things that had happened there. For example, they had one—I mean Sotheby's was on 980 Madison Avenue forever. And then they opened up another one on York Avenue. And so, I mean I was there. And you know I watched. You know they doubled their overhead, but they didn't double their turnover, you know. That was a lesson I didn't actually go through myself because I watched it happen somewhere else.

And one of the things I—you know little by little things got better for me. But I was always expecting this awful thing was going to happen in the future. And sure enough, every five or six years it did happen. I mean the current problems that everybody's having in the economy and also in the art world, I mean it seemed as if the last cycle would never end, and you could sell anything to anybody. But it did end. And I just think that, you know, my biggest realization was that things happen in cycles. And, you know, it isn't due to my genius that I'm successful. You know if you start selling very well, most of the time it's because the market is good. I mean you may do better than someone else because you have better things or you're better at selling. But it's not because I'm a genius that I'm here after 27 years. It's because I, among other things, I was observant, and I think I was lucky to be starting in a really difficult time. And, you know, I do feel sorry for a lot of dealers who started maybe five or six years ago. You know it must have been unbelievable. Just to put things on the wall, and everything sold. And put more things on the wall, and open up a bigger space. And it just seemed that it couldn't end. And then it did end. And those people that survived this will obviously have a very good understanding in the future of what to do.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How to prepare themselves for the next down cycle.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And I think it—And the artists I think have to understand this, too. I mean any artist who's gone through this cycle must have a better understanding now of what it's like. I mean it's not—it's certainly a calling to be an artist. It's a wonderful thing, you know. But, you know, you're part of a team in a way. I mean you can paint away and nobody will know who you are. But if a dealer or curators can make you more famous. If you're lucky, your work will sell. If you're lucky, the work will go up in value. But I mean there certainly was a period recently of very unusual things going on. I'm thinking in terms of artists sort of taking over the whole thing and, you know, cutting everybody out because they can do it themselves.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You're speaking about Damien Hirst obviously.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I'm not mentioning names. But I think we all know who the artists were who just became untouchable. And, you know, now all of a sudden everything's different because—And this happens in all areas. I mean certainly the auction houses, you know, there became a point when they were trying to be everything to everybody, and, you know, lend you the money and sell you the painting. And, you know, redo your house or whatever. I mean they—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sell your house.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Sell your house. You know take your children on lecture tours. Whatever. I mean there were all these things. But in the end the auction business is an auction business. And what they did best was auctions. And guarantees and all these other things have, you know, which put them into the area of let's say other, you know, of banks and dealers. I mean they aren't so easy when the market goes off. So I think each sector sometimes gets a little overblown, you know, or a little cocky. And then they—I mean the balance goes back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is it really hubris, or is it actually gambling? Are people actually gambling? Is it art, or is it racehorses? The yearlings.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I certainly have collectors who have both. [Laughs.] Well, if you, you know, are going to pick who are going to be the great artists, considered the great artists 50 years from now, maybe that's gambling. Or maybe you just have a very good eye for what's really good art. And maybe some percentage of the artists that you picked out will turn out to be remembered and revered 50 years from now. But tastes change, you know. Tastes change, and then they come back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's hard to anticipate, especially in a world with Internet and computers and world travel accessible to almost everybody. That everyone's context is completely different every day than it is on any other day.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, that kind of like. I like the idea that, you know, I have a website, and that, you know, I can wake up in the morning, and someone from Australia can say, You know I really wonder could I—I like this artist that you have, you know. We had to recently figure out how to send five catalogs to Australia. You know we don't even know what it would cost. But, you know, I deal with people all over the world now. So I mean I think that is actually very nice. Because you used to take an ad in a magazine, and you wouldn't know if anyone saw it or not.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it would seem to me that a global village would need a gallery like yours.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] Well, and vice versa, I think. The other thing I was thinking when you were talking about, you know, hubris or whatever, or who's going to last, or what's a gamble, is who gets to decide? You know who decides what's good art, you know. I mean collectors who buy at auctions and pay more and more? I mean they're deciding what they like. And then if something's very expensive, then that's considered good. It doesn't necessarily mean that it is good. It just means that a lot more people like it than they like something else.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, taste, I guess, can be shaped by all sorts of things. I remember taking a class with Robert Herbert at Yale, art history. And he made a point of explaining to us, that while we think Monet went and only painted the sailboats at Argenteuil a hundred yards away, there were coal barges being unloaded that he also painted, but the collectors didn't buy those.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: They didn't like those.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And they did not end up in the museums and the art history books. But there they are.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So the public was editing the production.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, the public was receiving an edited version of it. So, you know, you're asking who edits? I mean I don't know.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, I think—I mean I know that. I mean pictures of a little girl sell better than pictures of little boys. And cows—you know sheep sell better than cows. I mean this is what we used to do just estimates at the auction house. I mean portraits of ladies do better than portraits of men.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The Russian painters, Komar and Melamid has that whole project about what was the ideal picture. You know it had to have a little bit of red. It had to have a blue sky. It had to have some water in it.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, Bill Lieberman, for a while we were having lunch together from time to time because he was—they were doing this big show at the MET: Mexico: Splendors of 30 Centuries. And so he needed my help a little bit in finding out where some paintings were and doing evaluations. So sometimes I would have lunch with him over at the MET. And at some point they acquired the Gelman Collection, the Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection. Not their Mexican collection, but their Matisse and cubists. And he took me around. He'd been a close friend of the Gelmans and had advised them on their acquisitions. But in the end it's always, I mean whether you buy something or not is always up to the collector. So, he took me around. They had installed the collection at the MET, but it hadn't been opened yet to the public. So, he walked me around, which was great fun. When we were through, he said, "Did you notice anything in particular about the collection that is remarkable?" You know I didn't know what he was driving at. He said, "Look how many times you see lavender or purple." You go around, and you see this Chagall and Juan Gris and this Matisse and Picasso and whatever. Over and over subliminally Jacques Gelman liked that color. So, without realizing it. I mean you can go through the book if you like. But it was really amazing. And, you know, there are funny little things like that. Sort of emotional responses that collectors have. I had one collector that I could always sell him a painting if it had a lot of orange in it. He had an orange Tamayo, and he had an orange Matta. He didn't know it, and I mean I didn't intentionally go find orange pictures. But, you know, if it was a choice between an orange picture and a green one, he would take the orange one every time. So, you have to go look in your house now and see if there's something that reveals you.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Gosh, I don't know if we could do that to ourselves so easily. [They laugh.] We'd need another person to come and analyze our taste.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I always like collectors who come and say: I collect pictures of people reading. So, if you ever have a picture of someone reading a book, let me know. Or, you know, picture that collect male nudes or skulls. A lot of people like skulls.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Skulls?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Even before now when everybody likes skulls, there were always people that liked skulls.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Memento Mori.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Would it be agreeable with you if we were to resume this in a week?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I think that would be great. Thank you so much for your time.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Thank you.

[END OF DISC 2]

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Mary-Anne Martin at her gallery in New York City on a beautiful day, July 22, 2009, at 2:25 p.m. in the afternoon.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I think that's enough of an introduction.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That really pins it down, I think.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Thank you. Happy to see you again.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: We perhaps today can explore some of the dynamics between Norte Americano galleries and, you know, the Latin American art scene and how you managed to connect the two.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: All right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Through your gallery.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Is there a question? Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Break it down kind of thing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Specifically. Well, we had sort of alluded, I think, last time to there being certain challenges in, you know, the way art is exhibited and consumed in these other areas of the world and how that happens here. Last time you spoke about establishing a business inside an auction house.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right. Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And how that expanded to become, you know, the gallery you have now. Well, just for example, I mean there is some—there are some challenges that I understand face people from the United States, dealers, scholars, working with Mexican ideas of patrimony and rights and reproduction access. Even to the point where there's a kind of party line or a kind of way that certain people who are in control of these assets want that art to be studied or sold or understood. What Cuevas called the "cactus curtain."

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] Well, I did run into that from time to time. And especially in my role as a, let's say, a little pioneer. You know I was doing something that seemed interesting to me, putting together these auctions first of Mexican paintings and then later it grew or expanded to Latin American paintings. But definitely I ran into this idea that only a Mexican can understand Mexican art. And what is this American woman doing or think she's doing? Because it was basically—that was just what people believed. And I don't know if that's true for every country, but definitely, you know, I used to hear very often, oh, she doesn't really know anything. I don't think I knew anything in the beginning. But little by little I got to know quite a lot. I mean now—I might have mentioned this to you before, but it's gotten very heated lately—the issue of fakes. There's a real industry now of producing fakes; a particular artist that is being produced is Frida Kahlo. And an incredible number of fakes by Frida Kahlo being produced.

I was shown a Siqueiros yesterday, someone came in. And I actually already had a picture of it on my computer because it's been offered several times. But it came with a letter—well, various certificates, you know, from various—Well, there's a relative of the artist who has, I guess, the moral right in Mexico to give certificates. And then there's also a museum official who will write certificates for anything, you know. He's been fired now. But I mean this picture had all the usual certificates, all the usual suspects, every kind of documentation that seems

impressive but is really worthless. Then it also came with a letter from the artist's widow, which was dated 1979, and a translation of that letter. And that stopped me for a second because even though I knew the painting was a fake, this woman was—[phone rings.] Excuse me. [Audio break.] She's credible. And then I looked at the letter. First of all, I was given a Xerox of a letter, so it was one of those things where they sort of fabricate a stationery that looks important. And then it was signed by her. But you could definitely take two—I mean now with computers you could do anything.

But the thing I looked at, and I read it, and I said to the person who was presenting me with this painting, which was being offered to him for over \$7 million. I mean that was outrageous because even an authentic one hasn't gone for that much yet, by Siqueiros. And as I said, "Well, look, here's the answer." Because Angelica Sequeiros is a credible person. But she says here that the painting was done in 1944, and the medium was pyroxyline, which is this sort of plastic paint, which was used on novopan. And novopan hadn't been invented in 1944. So, the letter is a fake. And anybody who can make a fake painting can certainly make a fake letter. So, you know, you can take these certificates, which are worthless, and you can take everything here that's worthless. And this one thing that might possibly validate the painting is a fake. So, I think he was a little bit—

JAMES McELHINNEY: And an ill-informed fake.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, he actually—This person—it's interesting—he'd actually gone down to meet the relative. I won't say the name because I don't like to, you know, defame people. But he'd gone to a lot of trouble to really verify all of this. But this is just one of maybe, 30 or 40, paintings in this group that have been; and they're constantly being offered to people in the United States. The interesting thing is that there's a catch-22 aspect to it. Because if the works are genuine, they really can't be exported from Mexico because his work has been declared national patrimony. And if they're fakes, then they can be exported, but although they're not really supposed to come into this country because then the FBI gets involved. But it is kind of amusing that these people go—they're constantly trying to bring these things in. And there have been shows that have been closed down. I mean there was an entire Siqueiros exhibition that made its way to Chicago and was closed down by the FBI.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Because it was not attended with the appropriate releases or—?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No. Because they were all fakes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: They were all fakes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Exactly like this one from the same source with the same certificates. And I actually was asked at that point, which I did, to form a panel of experts, which met in Washington, DC. And we all examined all of these paintings. No, actually we met in—I'm sorry—Chicago because that's where the painting were impounded. And demonstrated why every one of these paintings was a fake.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How did these people get these certificates, though? Are the people who oversee, you know, patrimony, are they cognizant of this? Is this a nod and a wink environment?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I think that you could surmise that the people making the certificates are complicit with the people making the paintings.

JAMES McELHINNEY: One would assume, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: In the case of Siqueiros, it's very interesting because he did acres and acres of murals in Mexico. And he had assistants. And these assistants were trained to work in his style. This is a reality. If you go to the Chapultepec palace or various places, you know, where he has painted murals, I mean he did not paint every stroke of those murals. But then the people were authorized. They worked with him, and he signed the paintings, and they were done by him, they were supervised by him. But that was then. And now there are these people who are very well trained to work in his style, and they are creating easel paintings that are based on the murals that Siqueiros made that they helped with. And they're kind of funny because they're not smart enough to really do it right. Because Siqueiros did make easel paintings. If you made an easel painting, then the composition made some sense within the framework, you know—within the frame.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Of course.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But these paintings, as if you look at a mural that's 100 feet long, and they'll just go section by section by section. Or they'll pull out somebody.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, it's a fragment.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But what they don't do is finish the job. So, one of the paintings that we saw in

Chicago that had been impounded from this show, you know, had several Zapatistas standing along, you know, with these wide hats and their muskets or whatever.

JAMES McELHINNEY: White clothes, rifles, bandoliers.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right. Exactly. And one of them toward the end had this sort of boomerang form sort of into his head. And you looked at this—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It was the edge of another hat.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: From the missing figure.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But then we had brought all these books on Siqueiros. So, we opened up to the actual mural, and we'd say, Look, here's the next Zapatista in the painting, and there's his hat, and it's coming into this painting. Siqueiros would never do that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, these people aren't even original enough to edit out the hat brim.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Exactly. Exactly. Then there was one that seemed to be oil on canvas, you know, could we take this out of the frame a little bit? We'd take it out of the frame a little bit, and it just sort of like peeled off. It was like slapped on, you know, some kind of—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, are you imaging that these are coming out of some like alleged Asian hotel art sweatshop environments?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, these particular ones done in—they're in Mexico. They're coming out of Mexico.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And these are people who studied with him or—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely. And they know—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So why not just say "School of "or "Circle of"?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I guess it's because the amount of money.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Greed. Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, when the man said that he—you know this relative had written on the certificate it was worth seven million or something or other, I said to him, "Honestly, it's a fake. But you can get it if you want it for about a hundred." Because I know other ones that have been sold. I mean there are people—I mean there's a doctor in Utah, I know, who bought a very big one. It's was just an answer to a prayer. He'd always wanted a Siqueiros painting and a really nice one with, you know, Zapata on his horse or whatever. If there's any subject that Siqueiros is famous for, you can find a very nice easel painting right now. And they're coming in all sorts of ways. It's interesting. But it's also hard to do anything about any of it. Our whole panel of experts that met in Chicago a few years ago, it was a lot of trouble. There was someone from one of the auction houses, and there was me—I, a restorer who was familiar with his technique; we had a couple of gallery owners from Mexico, a couple of writers who were very well known for their writing on Siqueiros. There was a very famous collector who has his own private museum. It was a very illustrious group. And after we spent a day there showing why every single painting in the group was a fake, in the end then the FBI has to decide or I guess it's the court, if they want to go to trial. And then they have to decide if a crime has been committed, and if so, against whom. If then —

JAMES McELHINNEY: Whom to charge, etc.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And also who's going to pay. Is it worth having this trial, you know, financially? Because it's going to be your money and my money that's going to pay for having this done.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So was there any subsequent—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No. In the end the things were returned. I mean they're much more interested in going to trial if someone makes Gucci fakes or, you know, some really big brand name where there's a lot of money involved. So anyway, they all went back, and they're all coming around the market again.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's an interesting kind of a comparison, to compare artwork to handbags.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, handbags is business, you know. And I don't think that anybody really cares very much—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Artwork is not business.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —if a couple of people are gullible and buy fake art. I mean that would have been the mantle under which they would had the trial, would have been consumer protection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it would seem to me that if, you know, the government, if the Mexican government, is so eager to protect its—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Patrimony.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, the cultural heritage, it would seem like they would be equally strenuous in trying to discourage these kinds of spurious attempts to put artwork on the market that isn't—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It degrades the real work for sure.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Of course.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And you just happened to have mentioned something that is very timely. Because in the *New York Times* on the 21st of June, there was an article in the antiques section announcing a book that's going to be coming out, I think in September, published by—I guess I can use the name of it. It's Princeton Architectural Press, which I don't think has anything to do with Princeton University. I think it may be Princeton, New Jersey, based. But they publish books on photography and books on design, and I looked them up. I think that they have some sort of distribution deal with Chronicle Books. It's quite serious.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A lot of publishing there. SAT's there. I think even the *Wall Street Journal* is around there somewhere.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But it sounds sort of important because of the name Princeton. It's like, you know, Harvard Beets or something.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right it has branding.. [Laughs.]

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Anyway, so a lot of people read this. It's an art writer—I mean somebody who does antiques sections for the *New York Times*. And it's an article, and it's one of those things where they—basically they're taking the information from press releases. So, ignore the first part of this one because it isn't really what I found relevant. And the second one says: "Frida Kahlo's suitcases." And it starts out: "Frida Kahlo expressed masochistic love for her philandering husband, Diego Rivera; not only by incorporating his image into her self-portraits, but also by obsessively monitoring his tastes in food in her recipe books, which turned up a few years ago at a reclusive collector's home in Mexico City. Kahlo scribbled notes about which desserts and monkey brain dishes Rivera would eat with great gluttony. And how he would paw through tortillas on the table at Christmas and make them simply disgusting. She imagined a love potion that might tether him to her, concocted from warm sea twigs and ground-up toads. It would take effect after a serenade during a night of an eternal moon." So, this is going on, and it's total nonsense.

Then it goes on: "Carlos and Letitia Noyola, antiques dealers in San Miguel de Allende, bought the Kahlo Archives four years ago, along with suitcases and chipped lacquered boxes painted with Rivera's and Kahlo's names. A trunk also contained some embroidered blouses and also lottery tickets, hotel receipts, taxidermied hummingbirds, and a French medical textbook about amputation." Then supposedly it's inscribed. "'I am only a circus spectacle,' Kahlo wrote in the book's margins, probably soon after her gangrenous lower right leg was removed in 1953." Anyway, these people, who bought this archive, have collaborated with a photographer—and she seems very legitimate. I looked her up also, Barbara Levine, a photography curator in San Miguel de Allende—on a book about the collection of more than 1200 items, *Finding Frida Kahlo: diaries, letters, receipts, notes, sketches, stuffed birds, and other newly discovered keepsakes*. It's coming this fall from Princeton Architectural Press. Anyway, it basically documents a—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's curious.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's not really about art anymore. It becomes about celebrity. It's like a chandelier that was owned by Liberace or something.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But the truth is that these are all fakes. Every single—And, you know, you can look at some of them on the Internet. You can see some of them—some of them were exhibited a couple of years ago in San

Miguel de Allende. You can still go to a website where you can see these things. And various scholars and curators and auctions—I mean a lot of us have been passing these things around and saying, Isn't this funny? Look at this. I had a collector who was down in San Miguel de Allende looking for furniture and ran into—basically was shown these things. And then wrote to me incredibly enthusiastically. He said, "Mary-Anne, you must come down. You have to see this. This is incredible. Maybe you'll want to buy it." And, you know, they're just showing these silly-silly fakes to people that are extremely moved by them.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's like hawking holy relics on a pilgrimage route.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But, you see, it includes little fake paintings. I mean there are lots of other little things in there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well in the tableau industry.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There must be just thousands of these things in the marketplace that are just hot off the presses. Or the easels—whatever.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, this one has, you know, like this real story attached to it. These people, the Noyolas, "Bought the collection from a lawyer who lived behind a double set of gates. The house was like a bunker, protected by 200 dogs. And everything was dirty, dusty, and full of fungus." They explained in an interview with this woman who's writing the book. Adding, "We wish him to remain nameless." Which is convenient. "The lawyer told him—Noyola said he purchased the artifacts in 1979 from a woodcarver who had been friends with the Riveras. The dealer has since verified the story with scholars. Kahlo bartered her pictures and trinkets for the craftsman's picture frames. And just before her death in '54, she handed him the papers marked "Personal Archive for My Private Life."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sounds like a chapter out of a B. Traven story.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, anyway, what it is, is a hoax. And for a couple of years this hoax has been taking place in Mexico, in San Miguel de Allende, which is a lovely town, and a wonderful place to visit, and lots of American tourists go there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: An Anglo colony.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But now I've been granted this new job which is—I've always figured that there's no way that I can possibly police every, you know, fake painting that I'm shown or asked about. I give my opinions when asked. But I've now instituted this new policy which is border control. And I've decided, you know, it's fine as long as it stays in Mexico and everybody's having a lot of fun. There are some people who have pretty good suspicions who are making these. And I won't go into it. But once it starts coming into this country and into the U.S. market, as with the Siqueiros fakes in Chicago; or a situation like this where a, I think, credible or serious publication is about to come out, you can go on Amazon, and you can see it already. And I noticed it's already been marked down from \$50 to \$31.50. So, it's already discounted; hasn't even come out. But they're doing a lot of PR for it. And this article in the *New York Times* was basically picked up without any attempt to verify anything. I mean nobody—this person just basically got the information from the press releases. It's very credible, and they printed it. And usually you call someone, maybe, and say, "What do you think of this?" before you do it, print something like this.

Someone sent me another article, which was a woman who writes for the *Washington Post*. And she had been covering a festival in San Miguel de Allende; I think it's a music festival right now. And among the things she did when she was there, was she came upon this really amazing trove of Frida Kahlo memorabilia. Of course, exactly the same group of things—and I have her article, too. But this woman at least said: "There were so many of them and whatever, that I wondered could they possibly be real? And then I was assured that yes they were and everything." But at least she expressed just a sliver of doubt. And I mean again, I think the fascination with Frida Kahlo has come to a point where people—they want to be fooled.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, you wonder how many people own Elvis jumpsuits.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's like pieces of the true cross.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Exactly. Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean everybody you know. I remember studying in school that the wonderful thing about the true cross was that if you took a piece of it, you know, it basically regenerated it. That was one of the magical qualities of it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's like the loaves and fishes. You could just keep on—

JAMES McELHINNEY: The biggest cross ever built.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, it's always the same size, but it just keeps on—you know like some undersea animals that regenerate things. But anyway.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Salamanders' and frogs' legs.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I was talking to a very serious Frida Kahlo scholar yesterday, who said that—we were talking about this, again, this Noyola affair or whatever or this group of works that's about to be published—and he said that the way they managed to get them certified as authentic, which they really haven't been, was to ask if they could be exported from Mexico. And so, the answer was: Well, no. Frida Kahlo's works cannot, they're national patrimony, they can't be exported. So, these people now are going around and saying, you know, these works are national patrimony. You know, they can't be exported. But it's a like a backhanded way of saying they're authentic.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But they're not. In fact, one of the authentications, which you can see online if you go to a website—I can tell it to you—where these things were shown earlier, a couple of years ago in San Miguel de Allende, they showed you the authentications. And one of them is by someone that a lot of us believe is actually one of the people who made them. You know so this person's well known and knew Frida Kahlo well. But anyway, so there's a letter now that's being put together that we hope will be signed by a number of very reputable people in Mexico and out of Mexico who know Frida's work. And we're hoping that we'll be able to send an open letter to the *New York Times*. And I've also asked an investigative reporter—art reporter—if he would like to maybe write a story about this, because it actually is very interesting.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It is. You were speaking last time about the affair of Hans van Meegeren in Holland.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's kind of analogous. But do you think it's the same kind of lack of diligence on the part of the journalist in this article here that you were quoting is comparable to the attitude of the FBI towards the show in Chicago. That it's art; it doesn't really matter.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, I think—The thing with the FBI, I learned a lot about the FBI. [Laughs.] I mean they only have seven people dealing with art fraud for the entire country.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Art fraud, art theft?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Seven, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Art anything or just art fraud?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I think art fraud.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And, you know, it's nice that there are seven of them, and it's kind of fun because you can get them on the phone, you know. I know the one in New York, another one in Chicago. Until recently they didn't have email. In other words, the FBI did not have email. You know like fbi.gov or whatever. You'd have to write them at gmail or AOL or something. I think finally they've been given email. But you get an idea of how our government works, which is slowly. Well, you know, what we want is for enough funds to be devoted to this kind of thing maybe for it to be taken seriously.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, do you think there's any kind of a double standard being exerted by the Institute of Aesthetics, for example, on things that are headed out of the country? Do they decide or is it just anything that Frida touched automatically becomes a national holy relic? Or is it a matter of discernment.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, Frida has only—she only became a saint in the last, I don't know, 30, 35 years.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: When I started even learning about Mexican art, I didn't know—I mean Frida Kahlo was not a household word.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, she was a sidebar. She was a wife.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Of a famous painter who painted, too. And she was, you know—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It was Hayden Herrera that launched all of this interest in her.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I don't think Hayden Herrera could have imagined that the thing would just sort of lose control.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Of course not.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I'm looking at my little Frida Kahlo this and, you know, stickers and everything.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I should say that to the tape that this is a cutout card.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right. But there are others around.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is it a get-well card?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, no, you can make it anything you want because you can add these little stickers.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I see. Frida's become iconic like Elvis like Marilyn like George Washington.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Michael Jackson perhaps?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Michael Jackson imminently. Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: All right. The thing that I—With the Frida Kahlo, the person with the really interesting biography, who inspires young girls and people with—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Eyebrows.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] Yes, eyebrows and back problems. That's one thing. But the thing I'm complaining about is the gullibility of people to think that—first of all that her paintings were so poor that these things that—I mean I printed some of them out. I mean that some of these things could be real. When that group of supposed Jackson Pollocks was found, you know, the Herbert Matter. And that was maybe four years ago, whenever that—Naturally there are lots of articles. Oh, look, there are all these Pollocks, and they found them in their brown paper. They were forgotten. They're all identical size. They're all little, which is unusual. And one person says they're right. And most everybody else says they're wrong. And I looked at that and, you know, granted I'm an art professional. But I looked at them, and I didn't have to look at them more than once to say, well, those are those are going to turn out to be fake. The thing about Frida is that people don't even consider. Someone says, Oh, look, here I've found this bunch of annotated letters or, you know, a cast that has—

JAMES McELHINNEY: A wooden leg or something, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Absolutely. Well, actually when I got this email from the collector that had gone down to San Miguel de Allende to buy furniture, this is a couple of years ago, this person wrote me an email. She was very excited in fact. I want you to come down. And one of the things—I finally found the email. "Also, there was a diary that included a night she spent with Trotsky [Leon Trotsky], which had some very interesting drawings which I will tell you about in person." I mean, you know, these people that are putting together this hoax or this collection of fake documents, they're very funny. You know so they're putting in all the things that you would hope to find. You know my night with Trotsky. [Laughs.] Anyway, so it was very touching. And I must—and I wrote to this person that it was a fake. And she said, "Well, I must say the whole thing was very moving even if fake." So, people basically are being given what they want.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Another kind of fiction.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, well, in a way it's kind of a triumph for Latin American art, you know, that there is somebody who's become so prominent that it's worth doing all this.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, there's a whole history of frauds like this. Like William—I don't know if that's the name—Ireland, who was an 18th century theater person who "found" happy endings to *Hamlet* and to *King Lear*.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, I never heard that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: David Garrick and others, the Drury Lane crowd, were all agog at this. And they all were so happy to play happy endings to *Lear* and to *Hamlet*.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: And they blessed the whole enterprise. And of course, it was an utter and complete sham, a fraud.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That is wonderful.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But people want to have these things. I guess the, you know, demand is there for exactly this kind of thing. But how does that, as a person who's representing Latin American art to an American, international audience—American and international audience—I mean how do these shenanigans affect, you know, the way that you're able to do what you do?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I was thinking about that last night. And this has been a battle my whole professional life, which is there are days when you say, All right, if people like this Corot, and they think it's real, and it gives them pleasure, what's the difference? You know. And then you say but there is a difference because this is real and this is not real. And, usually the fakes lack something if only creativity. But I mean there aren't too many fakes that I think—Well, I think the fakes that are really that great, we don't know what they are because they've passed. But I think it does matter certainly in the market like the market for Frida Kahlo's work. She didn't do that many works. I mean there is a catalogue raisonné, and the catalogue raisonné is being revised by two very serious people. And quite a number of things have turned up since the first attempt came out, which I think was in '88. So, I mean there are works. Every so often I have found an original Frida Kahlo. I found three diary pages. You know she used to—There is her diary, but she used to take things out and give them to people as presents. And, you know, these really are authentic. The person that she gave them to really exists; these really are, you know—his children have them, and there's still one more drawing, and it's published in a book.

But there are things that you can find, but very, very rarely. So, it's really—it is upsetting that suddenly someone is now unleashing 1200 works that are false. I mean because among other things, even if the market stayed up, if there were so many, even if there was no such thing as supply and demand, once people find out that these things are fake, then the authentic ones are also questioned. I've always liked the fact that if someone buys something for me, they know that I know what I'm selling. That if anything ever were wrong, I would take it back. They understand that I know what I'm looking at. At this point in my life, I like the fact that I have a good reputation for that. Obviously the more I do to unmask something like this—and I am actually involved at the moment with trying to move this along so that by the time this book gets out people will also understand it. Basically, it's a document of a whole group of fakes, which actually might be useful. But it also makes me in the future have to justify things that I'm doing much more. You know if the word gets out, oh, you know, if you're interested in a Frida Kahlo, there are so many fakes you have to be very careful.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Go take it to Mary-Anne Martin.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, no, I don't know if they take it—I'm just saying, though, that Mary-Anne Martin herself then suddenly has to justify—I do justify what I do. But sometimes, you know, people just say, "Well, how do you know so much?" And sometimes it's hard to say. But, you know, I just do know. And I don't know everything. But there are certain artists that I do know very well. Diego Rivera is one and Frida Kahlo is another. I find Orozco much more difficult. It's interesting. Sometimes you get a feeling for how an artist works. And as always you always learn more as you go along.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, one of the things that I think may be worth exploring is this idea of certain high art and low art. And let's just—I mean in the last 20, 30, 40 years, you think about, well, like people like, you know, the Vogels, who collected—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —all of this work by initially fairly obscure people who were working conceptually. And now, of course, they've gained status and legitimacy. But materially they're not necessarily objects that are well crafted like this drawing by Diego or fall under, you know, any of the conventional historical criteria for what is a work of art, painting or drawing or sculpture. Let's just for the sake of argument say that all of this stuff that's in San Miguel is authentic. It's not, granted. But let's say if it were, would there be any merit to the idea that some people in the marketplace might be trying to create a market for artists who related artifacts, ephemera, souvenirs, Edward Hopper's hat, you know.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, that's nice.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean is there a possibility that somebody in this environment now, in this economic environment, might be trying to sort of open up another market?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I have no problem with that whatsoever if the things are real. In fact, they did find a huge trove of things that belonged to Frida Kahlo in the Frida Kahlo Museum—or house—where she lived. And there was this blocked up door, and they found all these, clothing and necklaces and things that, you know, you see in her paintings. They actually published a very beautiful book showing all these things. You know I mean I'm not saying people don't find things that were hidden. But I'm just saying that if you are manufacturing—It's like Howard Hughes or something.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, right. Howard, yes, that—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That was Clifford Irving who decided to—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Melvin and Howard, yes. Yes, the Clifford Irving thing. Well of course he had other adventures we know about, too. But I'm just asking if there was an attempt to open up another kind of art market of a sort of low order of objects. Not—you know they're just artifacts. How would that complicate what somebody like you do? Because somebody might—it would be just another genre of object?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I'm sure it exists in some form now. As you said, like Elvis. I mean the person has to be famous enough or have a sort of folk following—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —that anybody would want to—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Marilyn Monroe or Elvis Presley.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Marilyn Monroe, Lincoln, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Washington.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, I went to visit someone last week, and he showed me the only real death mask of Napoleon. He collects Napoleona, you know, and he got it for a song at Christie's a long time ago. Supposedly. But, you know, there are people who like things like that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: People will collect anything. There's a collector for anything.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Apparently.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What about Frida? Now she's very well known. But what about other women artists in Mexico from that period? Everybody knows Tina.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Tina Modotti. Well, there's Alice Rahon, who was married to Wolfgang Paalen. And she very strangely—I mean she was a poet in France. So, I mean she was a poet when she lived in Europe. When she moved to Mexico, she started painting, and she's very good. There's a retrospective of her work in Mexico City right now that I think will serve to call more attention to her.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Elevate her to more awareness?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: There's Maria Izquierdo, who is a wonderful painter, who sadly has been added to the list of painters whose work is national patrimony. I happen to be very against the concept because all it does is drive people underground, restrain trade, really hurt the market for artists. In other words, someone is a great painter, and then Mexico decides, well, we will add this person to the list. I mean Frida wasn't added to the list until I think '84. And Maria Izquierdo was added a couple of years ago.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Simply because a museum director, who was doing an homage to Maria Izquierdo, had trouble borrowing a painting that he wanted to borrow that had been sold by a Mexican to somebody in the United States. And the person in the United States didn't want to lend it. So, this person who had power at the time was able to convince the authorities that Maria Izquierdo's work should be added to the list of artists whose work cannot be exported. So, in one fell swoop this artist's work went from being freely traded—I mean really the prices were very good. I mean people were interested in Maria Izquierdo. And the next day collectors who own her work—and I knew a couple of collectors who had maybe 30 works; I mean they really were putting them away for one reason or another—one person said this was my pension plan basically. I love my Maria Izquierdos, and someday when I need money, I'll be able to sell them. And then suddenly they're put in a position where

they can no longer reach the international market. Which absolutely affects things. If you have—well, I can use the example of Maria Izquierdo or Frida Kahlo. If you have a picture that's in Mexico and cannot leave Mexico, an identical work happened to leave Mexico before 1984, or maybe it was painted in the United States because Frida lived here or whatever, the work that's outside that's open to the entire world is generally much more valuable than the one that can only be sold in Mexico. And so they really aren't helping themselves. I think what they should be doing is, if they want to, is this is such an important artist, we will designate these works as being the most significant works.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Specific pieces.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Specific works, these works. And then they have to do something like what they do in England; which is if somebody has a \$4 million Frida Kahlo and someone wants to buy it or a museum or someone outside, then there has to be a waiting time. And then they have to figure out how to buy—if it's so important, they ought to be able to figure out how to buy it, raise a subscription.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In a lot of the countries in Europe, if you want to purchase a work of art that's an historical work of art, you need to go to the government agency that will give you a license to export it. Or won't allow you to. I mean this incident of krater at the MET and, you know the—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Euphronios krater, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —repatriation of that object to the Italians. And the endless issues over the Elgin Marbles and other things like that. I'm sure that—I mean my assumption, and I'll ask you if it happened in this way, is that, you know, the patrimony over Mexican art, what we might call studio art or art by modern artists or historical artists last 100 years or earlier, was merely an extension of the laws that were designed to protect archaeological artifacts.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. It started with archaeological works, which I think is correct.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Although I think that you can have—you can say that, all right, if you're working on a dig, the most important things they can decide will stay in Mexico and be part of the museum system. And these works can be sold. All they do otherwise is drive people underground. I mean if you fly over Mexico, if you're in the plane and you look down, you can see mounds everywhere. I mean there's so much material still unearthed. I mean there's plenty for everybody. [Laughs.] But, you know, they obviously need the money to excavate. That would be a very good way to get the money to excavate would be to say that a portion of the findings will be available, and others will be—obviously they have to keep the most important treasures. But the way they're doing it now they're just creating a market for an underground trade.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. It seems like it makes no sense at all that you would impose that kind of restriction on export by artists and not by object.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Because if you look, for instance, you know, the Japanese have a law that anything regarded as an important cultural asset or national treasure may not leave Japan. But those objects are specific objects. They're not everything made by an artist who may have one piece thus qualified.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean that's the thing. Technically, if you have a telephone doodle by Diego Rivera, you would have to go to Bellas Artes to get a permiso to export it. And then they would either give it or not. I mean they do actually say that you can petition to get something out. It's just that everybody's afraid if they do ask, they'll be told no. And now the government will know exactly what they have. So basically, people don't believe that they'll be allowed to export anything.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The other thing that seems sort of astonishing is that one of their major industries is tourism.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mm-hmm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And it would seem like Mexican art, which exists in almost all of the major art museums around the world and Latin American indeed, it's become sort of the thing everyone thinks of when you say Latin American art. Most people immediately go to the Mexican muralists. It would seem like these things for tourism would serve the purpose of kind of little embassies hanging all over the world to get people to come to Mexico. It would seem that that, too, would be another argument against this whole—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I think that was the argument of Olga Tamayo, because when Tamayo died, I mean

he certainly was an internationally famous Mexican painter.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, yes, he lived here.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, he worked here, he lived here. But he has not been added to the list of national patrimony artists. He died. He's not on the list. And she didn't want him—I mean I don't know if it was considered an honor, but I mean Diego Rivera died, yet his work became national patrimony. I remember when Siqueiros died, you know—I mean it's been sort of automatic for famous artists: Orozco, Atl [ph], Velasco.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean is it the Instituto Aesthetica that determines who is and is not patrimony? Is there an agency or an individual, a cabinet post, a minister?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, it's not like one person.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A committee?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, it's definitely part of the government. I have done research into it, but I would have to—I've learned it, and I've basically forgotten it. But it would be a little bit like reading someone's name into the National Record. I mean it's like a congressional thing almost.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see. I see.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: They decide—They do have a sort of aesthetic branch of the government that deals with—I mean it's like a minister who then they decide if someone is going to be included.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I'm just curious because I think that the interesting thing is to understand how an artist becomes thus designated.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I'm just looking something up. There was a woman who was in this post a few years ago. Her name was Sari Bermúdez. And I think that she was in the post at the time that this book was published. They give the title here. It was that woman who was beseeched, as it were, to add Maria Izquierdo to the list of artists whose work was—It was way, way after the artist's death. And she's no longer the minister of this branch of the government. But I'll have to look it up. I won't hold you up, but I'll answer you.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, that's okay. So, you're looking at a book by Gunther Gerzso?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, this is—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or of his work.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: This is a catalog of a retrospective show of the work of Gunther Gerzso, which was done in 2003. He died in 2000. He unfortunately didn't get to—or he didn't live to see this great book or this great show. But this is an artist that I had been very involved with, both during his life and now with his estate.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I'm curious whether relatives or surviving spouses or anybody like that has any say in whether or not an artist is deemed patrimony.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That's an absolutely excellent question. And I do remember that, as I said, Olga Tamayo didn't want Rufino to be added to that list, although Tamayo was quite significant in the Mexican art world since the Tamayos had given a museum to the country basically. So, it may be that if she said something, they'd listen. Okay, Sari Bermúdez, this woman that I was talking about, she was president of the National Consuelo—that's like council—for Culture and Arts. So that person, that post, basically—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is the person who oversees this.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I don't know if it's one person. But the person in that post basically oversees this kind of issue.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sort of an aside, do you think the United States ought to have a ministry of culture?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.] We always have the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts], right?

JAMES McELHINNEY: We have NEA, NEH, Smithsonian. There are agencies who kind of look after all that.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's interesting because sort of the more serious an art discipline is, somehow, the more it needs to be protected. Usually because the more intellectual it is, the less commercial it is. So, we wind up having to raise funds for the opera and, you know, for people to study classical music, or the museums. I think in

a way the museums in the last 30 or 40 years have been reduced to becoming very commercial in terms of, you know, their gift stores and all the attending memorabilia that comes. How often do you go to an exhibition and you can't wait to get to the store at the end? Somehow that's comical. But I mean there are so many things. And, you know, just the blockbuster shows that pander, I think, to large audiences which is the only way that these people can keep the places going.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, if you go to France, if you go to the House of Monet, you actually enter through what was his studio, which is now an immense shop full of china patterns—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: This has a lot to do with the Americans.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and scarves and hats and all the rest, paint boxes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I went to Giverny. I lived in Europe a long time ago, and I went with my husband, we went to Giverny. I wanted to see, you know, the bridge. I wanted to—And you couldn't find it. And finally, you know, I went up to, "Monsieur, s'il vous plait—" I asked some person walking by, you know, "Où est la maison de Monet?" And he sort of looked at me. And then he sort of pointed, well, go around there and whatever. And there was sort of a parallel road that was nothing, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Then we got to this place which was gated. Then if you looked through, you could see the water lilies and the bridge.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And that road used to be a railroad in [inaudible], right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: This was like in—it had to be sometime between '68 and '71.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And there were no American Friends of Giverny. None of this had happened yet.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. It's before [Lila] Wallace and [Daniel J.] Terra and all these people showed up.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. You had to try to find it, and it was absolutely—I wouldn't say a nothing; it was just there. Lucky they didn't pave it over or something.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's astonishingly small.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Even now, I mean. But my whole point was to say that, you know, they at least greet you with all of the commerce—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, it's horrible. Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And then you have to go through it. And once you've run the gauntlet of all the commerce, then you have the gardens and the water lilies and all of that. But I think, yes, it seems like in the past 20, 25, 30 years, that anytime a museum needs to raise a lot of money, Monet, Van Gogh, King Tut, whoever. You know just to pack them in.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: They're the big ones.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Even—I was at a show at the Phillips last fall: Christo.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Christo!

JAMES McELHINNEY: And he was hanging something over a canyon in Colorado, Upper Arkansas River.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Interesting project. But down in the shop they had a tote bag, they had a sketchbook. I mean living artists actually having after-market commerce, which is I guess the way of the future.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It is—I don't know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, how has this—are there any other parallels to the Mexican patrimony policy in other parts of Latin America?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Here's my—You don't have to but I'm just saying....

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's funny: Salvador Dali surreal-its, sticky-notes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, Dali sticky-notes and then him.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, that's so funny.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I mean there are so many things like this.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, yes. Sticky-notes. So, this is basically a Post-It pad with—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's not too bad. I mean I didn't buy it; it was sent to me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's got a little palette and a picture of Dali with the *Persistence of Memory* behind him. But, for instance, you know, the Venezuelans have this whole abstraction of op art sort of canon.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Soto, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. And as I understand it, certain people like the Cisneros and others have been really—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Cisneros and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —trying to sort of push that style.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: They're promoting—yes. Their basic interest is now—I think it's their mission to demonstrate to the outside world that Latin America is not just paintings about fruit and flowers and politics. And, you know, there is other art coming out.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There're overweight people—[They laugh.]

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, she calls it Chiquita Banana art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Chiquita Banana art. That's very funny.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And, you know, so—But I personally—I mean Patricia Cisneros is very serious and has done a tremendous amount for the field as a patron of the arts and a trustee of the MET—or the Modern; I mean she's really—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Hasn't she endowed a curator or —?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And a room. I mean she's really campaigned and been very serious about what she's done and obviously put her money where her mouth is.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Effective.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: The only think I reject about this is the idea that there's some kind of a war on between abstraction and figuration, between conceptual art and, you know, social protest. There is no war.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In the U.S., in the United States, I guess there was, as I understand it, because I went to school during—at the School of Art at Yale in, you know, the '70s, that there was actually a lot of rancor and competition and friendly argument between people in either camp. But I think, as I understand in speaking to older artists, that that was never really the case in the '50s. And it isn't the case now. That it was a moment. But you're saying that the—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, art historians—I mean, you know, people have to write about something and they have to believe something, they have to curate from some point of view. And I'm just saying I don't necessarily agree with the idea that there's a war on, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, I agree with you absolutely.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I can look at a Gunther Gerzso, and this is an artist that I truly admire and collect and have sold many works of and will devote a lot of my life to in the future. And then I can look—I mean there's some works by Diego Rivera, where I mean they could have been painted by an angel. An incredible artist and an incredible draftsman. And one doesn't deny the other. It's like I like rock music, and I like Haydn.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, you don't have to choose. You can enjoy it all.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It all has merit.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, you know, I don't like rap. I don't think everything is equal. I'm just saying that there are—I mean different things appeal to different people, and that they don't necessarily cancel each other out. I do think that there that there are some things that are better than others. But there might be someone sitting over there that thinks exactly they're opposite things from what I think.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You have some—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Notes?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Notes. And perhaps we should take the conversation in a different direction now.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, they won't take too long. But you asked me a question, you know, in our first interview, and I answered it. I was unprepared for it. And later on I thought back and said, "Oh, I really forgot something." And I think it was one of your first questions where you asked me, "What was the first art that I saw?"

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I said, "Well, my own." But I actually forgot something very significant that actually became one of those cosmic connections that you don't realize is happening. When I was a little girl, I lived in Greenwich Village, and we lived 219 West 13th Street. And we had a little garden in the back which we shared; the next-door neighbors also opened out into this garden. I was two years old, three years old, and these people next to us were—they became friends of my parents. I just knew them by their first names, which were kind of funny to me. The woman, it was a couple, her name was Skippy, and the man's name was Peppy. I didn't realize it was Pepe. But Skippy and Pepe, and they were friends of ours, and he was an artist. And he used to set his easel up out in the garden, and I would watch him paint. I would talk to him for hours and hours [laughs] because he was there. They were very nice. And I used to show him my—I used to work with him, too. I mean I would watch his art, and he would encourage me. I have at home greeting cards. My parents stayed in touch with these people for many, many years. And as I grew up, my mother, I remember at one point, telling me—you know I was starting to learn about Mexican art. [Knock on door] Excuse me. I think this is that thing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: We're going to pause.

[END OF DISC 3]

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So anyway, I used to watch this artist paint. And then as I grew older, my mother, you know, would give me more information. They moved away. But my mother kept in touch with them. Pepe, he moved down, I think ultimately to Tampa where he was doing stained glass windows. And it turned out their last name was Escuder, and Skippy was actually her nickname. Her real name was America, America Escuder, and she was married to Joseph Escuder. My mother said, Well—When I started learning about Mexican art and going to Mexico, she said, "You know Pepe knew Orozco and knew Diego Rivera, too." And I mean they spoke Spanish. I thought, "Mmm, okay. Mom's telling me another story." But you know I believed—She said, "Yes, and he went and he saw Orozco, and he actually showed him some of your drawings, and Orozco thought they were very good." And I just sort of rolled my eyes, and didn't pay too much attention to this [laughs]. And then I started doing the Mexican auctions at Sotheby's, and my mother very proudly reporting back to her friends. I think at some point Pepe died, but she was still in touch with Skippy. And she said, "Mary-Anne is going to Mexico, and she's doing these auctions of Mexican paintings." And Skippy wrote back and said, "Well, in that case, she really, really ought to look up my friend Ella Wolfe."

So, my mother said, "You should look up her friend Ella Wolfe." I didn't know who Ella Wolfe was at first. But then I found out. Ella Wolfe was the wife of Bertram Wolfe. Bertram Wolfe was not only the great biographer of Diego Rivera, but he was one of the founding members of the American Communist Party here. And he appears in some of Diego's murals. Ella Wolfe was his wife, and she was an extremely interesting woman. She died a couple of years ago. And her obituary was fascinating in the *New York Times*. And I learned a lot more about her after she died. I was going to print it out for you before you got here, but I hadn't gotten to it yet. But anyway, I did go out and visit Ella Wolfe. And she had, among other things, a wonderful little painting by Frida Kahlo which Frida had given her, which was called *Self-Portrait With Curly Hair* [1935] and she has very short curly hair. And she told me lots and lots of things about Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, and she was real. This was a friend of Skippy's.

And then later on I got to be friendly with a woman called Susannah Glusker. And Susannah Glusker was the daughter of a very famous woman in Mexico called Anita Brenner. And Anita ran a magazine down in Mexico,

and she was photographed by [Edward] Weston, and she knew Orozco and Rivera. She knew everybody. And Susannah Glusker was wanting to do a book on her mother before they settled the estate. So, it was finally published by the University of Texas Press in Austin. It took 13 years before she finished the book, which meant that it held up the estate for 13 years, which upset her brother. And I had to go out there at one point and appraise some of the things that they had. Here's a photograph of Anita Brenner by Weston. You can see that they were more forgiving about the female body in those days than they are now. So anyway, when I was talking to Susannah Glusker, somehow we got to talking about Diego Rivera and Frida in New York and Ella Wolfe and all the people in New York. And she started talking about Joseph Escuder. And I say, "What!" You know she said, "Yes, he had a wife called Skippy, Skippy and Pepe Escuder." So, she said, "Yes, they were very important."

So, I went back to her book, which finally came out, and it turns out that they were—basically they had come from this, you know, leaving Spain during the Spanish Civil War. Jose Escuder, you know, they were friends of Anita's and Rivera's in New York. "An American journalist of Spanish descent who joined the Republican struggle. Escuder and his American wife, who were picked up with a group of POUM leaders. She and other wives were held hostage until all the men had been rounded up. Escuder's wife"—that's Skippy, our neighbor—"kept Anita Brenner posted with letters that he was able to smuggle out of prison. He also wired Anita after the June 16, 1937 arrests, informing her that the POUM had been banned and several friends' lives were in danger." Anyway, they were getting messages out, you know, to Diego Rivera.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Amazing!

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I mean this whole—you know they were revolutionaries. And, you know, they were living next door to us. You know if you go—there's some more documentation here about—from these archives. Then if you go to the very back and you look up Escuder, José, it says: See also—they give you some pages. Then they say, see also New York radicals, Spain. [McElhinney laughs.] So, it turns out that I, you know, even when I was two years old, you know, I was very much influenced by an artist who was connected with Mexican art and then ultimately with Diego Rivera in more than one way. And I just thought it was rather amazing. My mother actually was still living when I learned this, so I was able to finally call my mother up and say, "Gee, you know, I'm sorry if I was not believing you." I don't know that my mother knew about the political aspect of this, honestly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Only the artistic aspect, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. I'm just saying that to me it's one of those little cosmic coincidences that I should have been, you know, at my very earliest years of sitting right there with someone who would ultimately lead me to Rivera and Frida and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Was it in hindsight subliminally some kind of causal factor, do you think? That somehow something you absorbed from these chats in the garden—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Not at all. I wish—

MR. McELHINNEY: —led you in that direction?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, no. The thing that impressed me was just the very nice man who had time to talk to me and who, I mean, I just loved watching him paint. And then sitting there with my little, you know, my little art supplies and painting, too. I mean it was definitely something that—that certainly influenced me from my earliest life. And that was why it was strange when you asked me first what was the first art that you saw. And I realize now it was obviously the art of Joseph Escuder, you know, who was linked ultimately to Rivera and to Bertram Wolfe and all these people.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And your life's work.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: What would become my life's work.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What would become.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But I mean it really is strange that things like this sometimes do happen. So, I don't know if I wrote anything else that I—And I guess the other thing was just that when I first started these, you know, getting interested in Mexico and started working on these auctions, there were actually a lot of people who were still alive that you could go and visit and would tell you things. And it was, you know, kind of exciting. I mean for example there's a woman, Lucienne Bloch, who was the—I think she's the daughter of Ernest Bloch, the composer. But she was one of the assistants of Diego Rivera when he was painting in Rockefeller Center. And her husband, Stephen Pope Dimitroff—she met him there. She married him after a while, but they weren't married originally. You know he prepared the plaster for Rivera's murals, and she ground the paints. She's the heroine, the famous person who smuggled her Leica camera under her blouse into Rockefeller Center and took the only pictures of Rivera's mural, *Man at the Crossroads* before it was smashed off the wall. And these are

people I got to know very well. In the early '80s I acquired from a collector a mural by Diego Rivera which he had painted after this Rockefeller Center crisis, which he painted down at the New Workers' School. And I can show you a picture of it, but it's called *Workers of the World Unite* [1933], and it has Lenin, Bukharin, Trotsky, every— all the American Communist Party leaders, including Bertram Wolfe and—

It's a rather arresting mural. And we had it in a warehouse here in New York, and it needed to be cleaned and maybe touched up a little bit. So, I was able to call Lucienne Bloch and Stephen Pope Dimitroff who had worked on it the first time around, and they came. The owner was willing to pay for them to come to California, and they came and worked on, cleaned the mural, basically with soap and water and sponges in case you need any tips on this. And, you know, we reminisced about the old days, and they told me all these stories about Diego and Frida. And she was actually—Lucienne was—they were staying in Detroit when Diego was working on the Detroit murals, which was earlier—when [Frida -MM] had her famous miscarriage when they heard all this crying and whatever they were saying in the next room in this hotel. And she was with Frida when she had this tragic, historic experience.

And then later she worked with Frida to help her, you know, do a little bit of occupational therapy. They went to this lithographic studio and learned how to make prints. And that was actually when Frida made her famous and only print, which is called *El Aborto* [1932]—abortion is the proper word for miscarriage. And I would ask her about Frida Kahlo, you know, what was she really like? And she said, "Oh, she was lots of fun! It's terrible what's happened." You know with everyone thinking she was such a tragic person. She loved to drink and sit up nights and sing songs. I mean, you know, her view of this woman, having known her personally, was much different from the view that somehow has become the myth.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I think anytime we identify a hero, we want to project on them some of the qualities that they want us to aspire to. And so she, I guess, for the feminists became a kind of a, you know, patient, long-suffering object. But I also have obviously, because I have a wife who's an art historian and works in Latin American art, heard other stories about her, of course, having love affairs and being sort of more of an outgoing socially—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I think she was in many ways getting even with Diego.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, yes. However—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: He was, you know, like Picasso, let's say. There seem to be some people in this world that have more energy than they need for one life. And so sometimes it gets expressed—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean you go to the—what is it called—the Casa Azul in Coyoacán. And, you know, that doesn't exactly express itself as the home of a recluse or a mendicant or even a hero. It's just a fun place. And you can eat lunch in the garden with a pyramid nearby. I think clearly, she's a very complicated character. And I think why she's so endlessly appealing is that she has a lot of very interesting qualities that speak to many audiences.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Mm-hmm. Yes. And just somehow, she found her right time period finally. It may not have been the time in which she actually lived.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But 40 years later she's arrived.

JAMES McELHINNEY: She arrived a little too soon, a few decades too soon.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Otherwise she would have been like Britney Spears.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh I hardly think so .

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know maybe it's better not to know how people would—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I don't think anyone chooses the time that they have.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Get to be appreciated.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. You only get to decide what you do when you do it. And we're having a look in a book now.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, but it's strange. I thought I had—I have a bigger picture of this somewhere.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, you're looking—Okay, this is the mural.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I have bigger pictures in the back . I thought it was—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Would you like to read this?

AUDIO ASSISTANT: "Diego Rivera, Proletarian Unity, 1933, Fresco, Collection of Paul Willen and Deborah Meyer. Courtesy of Mary-Anne Martin, Fine Art New York."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That was the mural which was actually about 8 feet—it's a very large piece. This is the piece that—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Was it on canvas or was it on wall?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It weighed hundreds of pounds.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It was about three or four inches thick.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It was on plaster.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And it had a kind of armature made out of wire. And then it had a—We actually built a metal stretcher for it because it was, you know, after 1931 to let's say 1984, it was a little bit tenuous. And actually, Stephen Pope Dimitroff, he helped us design a metal support, you know, like a metal frame. And then it had sort of crisscrosses on the back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A couple of diagonal crossbars?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, exactly. And he was able to give us a diagram of exactly how it had been made. Because when Rivera was fired from Rockefeller Center, he was paid \$21,000, and that was to make sure he had no grounds for suing the Rockefellers for canceling the commission.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh I see.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And, you know, \$21,000 he had to pay for all the materials, for all the workers, and everything. But what he did, basically to get revenge, was to paint 21 freestanding panels which were then installed at the New Workers' School. It was a series of murals, portable murals. They weren't too portable, but anyway. And this was one of them. And so, Stephen Pope Dimitroff and Lucienne Bloch all these people, they went downtown and made this second set of murals. And what's interesting about this particular one, which is the *Proletarian Unity* [1933], is that it contains and more so all the offensive parts that caused the first one to be destroyed.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Because here's the—this is the one that was destroyed at Rockefeller Center.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And the reason was because there was this sort of emerging portrait of Lenin over on the right side. Then they started negotiating. Rivera offered to put a portrait of Lincoln on the other side to balance, you know, the revolutionaries with founders of democracy. But it just didn't fly with the Rockefeller Family. So, in the end it was destroyed. And so, the New Workers' School panels, you know, they became sort of—they were paid for basically by the Rockefellers. Most of them were destroyed in the end in a fire. So, there weren't so many left in the end. But this one was left and was in a warehouse for years. Well, it was in someone's house for many years. This man Paul Willen grew up with this in his living room, in his father's living room. His father was a lawyer, I think, for the Communist Party.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So, they used to play ball in the house, and sometimes the ball would, you know, bump off the Rivera mural or something. But eventually, you know, they put it away in storage. And it really wasn't very saleable, as you might guess, because of the contents. When I first got it, I found it very difficult—I mean I wanted it. But it was not very easy to market it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I had to wait until the Berlin Wall came down and a number of other things happen. I think I had it on consignment for 11 years. And I finally sold it to a Japanese museum, the Nagoya City Art Museum.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It becomes an historical artifact.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: They're very proud of it. Yes, it was. And they were able to look at it without being offended. But, you know, I had different museum directors—I remember one came in from California, and they said, "You know I'd really like to have this, but I'm not going to be able to—I'm not going to be able to get the trustees to swallow this." And, you know, I could understand that. But anyway, eventually it got sold, and I think it's living very happily there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I think even today there's a certain chariness in the United States about mentioning even the word socialism.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: We heard a lot in the last election, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, but I think it's, like everything else, you know, people get used to things, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, the rhetoric loses its potency.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: This is a scene which shows you something about what the panels looked like.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's the installation. This is we're having a look at a catalog from the exhibition that was in Philadelphia in 1986.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, it was Detroit, Philadelphia, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In Detroit, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But this is actually just a photograph of the murals. They're 21 panels, but this was the central panel of the 21. I think all but seven were destroyed. So, you can see what Rivera did with the money that he received. And they weren't that portable. [Laughs]

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, it would seem eight feet square.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And hundreds of pounds.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Hundreds of pounds apiece, yes. It would be extremely challenging to install anywhere. So how has the field of Latin American art changed since you got involved in it? How is it evolving, and where is it going?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: To my mind it's opened up, and I think we're at a moment where—You know how the Communists always said, you know, eventually the state would just fade away, you know, when they achieved perfect—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Harmony.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Harmony, right. And when I started those auctions, and especially the Latin American sales, I had to put together some kind of a group of works that could be publicized and marketed. In some way we had to be able to send these catalogs out and interest some segment of the population. And so, we had to have something—not just here's a catalog of a lot of very interesting and well-trained artists that nobody knows about, but we would like to send you for your consideration so that you can learn more and eventually buy them. It doesn't work that way. If you're doing an auction, you have to have star works, you have to have something that people can hook into. And so, what I had to do when I started the Latin American sales, was to pirate some artists from different departments and take them back. So that I convinced the contemporary department that I would have to take the Boteros in the future. I mean they were selling Botero in contemporary sales. And then, you know, the modern picture department, I took back Matta, Lam. We didn't have much by Torres-Garcia then. Basically, I had to take some works from other departments in order to have enough star artists or star works in this sale in order to send them out so that somebody would come to the sale.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You can't educate them if you can't attract them—if they don't show up.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I mean, to be truthful, working at Sotheby's, we weren't really educating people. We wanted to sell things to people. But, yes, I mean it's the same thing. This was a field that didn't exist—certainly didn't exist in the auction house. There were no Latin American sales before I came. So, some of the artists were

not so happy about this.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And maybe I mentioned this a week ago. But, you know, José Luis Cuevas for example, was—he said, "I'm not Latin American; I'm international." Botero also said, "Why am I being sold in the Latin American sale? I'm, you know, a contemporary artist." So, there was some—

JAMES McELHINNEY: How did you answer them?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, I didn't answer them at all. But the truth was that they hadn't really remarked upon was—certainly in the case of Botero—the prices were going up. In other words, we started to get much better prices for Botero in the Latin American sales. Because we still had Americans bidding on them. And all of a sudden, we had Latin Americans bidding on them who maybe knew his work better. But, you know, you have suddenly a painting going for \$100,000; I mean that was a lot of money in those days. And before that there hadn't been any Botero that had gone for more than \$50,000. So, it really wasn't such a tragedy except as an ego thing. And, you know, as time passed, I mean these sales got very popular.

You know when I started, I used to look out into the audience and when I was up on the podium. And you know you'd see the Mexicans sitting together, the Venezuelans sitting together, the Miami Cubans; there were no Cuban people there. And there weren't too many Colombians. But basically, people would be sitting together in the audience. And, you know, there weren't very many Americans. There had been Americans that had bought these things in the past. But eventually we started having Americans saying, you know, I really want to start collecting Latin American art. It's very interesting. And then Europeans we started—We started reaching people that we hadn't reached before.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How'd you help them do it? I mean if the auction house is a salesroom instead of a schoolroom, I would think that the private gallery is more of a venue for educating collectors.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That was actually the reason I decided both to leave and that I could leave. Because I had found something to do, which I knew something about and knew more about than some other competitors. I mean I have lots of competitors now. But at that point there was just so much you could do in an auction house. I mean you have sales twice a year. People would come and see what you'd gathered together, and they certainly were getting to see things that, you know, they didn't see on a regular basis. But then as soon as anyone had a question about some artists, like I really like—I think I said this to you two weeks ago—you know I really like this Maria Luisa Pacheco. How can I see more? Well, you can't. You can go to Bolivia. Really there was nowhere that these people were being shown on a regular basis. And there weren't—I mean there were very few museum shows. I mean there had been things earlier. Let's say pre-Cold War and even in the '50s. But at this point there just weren't—it just wasn't an interest, I think, of museum curators, and there weren't any professors in this field. And so, the auction houses, they definitely provided—I mean they injected some excitement into this collecting area. But I think it also became responsible for a lot of galleries opening up, a number of galleries opening up. And ultimately—and that's what I'm driving at—is that now I'm not so sure it's really necessary.

I was asked by a person who works in an auction house in New York, obviously not Sotheby's or Christie's, to consider helping them or working with them. They're going to do a Latin American sale. And they wanted to do something every year or maybe twice a year. And I honestly said, "I don't know if that's such a good idea." Because I think—You know especially the emphasis in this one is supposed to be contemporary art. And I said, "I think that a lot of the serious contemporary artists are handled by serious contemporary galleries and not necessarily Latin American galleries at all. I mean if you want a Gabriel Orozco or Santiago Sierra or Beatriz Milhazes, I mean these different people, they're shown in galleries in New York and let's say Brazil or Mexico. I mean they're establishing. I think the art fairs have also provided a way for people to see things.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Internet?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: The Internet, too. But I think, you know, you can follow things up on the Internet. I don't know that you sort of learn what an artist is like from the Internet. But if you go to an art fair or you see a book on an artist and you wanted to see more, you can actually find a lot on the Internet now. I think maybe now it would be—in other words maybe what Botero and Cuevas they were claiming then I maybe didn't agree with. But I think maybe now it's time for this state of mind to dissolve. I mean if an artist—And it's much easier to be known around the world now than it was then.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So how would the taxonomy change? Would you have an art of the hemisphere or the circum-Atlantic.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I don't know exactly. What I don't know is whether it's necessary to categorize so much. And then I think, for example, what Patricia Cisneros is doing. She's not trying to say that the Museum of Modern

Art has to have a Latin American department. She's saying there's no reason why you can't hang a Torres-Garcia in the same room as a Mondrian or a whatever.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Edward Hopper.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, an Edward Hopper can be with an Orozco. But I mean the point is that Pollock and Siqueiros. I mean that these people were all painters or artists, and certainly with contemporary art now, I mean conceptual art; it doesn't matter where you're from, that is what you're doing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In a macro sense this would be consistent with what you were saying earlier about dismissing the war between abstraction and figuration as being kind of a nonsense quarrel anyway.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But it's also, you know, basically dismissing the idea that an artist can only be viewed as representing the country that he comes from—or she comes from. For example, American art of the 18th century, I mean that's American art. But American art being done now, is basically international. I mean there's nothing particularly American about American art now unless I'm misinformed.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, it's extremely international. And not just in a transatlantic-New York-Paris-London way. But we spoke earlier also about these other axes like New York or Chicago to Mexico or to South America. There are these other axes. Do they just cancel each other out as they just are more and more and more apparent connections and links? We were speaking earlier about these exhibitions at the New York Historical Society—or that are being sponsored there—and at El Museo del Barrio, about how everything's connected.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. I mean people were here, and they influenced each other.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And actually, at that time, I think, the Mexicans were influencing American artists. And American artists were going down to Mexico to learn how to paint murals.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In the '30s, you mean.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. And meanwhile Rivera had gone to Europe when he was young to learn—in Italy—to learn how to paint murals. And all these things—it is kind of interesting that that's how it went.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's like this exhibition they have up at the MET right now: Michelangelo's first painting, which is a copy of—is it an Altdorfer? A German artist.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, it's a print. Yes. I think it's Altdorfer. And it's from a wood print.

JAMES McELHINNEY: With the temptation of St. Anthony. And, yes, he was extremely young, but it's a copy after a woodblock print. And of course, this challenges all of the assumptions about Florentine art versus the art being made in Rome versus the art being made in, you know, the Veneto at that time. That in fact even then art was quite international. Because that print, I think was struck only a couple of years before he made that copy. So, things were a lot more international even at that point in history than we like to believe.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, things were brought back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Verocchio didn't go to Germany to buy the print, though. It was—they were in circulation. So how have collectors changed over the years? Can you give us a kind of collector profile?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Here.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That's one incredible, I mean—[laughs].

JAMES McELHINNEY: One crazy completely non-Italian image.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, no, it's fantastic.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Hardly anything Italian about it.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's sort of Bosch. It's more like Bosch.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It looks almost like Bosch, doesn't it?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I was just double checking the artist.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Having looked online at the—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. I just wondered who did the exhibition.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Michelangelo's first painting. Now on exhibition at the Met.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Soon to go live at the Kimbell Art Museum [Forth Worth, Texas].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Soon to go to Texas. I'm just trying to confirm the artist's name [Martin Schongauer -MM]. Well, we can probably achieve that in the transcript.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. Okay. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: But how have your collectors changed over the years? Maybe as a way of speaking about how the markets changed.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Okay. Well, I think that they're younger. And when I first came into this, which was, again, when I was working at Sotheby's, you know there were a number of people who collected Latin American art—Mexican art and Latin American art. And in those days—some of these were very prominent and older people because they were wealthy, they were collectors. And at the time people collected in what I would say a vertical orientation. So that if you were Mexican, you collected Mexican art. And if you were Cuban, you were interested in Cuban art. Et cetera. Argentineans collected from Argentina. The only people that I noticed that were collecting great works from more than one country were the Venezuelans who seemed to be quite international. A number of them traveled to Europe, and they had apartments in New York. And they seemed to be more open to things. They weren't so nationalistic. And when I was putting these sales together, as I mentioned to you, I would actually pretty much divide the works into sections. So, you'd have sort of a Mexican section and an Argentine section and whatever. And then I could sort of stand there in the front, and I could look at them. We'd get the Mexican section, and all the Mexicans were bidding. And then the Venezuelans and, you know, everybody was bidding on their own art. But there wasn't really that much crossover with a couple of exceptions which were the Venezuelans.

But when Americans started getting more interested in these auctions, which was not in the beginning—There were some Americans who had been collecting Mexican art before. And they would come to the sales. They were interested. But they initially were somewhat shocked by the prices because suddenly the prices for the things that they wanted were much higher than they had been before. Because they had been used to going down to Mexico and visiting Mexico City, buying things. Buy a Tamayo maybe in a gallery here. But there wasn't a lot of competition. So suddenly when all these Latins were getting into the act, then the prices started getting high. And they sort of backed off for a while. And then all of this came a little bit to an end in 1982 when the Mexican economy crashed, along with the—Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela. I mean they all had huge currency drops and a lot of financial trouble. So, then I was kind of high and dry for a while. By that time, I'd started my gallery, so I was really experiencing—something like what we're going through now.

But then after—you know the sales weren't doing very well either. But suddenly there were these incredible bargains coming up in the auctions. And I started to notice that some of the Americans were coming into it because there was something they really wanted, and they could actually afford it again. So there started to be more Americans collecting when the market dropped. And gradually people who hadn't ever thought about Latin America art as a field at all started collecting in a horizontal way. So, I'd have people coming in and saying, Oh, I really am very interested. I think the art is very well priced. I think there's a lot of growth possibility, you know, if I start collecting Latin American art. And I have a little shopping list. I want a Rivera and a Orozco, a Siqueiros, Frida Kahlo, Maria Izquierdo. I'd like a Torres-Garcia and a Pettoruti and a Botero. Basically, they wanted a work by each of the great masters of each country. And I don't think anybody had been doing that before. And I'm not even saying it was very sensible. But it was a new development.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It was not just a speculative thing. It was also that this was their taste as well.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. I mean I think—some of these people put together very good collections. Other people just put together names. But I mean definitely that was the second shift. The first shift was just people, you know, buying sort of vertically. If I went to Mexico to look at—and I used to go to people's houses and see their collections—the only person I can remember seeing and visiting who had a work by another artist, an artist who wasn't from Mexico, in his house was José Luis Cuevas. I went to visit Cuevas, and he had a Matta. I mean everyone else had only Mexican art. And I got used to that. But that changed; it really did. And then I think Europeans started coming in definitely. Some galleries in Europe started dealing more in art, you know, that—I mean a lot of your Latin American artists had lived in—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, sure.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: So, you know, you'd get Matta and Lam and Torres-Garcia and Rivera. A lot of them, you know, got quite well known in other countries. And so, I think that was the next development, that we started getting European collectors. And then I think the final phase is now when a lot of the contemporary artists have actually been accepted just into the mainstream art community. And it's not necessary to package them up and deliver them as being Latin American art—though they are.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Would they be—Though they are. Would they be appreciated in terms of style, for instance abstraction versus somebody who practices in a conceptual way? Painterly abstraction as opposed to—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know I'm just going to answer that the same way. You know every so often someone will say, Oh, I love this painting. And it's so obvious that it's by a woman, you know. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: More gendered?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, but I mean it's just—how do you know that? Well, you know, I don't know that it's necessarily the case that you can tell that something's made by a woman. I mean there are some things you can tell they're made by a woman. But you may be wrong. And I think that Latin American art—as people are becoming more international, they're traveling more, they have access to the Internet, they have—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know they have some kind of models to look at, I think you're going to see less and less distinction by nationality.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It makes perfect sense because it would seem that a new collector coming to you or whatever, wanting to educate their eye, wanting to train themselves to develop a taste and an appreciation and an intelligent way of reading these works of art, and finding a connection between themselves and the art that they're interested in—and to train your eye. You have to go to a museum. You have to read books. You know you have to travel, and you have to experience, you know, the work firsthand. So, if you were, let's say, wanting to collect drawings by Tiepolo, which there are thousands and thousands, you can easily train your eye how to appreciate Tiepolo. But to collect art in a particular genre that's not accessible in private or public collections, easily accessible, it's really challenging, I would think. And there I would suppose that, you know, the dealer or the auction house as a venue would at least offer an opportunity for people to do that.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, I think so. But I don't know if this is quite what you're saying. But I do think that museums in this country are now developing budgets to buy art from Latin America in a sort of catch-up way. You know they're realizing that they—

JAMES McELHINNEY: That is an omission they realize.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes, I mean there are some museums that had things all along like the Museum of Modern Art in New York. And you'll find the Nancy Sayles Day Collection, [at RISD-MM]. There are collections here and there that are, you know, were formed.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You mean they're trying to correct a prior omission.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No. But there are a lot of other museums that just, you know, now they feel they have to serve the community where they are. And there are many more people living here who are of Latin American origin. And I think that—I think museums have their agendas. And I think that's gone into the agenda now.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, they now have to serve a change in the demographic.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. So, I'm beginning to have museums coming to me and saying, Listen, we would like a this. Or we have \$200,000—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: —we want to buy. I mean whoever's at the San Antonio Museum of Art does have a fund. And every year—You know they can save their budget for two years and buy something bigger. But they do actively—are part of it. LA County Museum, definitely. They've—well, first you have to acquire a curator. They hired a curator a few years ago, and now they're really quite serious in this field. Also, the Houston Museum of Fine Arts.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Very, very aggressive in this area. So, I mean this has changed. This is a change that I have seen over the last 30 years.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you're speaking about a lot of venues that are either in the south coast or the southeast of the United States.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, Miami, too.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Miami.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Chicago.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, also Chicago.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, absolutely. Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Minneapolis?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, Minneapolis had the really extraordinary Frida Kahlo exhibition.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Which then went to Philadelphia and San Francisco. Yes, I would say that the country has grown smaller in many ways. And that people are much more aware of things—or interested in things. Or they're interested in things they weren't interested in 30, 35 years ago. So, I have seen a big change there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How do you think you personally have helped to shape the taste and appetite by American collectors for Latin American art? How have you helped direct that?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs] Well again, I don't know if this was my mission in the beginning. But I definitely discovered an area which I thought was very interesting that was under appreciated. And then it became a way for me—it became sort of a life mission because I created my own job in a field that I—I didn't invent the artists, but in many ways, I guess I invented the idea of viewing these artists together. So, you know, but there are so many more people involved in this than I am now, that I really have—I am part of it. But I think that galleries or dealers, I mean they are interesting in that each gallery really does seem to reflect the taste and the interests of the owner.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Absolutely.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And you know I've never—People sometimes say, Well, don't you want to open up a gallery in Miami, too? Or you know a franchise, you know, like McDonald's. We'll have Mary-Anne Martin Fine Arts all over the place. It isn't possible because, you know, the gallery is wherever I am. I'm not saying this from an egotistical point of view. But I'm just saying that if people come in here and they want to see the art but they also want to talk to me, they want to know what I think of something that they're interested in. Well, you know, she has this painting, you know, and wow, that's interesting, and she can tell me about it. It's kind of an interaction.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you're also saying that you didn't set out to create a template that could be reproduced in other places. It's really your own evolution is the evolution of the gallery, the evolution of the field, that you keep changing, you keep learning, you keep expanding. And it can't be kept in the silo it's escaped from.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Exactly. I mean it would be hard to put it back in the bottle.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In the box, yes. Like the genie back in the bottle.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But, you know, as I see my gallery sort of developing, I am at a point in my life where I find myself wanting to devote more time to research and scholarly things. I love looking things up. I'm fascinated with forgeries. People contact me all the time and show me these things. You know mostly they're not right or they're fakes. But every so often, there is just some wonderful thing that turns up. And it is just so exciting when you find something that really exists and nobody knew about it. You know it's just a very interesting life. I think that at this point I am not interested in finding 15 new artists and launching 15 careers and developing them. You know that's really something for, I think, the younger dealers to do. I'm very interested in the artists that I have handled, and I'm very interested in seeing what's new. But I find myself more and more not retreating, but, you know, settling into a pattern where I'm much more interested in researching historical things. I like the idea of curating. Not myself necessarily, but you know when people are doing an exhibition, very often people will come to me and ask me what I think or can I help them find works. Very often I'll suggest things that I know exist that they don't know the whereabouts of.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In a consulting way.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. So, I enjoy doing that. For example, some friends—two people I know are doing a book on Mexican landscapes right now. And they're at point where they're not sure, you know—they agree on a lot of things. But there are some artists that they're not agreeing—I mean they don't agree with each other whether this artist should be included or that. And so, they came upon this idea that I should perhaps be the arbiter. Everything they agree on is fine. But they ones they don't agree on, they will just submit to me and not tell me—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, you're the tiebreaker.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, yes. And not tell me who was submitting what, but just asking me for my opinion. And I said to them, "Really, if you have two people, you're going to have two opinions. If you have three people, you're going to have three opinions. I'll be happy to tell you what I think. But honestly every person I think has his own view of art."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I look at it the way I look at it. And the other thing is I'm going to know exactly which one has submitted which picture because I know exactly what each of them likes and when they bought it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You don't want to be playing the role of an afternoon TV small claims court judge. Judge Judy or whatever.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Anyway. But I'm just saying, getting back to what is a gallery and what is an art dealer, I think a gallery basically is a reflection of the tastes and the interests of an individual dealer usually.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You spoke about how the field's changed and evolved. How do you anticipate its evolution looking down the road another ten years? And are there any particular tasks that you're interested in tackling?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs] Well, the kind of tasks I might be interested in would be a Gunther Gerzso catalogue raisonné. I'm sort of involved a little bit with—I'm certainly not a part of officially but sort of unofficially—helping in every way that I can with the new or the revised Frida Kahlo catalogue raisonné. Just that whole thing in general. There's no Diego Rivera catalog raisonné. It's one of the most famous artists who ever—I mean there's a thing that purports to be a catalogue raisonné, but it's full of problems.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's not accepted?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Not by me. [Laughs] But I'm just saying by the time I left Sotheby's, there were 33 volumes of Picasso's catalogue raisonné; it wasn't finished. And there's not even a Diego Rivera catalog raisonné that's been started. There's not an Orozco catalogue raisonné. So, I might—I can't do all these. But I would love to get more involved in sponsoring or promoting the production of this kind of research because it's really necessary.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, you'd like to become more involved in tasks that are going to define the field or artists in the field.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. I am—I'm not saying I'm more interested in going backward.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But a definitive project.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. We all have our roles. And I don't see myself, you know, as an impresario, you know, sort of discovering all the next generations of artists because I am very honestly not—I don't want to say this the wrong way. I mean I go to a lot of art fairs, I participate in a lot of art fairs. I see what's going on right now. And not a lot of it is really of interest to me. And I would say it's something like, you know, popular music. You know I grew up with the music of the '50s and the '60s and the '70s. And, you know, my favorite songs are from that era. And obviously there's all kinds of popular music being recorded now.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I don't think it's really meant for me, you know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Understood.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I think, you know—I think what may happen with contemporary art—and that's such a large term—that it may go backwards a little because things go in curves. And I see a lot of things that are being presented as brand new and, oh, look at what this artist is doing. He's burying himself in sand or whatever. And I say but they did that in the, you know, 35 years ago. And the happenings.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: There are a lot of things that were going on when I first—the pop art era and after that and all these things that were happening in New York when I was much younger, you see them happening again. But the people who are doing them really are not aware—or don't care—that they happened already.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Whether it's Hugo Ball or Allan Kaprow or whoever. I mean the thing is that what I've observed as an educator, and I have taught over the years, is that there's a kind of amnesia that occurs at intervals. And that people think that something is brand new is actually as old as dirt.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: In a way it has to do with like studying history and studying things, I mean—Every so often I'll meet a young person who's studying history, and I'm just saying, Oh, thank goodness. That's wonderful. Because it just seems to me that most people, young people that I meet, think that the world began on the day they were born. And there's so much to know that maybe they're right. I read an article about Olafur Eliasson who's a very, very respected and important contemporary artist.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The Waterfalls [*The New York City Waterfalls* (2008)] here last year, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes. But in this thing, he mentioned that—I can't remember what the body of water was. But that he had tinted some large body of water.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It was blue or whatever. But I can remember, you know, in the late-'70s that there was an Argentinean artist called Nicolas Uriburu, who lived in Paris, and he tinted the Seine green. We have pictures of it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: St. Patrick's Day every year the Chicago River turns green.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs] Yes, well, that's not art. See, that's not the same thing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, see, but it's—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: That's low art. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, it's the high-low discussion again.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I know—I remember the Nicolas Uriburu thing that had happened. And then there's this young person who's just so heralded, and whom I absolutely admire, talking about doing something that was done already. So, I mean it gets back to studying art history.

JAMES McELHINNEY: If it's a good idea, it's a good idea. Like coloring a lake or drawing the human figure.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: If it's a good idea, it's a good idea. So how would you like history to regard you in the future?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Oh, my goodness. I hope that I will be remembered as an honest person and a person who had good taste. And also had a very good eye for art and what was real and what was not.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And as a woman, as an entrepreneur? An inspiration perhaps to others?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: You know I grew up in the feminist era. But I honestly—I grew up in a household where I was told from childhood that I could basically do anything I wanted to do. And so, I really, I'm not a—I'm a feminist in the sense that I think that I have achieved something, and I'm a woman. But I don't think anything was denied me because I was a woman. I don't think I have achieved these things in particular because I'm a woman. But there are a lot of women—a lot of art dealers who are women. And I think there are reasons for that. I think it's basically a business where you can go—that you can go into, you know, without a whole lot of structure. I mean it's a one-person thing. When I worked at Sotheby's, I did spend quite a lot of time climbing through the political structure.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. It's a corporate entity—organization—yes.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But I did well there, and I became a senior vice president. I think I was the first female senior vice president. I did go—And when I first came there as a secretary, filling in for somebody, you know, in those days it was largely run by English people. I remember having it explained to me that—I wanted to become

a cataloguer and become an expert. And I was simply told we really don't give those jobs to women because they just, you know, you train them, and they just get married and have children and leave. And, you know, I was very upset by that because you know—But I mean that changed. There were no women auctioneers when I worked at Sotheby's in the beginning. And then that changed, too. So, things have changed. But I think basically my point of view is that you just have to go after what you want and not get upset. If a door is closed, you just find another door.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What advice would you offer to a young person who wants to get into this business?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's a pained expression on your face.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: [Laughs] Tell them to take some business courses before they start. I think that's the one thing that—I had to learn everything, you know, learn by doing. And I think that was one of the major problems with Sotheby's when—The main reason that Sotheby's got taken over in the end was because all the—it was being run by experts who had training in art history and had no training in business.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, understand the world of money and how to keep books.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: I think market research would be helpful.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: And I think, you know, understanding what your limitations are in terms of what a gallery is and the amount of money you're going to bring in, especially in the beginning. I mean you have to be capitalized to go through several years of losses. And you have to—it's a difficult business to make money in unless you're already rich. And I really mean that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's the old paradigm, isn't it? It's like opening a restaurant or anything. You've got to—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: A restaurant is a perfect analogy—I mean restaurants are very much like art galleries, I think. The other thing—I said to this person yesterday that I know that is from this auction house that was asking me, you know, about business. And I said that your business model for an art gallery should—and your budget—should basically always be geared to the down years. You know you will have up years if cycles continue. There will be years where you do very well and you make money. But that's not the time to start expanding and opening up three galleries and, you know, having Rem Koolhaas redo your gallery. You just keep on watching the bottom line. Then you'll make some money sometimes. But there are a lot of times when you just have to, you know, wait it out. And I think that's what a lot of people are doing now. They're waiting it out if they can. If they can't, it's too bad.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Hope they're in a model that's not going to strain the resources too much.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: It's really—And I think it's not just art galleries. I mean the auction houses are going through this, all sorts of businesses.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A lot of retailers. I mean—

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Well, you saw the article in the *New York Times* yesterday or the day before about the businesses, you know, all the storefronts on Madison Avenue are closing. A picture of [inaudible] closed down. I mean these are wonderful places. There's no reason, you know, that they should fail. But trying to get through this economic downturn is very difficult. There's a point where people just have to fold their costs.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is there anything at all that we haven't explored that you'd like to read into the record?

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: No, I think that we've explored a lot. And, you know, I think ten years later I'll have more to say.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Great.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: But you know it's been an interesting 27—I don't know how many? The gallery is 27 years old or something like that. It's been very interesting. The one thing I can say is I enjoy what I do. So, I don't mind going to work. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, thank you very much.

MARY-ANNE MARTIN: Thank you.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I appreciate it.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]