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Oral history interview with Robert E.
Meyerhoff, 2014 December 11-12

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Robert Meyerhoff on December 11-12, 2014. The interview took place in Phoenix, Maryland, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview is provided by Barbara G. Fleischman.

Robert Meyerhoff and James McElhinney have reviewed the transcript. Their 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.

In January 2018 Robert Meyerhoff and his son, Neil Meyerhoff, reviewed the transcript and made factual corrections. These corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials.

Interview

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Robert Meyerhoff at his home in Phoenix, Maryland, on Thursday, December 11, 2014, the interview being conducted for the Frick Center for the History of Collecting and the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Good morning, sir.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Good morning.

JAMES McELHINNEY: When was the first time you were cognizant of being in the presence of a great work of art?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: You own many, and have been a steward to many great works of art. When was the first time in your life that you actually knew you were standing in front of a great work of art?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, that's a very difficult question. We—I guess, I—you want a date, like what year?

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, I mean, as a kid I mean, were—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I have—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Was there art at home?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, I—we had no art at home, my home. It's—I guess I can only answer that by telling you more about my history of collecting art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you are an MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] graduate?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Engineer?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And you know, Meyerhoffs are well known in the Baltimore area for philanthropy. I researched a bit of it, and there are a number of organizations like you know, the Joseph and Harvey Meyerhoff, are they—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, that's my uncle and my cousin.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's your uncle and your cousin.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And yourself and your late wife, Jane, being heavily involved with helping MICA [Maryland Institute College of Art] and other organizations, also University of Maryland, Baltimore, with the—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: County—Baltimore County.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —Baltimore County College [University of Maryland, Baltimore County -RM/NM], with the

Scholars Program, and you know, the 200-year emphasizing STEM subjects, a lot going on, a lot of help to the community. To what do you attribute this sense of social responsibility?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, let me—let me answer that, let me start off with the history of our collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Very good.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I was married in January of 1945. My mother-in-law, or prospective mother-in-law died, my wife's mother died, in October, or November of 1944, very young. Her father remarried a few years later, and he married a local artist. And so that was more or less our introduction to art. And her father died in 1958, I think it was, and before that, in 1955, Jane contracted polio. And now she's hospitalized because of her very little interest—by my introduction to art we decided to give a collection to the Baltimore Museum in his memory. Is this recorded or are you typing it?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So we decided to give a collection to—while Jane was hospitalized, recovering from polio, she took a course at University of Chicago with Professor Bates Lowry, and I don't know the exact title of the course but it was more or less how to look at art. And so he would pose—he had a whole curriculum, and he would pose questions, and she would answer the questions and so forth. And so that's how I became interested in art, was through her taking this course with Bates Lowry, who was—Bates Lowry, just incidentally, was director of the Museum of Modern Art for a very, very short time. Years later, I met Bates Lowry, and I said, "I was so proud of Jane, she got an A in the course."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And he said, "Tell you the truth, Bob, she was the only person that ever finished the course."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Really?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Funny.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, that's the story I tell, anyway. I think it's true. Anyway, we decided to give a collection to the Baltimore Museum in his memory. So I went to see the curator and the head, the director of the Baltimore Museum. And I told him, "I want to buy a collection, not a painting, but a collection in my father-in-law's memory. How much money would that take?" So they talked for a few minutes, and they said, "\$15,000." For that \$15,000, we bought a Rothko for \$4,000, we bought a Tobey, a Stamos, I think we bought five or six, a Motherwell, and that's what prices were those days.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What year would that have been?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: 1958. Mark Rothko today, which we paid \$4,000, would be appraised at anywhere from 25 to 50 million dollars.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Jane and this director, the curator, went to New York to buy the collection. They bought the Rothko. They called me because they were offered a de Kooning, *Woman*, for \$7,500, and what should we do? I said, "Well, we can't buy one painting for \$7,500. We'll buy a collection." So we didn't buy that. Well, that painting today is probably appraised for \$50 million. But there's an entirely different price—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: She says, "You paid \$4,000"—the story she tells is, "You paid \$4,000 for the Rothko," and I said, "What does it look like?" So we went over to the Phillips Gallery in Washington, which I had, and I said, "You paid \$4,000 for a painting like that?"

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And you see, that was my inexperience and my introduction to art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you were—you were an engineer by training, family business and real estate and instruction, and so art was not really—so were—were any of the people in your immediate family—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —you know, into music, or were they big readers or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, not that I know of.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Not at all, okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So it was your wife, Jane, who was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —recovering from polio who took this—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —art history course, and that got her excited.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. The collection really is more Jane's collection than my collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [coughs]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It was our collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean, we never bought anything we both didn't like, but Jane was the introduction to it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And what was her background like? What was—what kind of a family—had she—had she been more—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I like to explain this way. In my friend's houses, there was no art. I mean, there may be a poster or two, there was no—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I had no really background, or Jane didn't have a background of collecting art. It was not—it was an acquired taste, an acquired thing. There was no background. My father or grandfather, or my uncles and cousins, they weren't involved in art at all.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Later on, though, they became involved with—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —serving the community, but also, you know, the—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, my family was very philanthropic.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, indeed.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And my father and my uncle were very philanthropic. My uncle had no interest in music, no interest whatsoever. But he realized that it was important for Baltimore to have a symphony orchestra, and he became chairman of the board. He was very generous, and the Symphony Hall at Baltimore named Joseph Meyerhoff by him because he did it as a civic duty, not as an interest of his.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, right. Are you acquainted with Charlie Bergman at all? Do you know Charlie, the Pollock—he's in Gene Thaw—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Who is he?

JAMES McELHINNEY: The head of Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, I mentioned it only because he's the great nephew of Louis Levin of—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Who does—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —Levindale Hospital.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I didn't know where Levindale came from.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay, yes, just curious, and one of his aunts was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually, Bergman, [Bob] Bergman was head of the [Walters Art Gallery, now the Walters Art Museum –RM/NM]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —and then moved to Cleveland.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's a different person.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. He was very, very good.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you—or your late wife acquired the Rothko, and you were initially, I guess, a little stunned. But then how did you learn about painting and art? What did you do to sort of do the research to cultivate an eye? Was there anyone who was a mentor or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we had no mentor. We never had—we never asked—we didn't have an advisor. We just used our own taste and judgment, and of course, Jane took this course, which I told you about, and she had —

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean, the question may be describe your living room, is the first question.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And she would answer in three or four pages, or maybe one page. And Bates Lowry wrote back and said, well, you didn't mention this; this is how you should do this and that and the other thing, and she wrote three or four pages. So every question was four or five pages, which he corrected and helped her insights looking into other things. So she really became—from that course, became very interested, involved, and we hadn't thought about collecting. We hadn't thought about—her father died, and that's when we decided we'd give a collection to the Baltimore Museum. So that was our first idea of collecting. And one of the things she saw was a Hans Hoffman painting, which was \$6,500. And again, we said we couldn't buy it, but so after we bought the \$15,000 worth of paintings, or may have been \$17,000 or \$20,000, but we decided to buy the Hoffman for ourselves. So the very first painting we bought was a Hans Hoffman for \$6,500. And that was—and from then on, Jane read every article, of course, began to get art magazines and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —became very involved and knowledgeable about all the artists. And we first bought a de Kooning. I mean you didn't have to know much about art to know that de Kooning was a great artist, so we bought a de Kooning. We bought a Pollock. We bought a Klein, bought a Motherwell, all the established artists. We know we couldn't go wrong. And actually in those days, the prices were so low and there weren't that many people collecting. I used to say those are every—we went to every opening of those people had an opening of a show, and there were 300 people there, and the same 300 people were at every auction—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —every opening, and of those 300 people, there were probably five collectors. The other 295 people there because there was free wine, free whiskey.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's the reason they were there. Or they were friends, they knew—they were friends of the artists, so they were—they had the same—nobody was really buying. So the artists—the galleries themselves, the gallery's owners, you go see them, you could talk to them in a half hour, an hour, they would educate you on what they thought about art, and I mean, Sidney Janis, we could spend hours talking to Sidney Janis, or other gallery owners. And that's how we became knowledgeable.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So who were the dealers whom you liked, who you liked to—I mean, you—speaking about Janis?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, he was considered the top gallery, but the other one was—I didn't know you would ask the question, and I can't remember. It was another dealer that we dealt with very much. Well, kind of—another thing that happened was—I'll come back to that in a minute. We went to de Kooning's show, and he had—this was right after—it was the next show or shows after the *Woman* series of de Kooning. And he was—he asked—we liked this particular de Kooning, but he wanted \$6,800 for it. And so \$6,800—not that I couldn't afford it, but \$6,800 is a lot of money when the Hoffman, we bought it for \$6,500. So I said, "Can you give me a ten-day option on it, think about it." So he said, "Yes, give you a ten-day option." Well, at the end of the 10 days, I called and said, "I'll take it." He said, "I'm sorry, I sold it." I said, "Well, how could you do that?" He said, "Mr. Meyerhoff, I've been—got X number of years in business, never sold out a show, never. Giving you an option meant nothing to me. I didn't expect you—I didn't expect—I'd always had that painting for sale because I had all these other paintings." "That was the most terrible thing—how could you do a thing like that?" So he said, "I'll tell you what. I have another, very similar painting. It's \$8,600. Instead of \$68, \$86."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So I said, "What kind of fool do you think I am?"

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is this the artist, or is this the dealer?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, the dealer said this.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, dealer.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Who knows what the artist—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean, artists at that time always had felt that the dealer was getting more money than they told them. They were always suspicious. I mean my experience with the artists was they were very cynical of the dealer. I mean, what did the dealer really tell people? What did he really sell it for?

JAMES McELHINNEY: I don't know that that's really changed much.

[They laugh.]

That's pretty funny, \$8,600. We'll have to try—we can research who that dealer was.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, it was Sidney Janis.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, it was Janis,

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, no question. I know it was.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That rascal.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Do you know Louise Deutschman who worked with him?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay. So did you establish any rapport with any of the artists in a personal way?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. One of those artists I don't—I have to be very careful mentioning peoples' names. I don't want to get involved in that. I just want to talk about myself, my wife, and our collecting. But one of the artists we collected, I met, and I just liked his personality. So we gave—I gave the painting to the Whitney Museum. And Jane and I decided we were not going to meet any artists. We didn't want the personality to influence our thinking about art, the painting, so we're not going to paint—not going to meet the artists. Well, for whatever reason we decided we were going start, set up boundaries, established artists we thought would be better—we thought the price would be better, we would buy artists of our own age generation. So for instance, we met Rauschenberg,

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't know—excuse me—we bought a Rauschenberg. Then we bought a second Rauschenberg. Well, nobody ever bought two Rauschenberg's, so he wanted to meet us. So through that, we did meet Rauschenberg, and we did meet—we met five artists that we collected in depth. It was Rauschenberg and

Stella, Johns, Kelly—did I mention Lichtenstein—and those five. And I really became friends with those five.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, they were friends, anyway, like Rauschenberg and Lichtenstein had you know, houses in Florida.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it's Rauschenberg and then Roy had houses in Captiva.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, Captiva.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —very close together. And but to say they were all friends—and Jasper and who—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Rauschenberg. Well, they had a close relationship, too.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, I was trying—

JAMES McELHINNEY: But—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Whatever, but we met each other separately. We didn't meet through each other, I mean —

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Maybe one said, "You ought to meet these people," whatever. I did a small documentary on Jane and our collection, and an interviewer asked Dorothy, Roy had already died—an interviewer asked Dorothy, "What other collectors were you friendly with?" And she thought a few minutes, she said, "None." So he said, "Why are you friendly with the Meyerhoff's and you aren't friendly with the other collectors?" "We liked them."

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And that was really our answer to all these friendships. We made these friendships, we didn't—we made it—we weren't friends because we wanted them to sell us the art, and they weren't friends because they weren't—we weren't friends because we wanted to buy their art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You just liked them as people.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We became—we became close personal friends and we liked them.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Do you think that the relationship you had with these artists in any way enriched the experience of living with their work? Did you feel like you had insight into their work?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we did, yes, of course, we did. We did because we visited them when we came to New York, and we didn't call them. They'd get insulted, not to just want to sell us something, but they just wanted to show us what they're doing. So we, many times—most times, I guess, we saw the paintings before the dealer saw them. And we never bought the painting direct from the artist, or we said, "Can we have this painting?" And they'd say, "Yes." And we'd call the dealer, and never—discuss price with the dealer, never with the artist. And of course, that's why we would maintain friendship.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Well, there is that kind of anxiety that some collectors, not unheard of, try to bypass the dealer that can cause a lot of hard feelings.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we never—we never—we never even thought about that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, well, of course not. What about any of the critics or any of the museum people? I mean, I imagine that once you hit the radar, a lot of people were courting you for you know, donations or to participate in what they're doing, and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Like what? I don't—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, a philanthropist is often going to be sought for support for certain institutions, certain initiatives or projects, or—I mean, you—obviously heavy, interested, like local affairs and local cultural affairs. And as we were saying earlier, you know, the Baltimore—University of Maryland, Baltimore—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: County.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —County, MICA, the dormitories at MICA, the gallery at MICA, but—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't think—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —did you have any kind of interaction with people at MoMA [Museum of Modern Art] or the Whitney, and if so—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I—I don't think—I don't think the artists ever asked us to contribute to any philanthropy.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, no, no, I meant like you know, the museums, like the Whitney or the Museum of Modern Art—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, the Whitney, I think the first experience we had or had a connection was with the Whitney. They formed a national committee. And they asked us to be on that committee, and we were one of the original founders, or members of that committee. So we were involved with the Whitney.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And what did you do in your capacity as a member of that, you know, that committee? Were you advising them about what to do, or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, they were advising us about what to do.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, you were—they were advising you?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean, no, they obviously had interest in raising money philanthropically, so we did participate with the Whitney. And later on we were asked to be on the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, so we were helpful in that to them. The Baltimore Museum had a rental sales gallery, and Jane went on that committee, and again, became friendly with the dealer, the curator and the director and learned from that experience by going to New York and borrowing works of art to be, and so she went with them and went with the committee and again, became very knowledgeable by just seeing, just seeing all the work art was being done and was being offered.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So were you helping them to locate new donors and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we didn't—we never did that, no.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or introducing them to new patrons, or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we didn't—we didn't do that. I had nobody to introduce them to.

[They laugh.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: So but I mean, I'm curious, because your activity as a collector goes back more than half a century, and no doubt when you got involved, when you purchased your abstract expressionist pictures, the Rothko, the Hoffman, the Stamos, the Tobey, all these painters back in the '50s who were on, you know, the cutting edge, the art world at that point in time was a very different place.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly. That's what I was trying to explain before.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. How would you characterize it, your memory of it?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Of the—what the art world was at that—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, the whole art world at that time, at that moment in time.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, as I said, there was nobody collecting, I mean, relatively speaking. There were very, very few collectors, and certainly very few collectors buying the five artists that we're talking about. And there certainly was nobody was buying for investment, because it wasn't an investment. I mean, the dealer got 50 percent—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —in those days, and selling a painting for \$4,000, I mean, what kind of investment is that?

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You'd have to double your money just to break even.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So you wouldn't buy it as—you'd have to buy because you wanted to buy it, you loved it. And we became part of a group, society, I guess. I mean, Jane, for her activity at the art—at the Baltimore Museum, she wanted to—asked to be on the board of MOCA—you said MICA, it was MICA—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Maryland Institute College of Art—yes, MICA.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I meant MICA, not MOCA.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There are a lot of MOCA's out there now.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, right, right. No, so she served on that board, and became involved, so therefore, we were involved for many—she was involved many years on the board, and then she was retired from the board. One of our sons, Neil went on the board, so we had connection with the Maryland Institute for a great number of years. And Bud Leake was the director.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I knew Bud Leake.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, became a good friend, good friends of Bud's. And so we were involved in MICA from that point of view. And then when they expanded then we were generous patrons of the MICA.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Bud Leake was an interesting man. He was an accomplished painter, and when I was at Yale, he was working with the School of Art there as a development person, trying to help them raise money and expand their programs, very nice man. Who were some of the other collectors you met early on, and what were they buying? I mean, you must have—you said when—if you were at an opening, there would be 300 people at the opening—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, 300—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —the line and the food and the booze—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and four other—well, and a handful of other collectors—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —who was you and your wife, and then who were the other—who do you remember? Who were the other collectors?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I had some—I had notes. I have many, many tapes. Jane had many more tapes. I have a drawer this full. When she talked to the artists, she would record their, the conversations, and then she would call our, Jeanette—my assistant, and she would type up the—she would send her the recordings and she would type up the—so I have all this—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —typed. I have all these artists and all the experiences we had with them, and all the experience in the art world. But I'm not going to talk about that. They're personal. I have here—I got it all—my son made a synopsis of all the conversations that I made. I have a lot—I had a conversation with every painter I had, every painter, every comment Jane made. But I'm not giving you that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I was unaware of it, and you couldn't have—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. Well, the point is that, I was very careful not to mention—I don't remember—I remember one of the first people we met was Irving Blum, who was actually a dealer but he was also a great collector. And he was very—we learned a lot from people like that, who previously collected art and so forth. And I really don't—I really don't remember. I mean I know the Bergman's for Whitney National Committee.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Recently their collection, or part of their collection was sold at auction.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But I never saw their collection. I mean, I knew the people, I knew their—I guess we had conversations, learned from that, too. But you asked what's the first time a great painting struck a peak [Laughs.]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —before. Well, I like to think that almost every painting we bought, we bought very carefully. I know we did, and of course, Rothko was—the first Rothko we saw was something we really thought

was great art, and through the years effectively these five artists I mentioned before—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —obviously, we didn't buy everything they did, by any means. And some paintings we didn't buy at all, I mean, doing certain series, so—

JAMES McELHINNEY: But you had to develop a kind of sense of taste and a sense of—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Absolutely, as I—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —purpose.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: As I said before, we had no advisors. We had no—people tried to give us advice, and not that we didn't listen to them, and Jane, I mean, read every magazine, every source of—possible source of art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Did she write about art, too? I'm asking because you shared this—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. I'm just trying to think what—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, she thought about all these conversations. She wrote about why we liked the art, yes. And so I think we would—yes, she would—in those tapes that she did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So the tapes that she did were conversations about each piece that you had in your collection, like a personal—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I have a story about each piece of art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's interesting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. People say they're wonderful stories, and they are wonderful stories, but I'm not prepared to tell you the stories.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean, they're personal stories.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I understand. Do you think at some point—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, I think so.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —in time, they might be shared?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, I think, definitely would. I mean if you want to put a restriction on anything, it would be after the artist died, if anything. But well—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —we have a plan what to do with all that. We have—as you know, we promised our entire collection to the National Gallery.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And we've planned to give them all these tapes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So all the archives are also going to go to the National Gallery?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay. Can you share why you undertook this ambitious project, because it's very unusual, I think, for collectors to—it's not unusual to document their collection in some way, but to have their own sort of oral history of it, too, is very unusual.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Very interesting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, how many people were involved, that are so friendly with these artists. It's an oral history of our friendship with these artists, it was an oral history of each painting we bought, and why we bought them, why we thought it was a great painting, why we didn't buy that other painting. I mean, how we chose these five artists. I mean, we could have changed—collected another five artists just as easy. I mean these people weren't famous at that time. They weren't—I mean, I said, nobody bought two of their paintings. People weren't buying that kind of art, and we were very fortunate in the sense that as prices went—among other collectors, many collectors I know said it was their—I think they said it was their—I thought, if they paid \$4,000 for a Rothko, they couldn't see themselves paying \$25,000 for a Rothko or later, we spent a million dollars for a Rothko. Even though they could afford it, some people just can't get over the fact that they bought it for \$4,000 after we paid \$10,000.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That never bothered us. And fortunately, I was being fortunate I was being successful economically, so as the prices had gone up—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —I could afford higher price. I never said if we paid \$4,000, why can't I pay \$100,000 or two, in fact.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Last year I interviewed Sid Felsen, and he said something to me that was interesting. He, as you know, did a lot of work with Bob Rauschenberg, a lot of prints—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and editions. And I was asking whether any of the things they had decided to produce were motivated by any anticipated monetary return. He said, absolutely not. He said, "Bob never did anything because he thought it would make money. He thought he made money because he got it right. We never did anything that we thought was going to get in the path of a dollar, but we got paid well because what we did was good, was exciting, it was well done." He said, "That's the only reason why we ever did anything." So it sounds to me like as a collector that was also your ethos.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, this is an aside. Sid Felsen and Gemini are one of our closest friends, and the very first time I met Sid Felsen was that I was going to California, and Bob Rauschenberg was working there, and somehow or another when we were visiting friends and he said—we invited him to dinner with our friends in California. And we—he was supposed to show up at say 7 o'clock, and he didn't show up. And so I called Gemini, and Sid Felsen, who was there, and I said, "Is Bob Rauschenberg there?" He said, "Yes, he's here, but Bob's coming to dinner." So I got on the phone, Bob said, "I'll be there in half hour or an hour." Of course, that's typical of Bob Rauschenberg. He showed up with like 15 people.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.] An entourage.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: An entourage. And Bob, you know, he had—I don't know—well, anyway, he was a great conversationalist. He could come up with some wonderful statements.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's amazing, and I learned this through doing a series of interviews through the Foundation, for the Rauschenberg Foundation, including Sid Felsen, was that Bob Rauschenberg was almost completely dyslexic, couldn't read, yet verbally articulate, very bright, and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Absolutely, absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —kind of a savant in that regard.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, a lot of these artists—we collected those five artists—they're all geniuses, in our opinion, geniuses in different ways. But they're all successful artists in their own way, and coming to it from different ways, different points of view.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it was interesting, because when I interviewed Sid Felsen, he has also been interviewed so many times, that it was hard to sort of get something fresh, some new kind of point of view. But one of the things I learned by doing research at the Foundation was that he had photographed every single project that Gemini did, and he had this marvelous, vast collection of photographs—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and of all the Rauschenberg projects.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And so what we did was we did the whole interview based on his photographs, and that was very exciting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, he has—he's had a great collection, and he's very—he put together envelopes with all these different—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —stamps he has, very, very—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So I see sort of a parallel between his photo archive and your oral history archive, this sort of keeping track, sort of maintaining a narrative of about—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we never—I mean, I don't think Jane ever was thinking about an oral history when she was doing it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: She just did it.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: She was. We didn't—we have these five artists in depth. It was never intentional to buy in depth. We just bought—we'd buy these five artists, and then we said, "Why should we look somewhere else? We like these five artists. Why don't we just keep buying the same art? It's our debt. It was debt because we bought those same artists over a period of time. It wasn't we were thinking we were doing something for history.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, no, no, it just happened—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —just intuitively. So were there—as time went on, so into the '60s, into the '70s, how did you—and as you developed an eye and a point of view as collectors, how did you respond to changes in the art world, I mean, because famously, there were incidents like the confrontation between Bob Scull and Bob Rauschenberg, the auction where the Rauschenberg had sold for some huge amount of money. At some point the world turned—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That huge amount was like \$20,000.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, huge amount, \$20,000. But at some point, the world turned, and art became more about investing and speculation, and here we are now, with a—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it's just astounding. I mean, it was just in the last year or so, or two years—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —it really took off.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's just crazy, I mean, a lot, I guess. I'm looking at my notes here to see. I'm trying to think of—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I could ask you another question. If as you began to develop these relationships with artists, with the dealers, did you also form associations, relationships, friendships with the writers, any of the critics, any of the people who were—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no. The only writer we—I see it's already 20 after 11:00, so hopefully we'll—we'll probably have another session tomorrow—but I got to review—I know I have all these names, but I just don't have them at the top of my—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I can get Karen to email the notes also to Jeannette, if that's helpful.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And what? And email me what?

JAMES McELHINNEY: If you want to review what we've done today—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —what we're doing now—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —it's possible to do. So you're saying that there was a writer who—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, I—Calvin Tompkins.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's the only writer that we ever became friendly with on a social basis, and actually, I asked him to write a waiver interest in doing a documentary, or document on my collection. He said he couldn't do it. It was just too close to all the artists, also, and he wouldn't do it. Actually, we hired a man named Jackson Frost, who interviewed all these people. And of course, that's what all these pages are, of these interviews.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I see.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And there's something else—come on, where's the other one. He was interviewing all these people.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And he was interviewing the—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: These artists we talked about.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And—

JAMES McELHINNEY: And so I presume this is part of the archive that you're going to be leaving to the National Gallery?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well, I'm just going down the line here, because I have 16 tapes, or these are my tapes—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —separate from Jackson's tapes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —which is—I would say is a much more—I have 16, she bought his—I don't know how many tapes, I mean—

JAMES McELHINNEY: A lot.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: A lot. You haven't seen our galleries?

JAMES McELHINNEY: I have not, yet.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well, for instance, I have here a story of how—how we got to know Bob Rauschenberg closer was the fact that Jane bought a first Rauschenberg, a second Rauschenberg, and she wrote him a note about how much she enjoyed the painting and so forth. And we had never met him at that point. So we met him, and he said, "Oh," he says, "You're the no PS lady."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And Jane said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "All these people writing these letters how much they liked it all, and PS, would you lend a painting to the art show we're having at Baltimore Museum of Art." He said, "You had no PS."

JAMES McELHINNEY: No PS.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You just—it was just how much you liked the painting. You didn't ask to borrow something, you weren't writing a letter asking for a favor. So that's how we got the—that was his first comment.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, he early on, in a modest way began to get involved with philanthropy, because he had that little—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —Change AID that was—that was sort of an emergency fund for artists.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we were—we actually visited him in—Bob in Captiva, and I'd been there once, but I didn't know where—we had the address or something, but I couldn't find the house. And I said, "What are we going to do?" I didn't have his telephone number; we were supposed to meet him at say 3 o'clock that afternoon. We had drove over from Miami; we were visiting in Miami. I was going to go over to see him, and couldn't find his house. But we had no idea—I went to the closest liquor store. Well, I—

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Who's your Jack Daniels customer?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly. No, I knew who he was, I said Bob Rauschenberg, Jack Daniels.

[Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right there it says Jack Daniels, and he gave me his phone number, and I called him. But that's—that's the kind of story that I—

JAMES McELHINNEY: He had two cars. He had a Volkswagen Bug and he had a bus and he had named one "This" and he named the other one "That."

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, he also had a car that he made a print of the car, and that was—I have a print of that car that was a part of—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It sounded like he was entertaining a lot—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, he was

JAMES McELHINNEY: —constantly.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He was very entertaining. I have here, it says—do you want me to go through this?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure. Sure.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And then I might—I have backups. All of these things are in this book and other things I have. I had my son go through and make sure I had all my stories, because I tell these stories, and people say, "Oh, they're great stories." But I would visit him. Another time we visited him, we spent a couple days with him, and we slept in his bed, and he moved to this other house he has on—his house in Captiva but then he had another piece of land, it's in Captiva but it's in another location. So he moved out, we moved in.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, so what was—one of the people we spoke with about Bob Rauschenberg said that he—there weren't many places in his house to sit, that people were standing around a lot. There were these beanbag chairs and stuff and not much place to sit, so people were—a lot of activity around the kitchen, too.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You guys having—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, he had a studio and a house.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And most—the television set was on all the time.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And that was—I bet a lot of people have their television sets on all the time. I don't.

JAMES McELHINNEY: They also said that hear— he could eavesdrop on conversations two rooms away. You'd be in a, you'd be talking to somebody and a person would be in the other room and he'd respond to another conversation.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: He had some kind of very extraordinary—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I know many women could do that.

[They Laugh.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They're listening to two conversations at the same time.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But you never, you know, collected Cy Twombly's work, though.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. As a matter of fact, we had an interview. Well, Jane did an interview with Irving Blum at the—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —at the National Gallery one time and he said to Jane, "There's one artist you collect and I know and do you have one artist you know you didn't collect?" He says, "Yes." He said, "Let's both write down the artist name."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Funny.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So he wrote down names. She wrote down—turnover. It was Twombly, Cy Twombly. In other words, we were—we never collected him and he knowing our taste and knowing everything knew that was one of the people we should have collected, but have not collected.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So at the time that you might have had the idea to collect him, the prices had already—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, and we just didn't. We already had these five and we weren't thinking about these galleries that—what we decided, we decided that we were going to endow, create a foundation, endow the foundation, and it'll be open to the public. And so we decided. We moved here in 1973 and we lived in the suburbs before that and we ran out of space to hang pictures but plus the fact we also went into inactivity. Say we bought the first paintings in 1959.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: '58, '59 for ourselves. It was about the same time I went into horse race, thoroughbred racing. And—so we decided to buy a farm, raise the horses on, and decided to build a house. Well, the architect, oh, he was worried where the paintings going to go. So we said to him, "Forget that." He couldn't come up with plans, so we came up with a plan of the house and gave it to the architect. He says, "You do build a structure over this house for the floor plans, the architecture itself is the architect's plan." And he was right. We didn't have room for the paintings. We already had then, nowhere near the paintings we have now. So every time I [inaudible] how do we learn about art after buying these paintings for our museum and so it affect ourselves. We went to New York quite a bit and we went to every museum in the western world. And I would pace off the—there's no such thing as a museum room. Every room is different.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: There's no such thing as a standard room but my brother had a good friend who was a friend of the Duke of Pembroke's and it was called Wilton House. And Wilton House was Eisenhower's headquarters in World War II. Am I talking loud enough?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well see, I talk very low and I'm screaming now. In my terminology, I'm screaming and I know it's normal, but to me, it's screaming but—

JAMES McELHINNEY: There's a very sensitive recorder.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Okay, good. Anyway, we went to see the Duke of Pembroke's house and he has, it's a famous house. It was Eisenhower's headquarters, World War II and he has one room called the single cube and another room called the double cube. The single cube is 30 feet by 30 feet, 30 feet high and the double cube is 30 feet by 60 feet, 30 feet high. So I came back and I said, "We got the room, 30 by 60. That's it." And he said, "What about a flat roof?" I said, "No, no flat roof. It would leak all the time." We want a pitched roof. So he said, "We'll have to use the same pitch on the galleries that we have on the house. That'll be the same pitch." And we could—the first gallery, I couldn't make 30 by 60 because I already had the swimming pool and the pool house. So he said, and the first gallery, "You can't make it 30," I was going to make it 30 by 60. And the first gallery, how high do you want the first wall? I said, out of nowhere, just said, "9 feet." Without thinking, I said 9 feet. So

using the pitch of the same as on the house and using 9 feet, and using the first gallery's not 30 by 60 but the second gallery is 30 by 60. Turns out that the second gallery was [inaudible]. We now have nine galleries and they're all 30 by 60 feet. And they're all, the height of the second gallery, because of the pitch and because the 9 feet, the straight walls on our house, on our galleries are 16 feet. So they're 16 feet and they go up to, like, 24 feet. So all the galleries are 30 by 60, 16 feet. Years later, after building the galleries, or some of the galleries, I got a book on Wilton House. And they said that they were 30 feet high. They were 30 by 60 but they're not 30 feet high. They go up straight and then curve up to 30 feet.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: The straight wall at Wilton House is 16 feet, the exact same thing I have. If I had said 8.5, I said 10, entirely different.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, that's interesting because it, there must be something just intuitively about that kind of proportion that feels right for hanging pictures. You're happy with it?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, of course. And of course, we were happy with the way the Duke of Pembroke hung his pictures. I mean, we knew that—how it fit in a 30 by 60-foot room and we have, well, I'll show you later.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I mean, I'm curious now because what you, what you're talking about is, like, creating your own personal museum.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's what we were doing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you got to have, like, a prepared or I don't see, I mean, were you up there on a stepladder with spackle and a hammer and nails hanging these things? Or did you have—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I had a man who worked for me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I'm in, you know, was in building house and apartments. I've built over 25,000 houses and apartments. And anyway, this man works for me, worked in housing. He's now been here for my maintenance man for 30 years or, well, I've been here since '73, so that's 3 years. That's—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Forty-one.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Forty-one years. He's been with me 41 years.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And, but then I have my carpenter. I buy a painting from the dealer, Leo Castelli or Janis or anybody. I have carpenters come up, hang the picture. They hang the pictures and they hang a picture in an hour that takes the gallery all day to hang a picture. So I know exactly how we're going to hang the pictures and Jane knows. If Jane, one of the great things she had was how to hang pictures. She had a knack to know exactly how high off the floor the painting should be, what painting should be on what walls, and every, every—like Ellsworth Kelly says it's more, [inaudible] but he said that my art gallery sold more Kelly's than all the other galleries together because selling one Kelly, it doesn't mean anything. Seeing Kelly's together means something.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You see with the whole point.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well that's absolutely true with his, yes, with his work. If you see one, it's not enough but—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But he is very sensitive how they're hung and he wants [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Have you any of his drawings?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I have a lot of his drawings.

JAMES McELHINNEY: They're wonderful. There was that great show at the Met a couple of years ago and just that one gallery up between the modern and the contemporary gallery, that one long room full of his drawings of plants.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, we had more than one.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wonderful.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wonderful drawings. Yes, I mean, there are a lot of ideas about 62 inches on center or whatever.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Sixty is what most people say.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sixty but—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And that's a good, it's a good way.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's a good height.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, because people are, if it's too high then it's sort of intimidating. But, so did your carpenter have to go and talk to museum people about—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The preparators and have you got, like, a little conservation room, too, or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no. Actually, that's, the National Gallery comes fairly often to check them out, make—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Any conservation they do because they're going to get the paintings.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So they want to make sure to keep it in good shape. But he, but our carpenters are—I mean Jane would tell them how high and how high how to hang them or whatever but they're—I have very good carpenters. They're more than just carpenters.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, they're, yes, so what's the heaviest painting you have?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, the, I think the heaviest is the, well, of course, the heaviest, you came here past the Richard Serra. We have these.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They were, like, 5 tons or so.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He wanted to take a picture of me standing under them. I said no way [Laughs.]. I went ahead and lift it up on a crane.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I know someone was killed installing one of those things. That's not, they're dangerous.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There was a, there were a number of stories about installing the Anselm Kiefer show in Chicago in 1986 and you know, his work that, you know, the German painter is very, very heavy with all that lead and so forth. Just wondering if you, if you—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we never had a painting that heavy to worry.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So no hanging stories of any note or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I know the artists all liked the way we hung them, way that Jane hung them and we show, we showed this collection in the National Gallery twice and the National Gallery was worried about was how, that looks so good here. How could they make them look right there? They not even look as good in the National Gallery as they look here.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So your collection is—we'll be hanging it in, you know, the Pei Building. Is that where it will

be or—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They don't have room for our collection. The arrangement we have with the National Gallery, is that the paintings have to be on our walls or their walls at all time. If they, for instance, took a whole room of ours, they'd have to put their—the paintings of theirs, so, and we don't know how long. The idea of this being a public museum is going to work out. How long does it work out? The backup plan was closed it would go to the National Gallery but the idea now is, that the paintings have to be on our walls or their walls at all times.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's kind of unusual. I mean, we're seeing a lot of new museums being built by collectors or being opened by collectors like, well, like Ron Lauder, the Neue Galerie in New York or, I guess, you know, the famously Alice Walton's museum.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, and this new museum that the, they're being built in Venice by the—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Pinault?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Pinault, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. Well he had Palazzo Grassi, right? And then—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He had what?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Did he own the Palazzo Grassi?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, right, right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And then he bought the Dogana.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, but Frank Gehry did a building for—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's like a ship.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We had a lot of people doing that. We weren't thinking about building a—we weren't about the architecture.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We say that you're a great art, no matter how it's hung. It looks good.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right but I think a lot of, a lot of people have said that the inside of, you know, the Bilbao is not as interesting as the outside. But have you been to, have you been down to Crystal Bridges to see—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, I haven't, no.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You know, the Moshe Safdie building?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, no, I haven't seen it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, that is a kind of starchitect building.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we just came from, I just came from Miami, where we saw the new museum, the Perez Museum and we saw the New World Symphony had a new building. And the New World Symphony Building is a Frank Gehry building. It's not a Frank Gehry building on the outside. It's a normal-looking building. Inside, it's a Frank Gehry, it's—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, interesting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, the Perez Museum we call Rose Ellen's museum, my daughter Rose Ellen because she was chairman of the museum for nine years. And she was chairman of the committee that hired the architect for the new building and she was our—hired the builder, so we call it Rose Ellen's museum.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, good.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But the architects there did a fantastic job. I mean, the, but everybody raves about what,

the job they did. But the architecture of these new buildings are just as important as the art inside them. Our collection's not that way at all.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's the art.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I guess one could say it's a little bit like the Barnes Foundation, the old Barnes Foundation.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Which was a residential-cum-museum space.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And obviously, it not built by a starchitect—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A Richard Meier, Moshe Safdie, Frank Gehry type.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, well they wanted, they want the family. They want the people to say oh, that's so-and-so's museum.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Not, they have great art in that museum.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Yes, it's interesting that it's the, you know, the—your name here, culture of—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, like, now I said that I probably want to take that out.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you can have a look at the transcript and see how you feel.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So am I to understand that the building we're in, part of the building we're in, is accessible, or will be accessible to the public?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, yes, the whole thing, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Whole thing?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I would assume that the director or whoever will be in the National Gallery, has to take it over.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We pay all expenses. But they, I assume the director would live here. That's what I would think but that's sort of silly. They'll make that decision when it comes, time comes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So what will become of the grounds and the horses?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Everything.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Everything?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I assume there be no problem hiring somebody to take over the farm.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: If it, there's the [inaudible] and there'll always be the horses here, too.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did you ever entertain the idea of having a kind of Storm King-like, sort of—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we'd never collect that much sculpture, so.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's just not that—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So there are a couple of pieces, like you said, you know, the Serra and, you know, the piece out—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We have Stellas—a couple of Stellas and a couple of Kelly's.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But they'd be really [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, just in situ. And at what point in time will, you know, the building be opened as a museum?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, when I die.

JAMES McELHINNEY: When you die? So will we have a chance to have a look at either of the galleries at some time?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Want to do it right now?

JAMES McELHINNEY: We could do, sure. Why don't we do that? Why don't we take a break and why don't you carry that with you gingerly?

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track01]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Go look in here, go look at those—did you see all [inaudible] several trophies.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I can see that.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: These aren't all [inaudible]; I had many more trophies when I was here.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I assume you're an equestrian yourself?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no—

JAMES McELHINNEY: No?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Never.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Never.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Can you stop recording for a minute?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, turn it off.

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track02]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We spent like 25 percent of our time in New York so we went to all the museums, all the galleries and so forth, then how do you—how do you pick—had a [inaudible] what's [inaudible]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You keep looking and you develop an eye.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you acquired the apartment in New York the same year that you got this place?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: 1974 [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But the—anyway my physical trainer from the Carlyle hotel—he's now a very successful trainer, runs a facility and we've focused [inaudible]. But anyway the trainer comes down two or three times a year, right, and I get—he says exercise five, six days and two hours every day and I couldn't do that; well he decided to help me. I figure all these doctors couldn't help me, how's he going to help me? So finally the doctors say "Call him; we can't do any good." So we called him and he came down and gave me some stretches and cured it and—but then I moved to New York and, forgetting all about this, ran through three or four museums like I always did and was back again and the pain was horrible. So I called him again and [Laughs.] he came down and cured me again and I've gone again and now I'm back to where I am and he's coming down next week or he's been down once or twice, and hopefully he'll cure me again and I'll never walk again [Laughs.]. I'm going to go—look, I'm using this; this is a cause for me to [inaudible]. This is the first—the first gallery right here and this is a library obviously. When you show somebody a house—around a house you say "This is the library, this is the bedroom" [Laughs.], you know—you're like what else could it be?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right [Laughs.].

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is the library.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's where all the books live.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well, I've got stories that—well I don't—I just don't want to talk about the artists

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, I understand.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Makes it difficult but the—turn it off again?

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track03]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So one of the things pertaining to this—I guess you can say—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's the Brice Marden room, yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes and Jane collected artist by artist, I mean the whole gallery is one artist and Jane always thought—she wished she hadn't done it—then maybe do by periods or by influences or whatever. Actually Brice Marden had to be the sixth artist that we collected at that—this room is not very [inaudible] I forgot that [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Want me to carry that up for you?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Can you do that?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. So all stages of Rauschenberg—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —from the combines on—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually [inaudible] these windows [inaudible] talk about the architect—what about the windows? Well they—it was in Brandeis University; they had similar windows in the corner. That gave me the idea [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Long, skinny verticals in the corners.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well they're much bigger, they're much bigger but they—in this case [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's a very big room echoing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's a 30 by 60—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: There is a coffee table with four chairs around it in one part of the room.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Turn that off until he starts to—

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track04]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Here's that carpet.

JAMES McELHINNEY: At some point he—wasn't one of his pieces, *Diver* or something—he got embroiled with a lawsuit but—for having appropriated a photograph—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and so—and then after—so did you ever send him photographs?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Photographs of what?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Anything; he—you know.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no, no.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Because I was told that he would ask everybody to send him photographs if they traveled or whatever—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, no, never. I figured he did pretty well without me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.] Do you know his son Chris who's a photographer?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. I wish I could tell you some of these stories—they're great stories [Laughs.]. I don't want to.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No? There will be a time later on.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Everyone who comes into this room says, "Wow!" [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is a big wow, yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually this is called *Hooloomooloo, 1, 2, 3, 4*. We only have 3; the fourth is twice as high as this and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Anyway they think the wall is made for this, same as that. Wait that's a—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's seldom that one sees so many Stellas like this in one room together; it really is—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They were borrowed together, the Stellas, to the National Gallery. We've already given I guess 46 paintings to the National Gallery, so. That's a—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you must have some kind of loading dock here or some kind of—?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well they didn't come in through that door we just—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, they came in through this door.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I see, okay. Wow.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Hey turn it off again please.

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track05]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: These are the sort of stories I cannot tell.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well it'll be marvelous when they can all be—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —be shared.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: These are all Race Tracks—Car Race Tracks—he's the—at the—[inaudible]—that's it, Car Race Tracks; that's why he did the Race Tracks [inaudible]. When we—when I was in [inaudible] they had these [inaudible]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Had the Guston and the [inaudible]. Is that your only Guston or do you have more?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We have some drawings. Guston is far worse for retro-sale and we met him—Grace Hartigan—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —married a Baltimorean who came to Baltimore so we became very friendly with her; she taught [inaudible] gained social friends and Philip Guston came down to visit her one summer—spent some time with him but he was always available. I mean one time we flew all the way to St. Louis just to see a show; they were all for sale, we were thinking about buying one but we have all those—we just didn't buy one until much later.

We went to see Roy Sargent not quite for ourselves; we wanted to buy a Rothko. So I called—I called and that's—I called information and said do you—I'm trying to tell the story but it's the hardest thing to tell—anyway I called and we spoke and he didn't want to sell me a painting. He said—he said he had a dealer and he said he wanted—so I explained to him we're the people that bought the Rothko for the Baltimore Museum of Art so he said "All right." So I go out to see him and he was painting dark paintings. We were thinking pastel paintings and I said—he had—so we're talking about some bargain; found out later he was tutting on the paintings and I said, "Do you have like this kind?" "Oh yes." "Can you sell us one?" "No."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: "You buy this or buy nothing." So we bought nothing. You know better, we had the—Priscilla gave him the house [inaudible] and I told him, I was like [inaudible] and years later we bought the same painting different price.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Great story. Oh here we go—marvelous drawings.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There's a marvelous studio up in Spencertown, New York, right?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, we've been there a number of times.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So all of the installations here were by your late wife?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Marvelous, wonderful eye. I can see why the people at the—at the NGA are worried about trying—about doing as well.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually when we did the show the first time at the National Gallery of Art, Jane helped hang the show.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Excellent.

[Telephone rings.]

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track06]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] pick up the phone [inaudible]. This is Lichtenstein.

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track07]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Marvelous, this is a wonderful picture.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Jasper Johns. See this picture—this picture and this picture, they look just as—inside out [inaudible]—it's not—this is not something that—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's hard to sort of absorb this all—it's a—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, I'm rushing you through here—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —marvelous, marvelous, sort of stunning—just these gorgeous spaces and they're all hung really well.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [Laughs.] I'm just thinking about how my stories compliment these paintings in so much—that—so interesting what they say and how we got them, put them up, and times we've bought them.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So each picture has a story.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Absolutely, absolutely, each has a story [inaudible]. Can you turn it off?

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track08]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This book has lasted about—past the—past year.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So Kline, de Kooning, early Stella, Pollock? Reinhardt?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. There are two other Reinhardts we gave to the National Gallery earlier [inaudible] Stella already, Clifford Still.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Have you been to see the Clifford Still Museum in Denver?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, I haven't.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's a very curious thing because he had nothing at all to do with Denver.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We had a very, very interesting conversation—Clifford Still he was—he was the—teaching—at MICA.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And he came out here for lunch and we had a long lunch [Laughs.]; he had a lot of interesting things to say. This is Agnes Martin; I discovered this hanging up in this bedroom for years and we brought it down here, and my grandchildren had written and made little smilies [Laughs.] and so they—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Dear.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They've been removed [Laughs.].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Noland.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. There was some comment about the fact that the de Kooning—this was happening I think it's between '87—is this—if you want to do it it was '87—Grace Hartigan knew de Kooning very well in New York, just positively done by de Kooning—one more search?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Pardon?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Can you do one more search for me?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure. Be my pleasure. Here's Grace Hartigan; is that a self-portrait?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] this is a photography collection from [inaudible] let's see here [inaudible] there are a couple of things [inaudible] and well you—you just [inaudible] just conversation we had [inaudible] she's sorry about the fact that she's a [inaudible] first officer [inaudible] but she also, I think the same time as in Munich, she sort of [inaudible] self-portrait.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [inaudible]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] self-portrait [inaudible] years later [inaudible] she [the Queen of England -RM] commissioned Struth to do this photograph and then she allowed him to set up surprising points of view: she was in the sofa, I mean, in the—in the [inaudible] she was [inaudible] and we—and we [inaudible] I said [inaudible] before a show, introduced to Thomas Struth and he says she had commissioned him [inaudible] close to her and [inaudible] is taking pictures [inaudible] "What are you doing?" and [inaudible] says "Great [inaudible]; he chose this dress," and [inaudible]. Will you look at the wreckage? [Inaudible] and they're looking at you [Laughs.] [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Ever watchful.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Ever watchful [inaudible] if you have to talk about the 10 greatest paintings ever [inaudible] you have to include among those—you have to include the landscape, you have to include the drawing, so pretend you're [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: And this is the Pergamon Altar.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I see, yes [inaudible] marvelous thing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. This is the—Candida Höfer—this is the first one and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: [inaudible]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: [inaudible]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually, talk about that previous son [inaudible] he was just walking by this [inaudible]—coming and he's just walking by this—he's like "Wait a minute" [inaudible]. This is [inaudible] sort of. He's the most popular photographer today; it's hard to say best or well-known or—he's—he gets the highest prices, let's put it that way. [inaudible] he was younger [inaudible] you're telling tales [inaudible] they're obviously expecting [inaudible] I first thought maybe he digitally made this [inaudible] I thought maybe digitally and [inaudible] in conversation [inaudible] director and president [inaudible] his father was [inaudible] his mother was Italian and in conversation [inaudible] he used to visit his mother's family in—the name of this town, it's like—it's on the Baltic Sea—forget the name of it; anyway I said, "Well does the beach run in the family? What did the beach look like? He said, "It goes on forever." So it's not digitally; this is the—

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is the Baltic Sea?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: With this large portrait.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is the Thomas Ruff, that's a friend of his; they run with Candida Höfer—was here; she came out [inaudible]. In Baltimore we have the Peabody library, which is one of the great libraries, so she called his dealers in New York and said, "We have the [inaudible]." Everyone said [Rheda -RM/NM] thought that Candida Höfer would like to do it [if we had a library -RM] so she said, "Send me a photograph" [inaudible] took a photo with her [inaudible] she got the photograph in the morning and she called me yesterday and said [inaudible] so she came and bought us a set and when she came she said [inaudible] so wait a minute, she [inaudible]. This is Thomas Demand and how do you think [inaudible] this is—this is not—he did all this in paint; this is not a scene, he created this and did everything on this paper and knowing this piece of paper, I said, "We'll bump 20 thousand pieces of paper." The curator of the National Gallery said it's 200 thousand pieces of paper [Laughs.].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh my God. So all the foliage is basically cut out—yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's all—it's all paper. Nothing, there's [inaudible] it's just pieces of paper.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So it's a photograph of an installation.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He made it and then he has it; it's like the [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: —It is quite amazing, a big, long parts of the landscapes are the interior of a forest?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is Jeff Wall, this is a—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes he shows at Goodman, right? Marian Goodman?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, so does Struth.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We met him, I have to tell you and she said—he said this is my Hans Hofmann—

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Jeff Wall said, because Hans Hofmann's the [inaudible] so we have to finish this off because this takes this long [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well I think it's the backlighting—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —kind of screams for attention.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He said he—he was hanging—actually, I've bought several things from him. I have to be—I have to be the first—I was there at the first Art Basel, 45 years ago.

JAMES McELHINNEY: In Switzerland.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: In Basel, Switzerland and the reason I was there is my niece was an art dealer in Athens, Greece and she was showing me her first booth, so I was at the very first one—but after all he's done—so 45 years ago. We'd already bought some Struths from Marian Goodman, so we [inaudible] because he's [inaudible] so we finally got back to her and asked, and we loved it [the Jeff Wall -NM] so we—he autographed it so we'd buy it around the same price that we sold it. We don't remember, it was in some gallery and we had this thing and what—the things he didn't have in his show they had back in the —and this was one of them. The reason we got it was we followed them back and we found the gallery, they told us the price and I convinced them, I said, "I'll buy it."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Turn it off.

[Audio break.]

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track09]

JAMES McELHINNEY: [inaudible] and it doesn't seem like—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Tom? They're going to help me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: One's not prepared to find this space within that room—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: What happens is people know we're looking and the [inaudible] I mean this great space. They walk into the Marden room and they—people who've never been here—"Oh my God, look at this" [inaudible]—"Oh my God, look at this"—not knowing: "Let me see the Rauschenberg room" like you did, you turned for the Stella [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh my God, yes. Well it's a surprise, it feels—it feels like a discovery.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I interviewed another collector who said that Ed Ruscha—you know Ed Ruscha?—said there are two kinds of ways to respond to art, one: is go "Wow! Huh?" and the other one is to go "Huh? Wow!" He said the second is much more desirable.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] some people say it's "interesting," that because it [inaudible]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh no, that means nothing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, but "huh-wow," it's a—I guess is the desired one.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is Baldessari, he always has these—covers up the faces, yes. You'd think [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: So he just had a show at Marian Goodman.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] never see it [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: So are you—when you were beginning your collection did you make a decision that it was going to be primarily American art?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no, well if it is, but we—

JAMES McELHINNEY: It is.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes butwell we—because that's the way it happened. You know what I mean, we have Howard Hodgkin [inaudible]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, I saw that piece.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —and we have some he already did and I think we have another artist: Jean Dubuffet.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes so I'm like take some photographs. She's [inaudible]. I figure once I've filled all these top to bottom, [inaudible] all space, all the rest of [inaudible] space, all the other counter space, I got—so this is up—this is all the way back there. People say—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So it works on paper and print, so—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —these rolling walls.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I actually had to [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Is—[inaudible] amazing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Isn't it amazing?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Who's the artist?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Viktor Muniz.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh of course, okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He does—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes he has a show out now, too.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He does indeed [inaudible]. This is a movie theater in Tampa, Florida. This way it goes all [inaudible] movie theater [inaudible] He left the camera open for 24 hours. [Inaudible] This is Phillip Johnson's house. [inaudible] [Andreas] Gursky [inaudible] and [Thomas] Struth they all studied at Düsseldorf School of the Bechers.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They studied under the [inaudible] like 45,000, but Gursky always said—[inaudible] always said the same thing—they never [inaudible] you never see this because you're an American; you never see this.

[END OF meyerh14_1of2_sd_track10]

JAMES McELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Robert Meyerhoff at his home in Phoenix, Maryland, on Friday morning, December the 12 at about—it's about quarter past ten.

How are you this morning?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Unfortunately the pain is more—yesterday was better than it has been. But today, it's—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I'm sorry. It was wonderful having a tour of your galleries. It was a real surprise because the building, as we said, doesn't exactly prepare you for what is inside. It's a wonderful thing. I thought maybe today we could start by talking a little more about, you know, the building and your plans for it and, you know, the genesis of the building as well. So you shared with us yesterday that you had been the designer of the floor plan of this. When you came up with the idea, had you seen anything else that inspired you? Had you seen a museum, some other place that—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, as I explained yesterday, every museum room is different. There's no such thing as a standard museum room.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So I paced off of every room I could find and still hadn't decided on anything until we went to Wilton House, the Duke of Pembroke's house, in England and had these two rooms, 30 by 30 by 30, 30 by 60 by 30, and as soon as I paced off the 30 by 60 foot room, I knew that was—I mean after all these other experiences, I knew that's the room I wanted.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But those rooms have a vaulted ceiling, right? But here you decided on a pitched roof. Was that for reasons of weather, to avoid leaks and—?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it would look foolish to have a pitched roof on the house and some other kind of room on the galleries. It just wouldn't look right. And so therefore—and also, as you said, flat roofs always give problems and I didn't want a curved roof and I didn't want a flat roof, so the only thing left was a pitched roof. [Laughs] And as I said yesterday, the idea of the size was right and the architect and I, he discussed opposite. He thought about putting the whole thing underground, and I thought that was ridiculous because we're on a farm, there's a beautiful view. I want to have the view. And I had visited—one of the museums I had visited was Brandeis and they had windows in the corners, like—not as—their windows are much larger. Maybe, I don't remember the size of the room, but it wasn't 30 by 60 and that's when I decided on the windows in the corner. The architect was talking about windows in the middle building. I was like—again, didn't make any sense. We're looking for the most raw space we could get.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It seems like there are a lot of museums that are being designed by "starchitects," as they call them—people like Daniel Libeskind or Moshe Safdie or Frank Gehry and the buildings almost compete with the art, or they do compete with the art. How do you feel about that?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't feel anything about it. If that's what they want, that's what they do. But we weren't looking for any known architect. We knew what we wanted and didn't need notice—just needed an architect to follow our instructions.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, who did you end up using?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well his name is Lawrence Meneff, Jr., who was the architect on home-building business, building homes. And he was the architect who did my houses, so he's just—he has a say. He put the envelope around the house and the envelope around the galleries, which is very simple.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's very effective, too. So that when you constructed the galleries, did you have input from people in the museum world regarding how the mechanicals would have to be different than an ordinary home? For instance, climate control?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I contacted the National Gallery and I put in the systems that they recommended to maintain the temperature, maintain the humidity at all times. So we do have that system.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you don't have an additional storage?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, you saw the storage I have on the racks.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, right, yes. The prints. Yes, the works on paper.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: There's some paintings on those racks, too.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So those rolling racks—yes, I was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I got that idea from—Ellsworth Kelly had the same racks, I saw—contacted the company that made his racks and that's the racks we put in.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Up in Spencertown, his place there?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So. That's interesting. So you had them made by the same contractor who did them for Kelly?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Great, extremely effective.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's also effective, as you said, because it goes—my idea also was not to build them straight out but to keep moving them to the West so that when you're in the gallery, the next gallery opens at the far end, so that you don't see it—you don't see all the galleries in one shot. All you see's the next gallery and you see the opening over there. You wonder whether there's another gallery there. And then you get there, you wonder whether there's another one in the next place.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So each room is a surprise?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, that's a nice—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Or they might—you think it might be the end. You don't know how far they go.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Right. It's very effective.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You say, "Oh, there's another gallery?" [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: And also, they're each in a different level so that entering, you know, the Marden room, which is a "wow" moment—then you move upwards through a series of these spaces. And each one is a surprise. So that's how you envisioned it when you laid it out, yes. Amazing. Wow. Well done. So back to your collecting. You collected a small number of artists in great depth and you were saying that yesterday, you had wished in a way that you had collected Cy Twombly and what's his name—someone had told you that—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, Irving Blum.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Irving Blum had told you.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It was an interview that Jane had with Irving Blum, was a half hour interview or whatever and one of the things he said: "Would you have thought about taking another artist?" And he said, "I don't know, I think you and I—we haven't discussed this." Irving was saying to Jane, "We haven't discussed this. Write down on a piece of paper who it would be."

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's right. And it came up Twombly, right?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly. We're not distressed about it.

[They Laugh.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, no, no, no. Obviously. Obviously. But were there other artists apart from Cy Twombly? Because you think about Johns and Rauschenberg and Lichtenstein. You think about Jim Rosenquist, maybe, and —

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it's just as we said the other day. We could have put all those artists all at the same time. These might have been better known—Jim Rosenquist, I don't think, at that time was as well-known as these other artist, and Cy Twombly wasn't either, I don't think.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But there were a lot of artists off the top of my head I don't remember—well, like Nolan. We had two Nolan's but we didn't collect him in depth. We have other artists we could have collected that are not known today or very little known.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, people like Larry Zox and David—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't know that name, but other names like Morris and others artists.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Morris Louis.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Morris Louis, but his last name was Morris, the one I'm thinking about. But there are a lot of artists. I mean, at that time there are ten or 15 artists more or less on the same level. We could have taken five others rather than the five we did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's sort of the color field painters—people like—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, a lot of abstract painters, too. There were a lot of people at that time almost as well known or maybe more well-known, some of them.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Olitski—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —and a lot of whom showed with Emmerich, I guess.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. Well, the one's Emmerich, and the one's Janis and—the name I was trying to think of just so you—Sam Kootz.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sam Kootz.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We did a lot of—we had—we were very close and we bought a number of things from him, but we also—he was one of the people we visited and we'd discuss art and we went out to dinner with him and stuff and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: You told us that you like Janis, but you didn't say exactly that you were friends.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, yes, but we didn't socialize with Janis as much as we did with Kootz. Not that we did a lot. I mean, we went out to dinner maybe once or twice and went to his house and met his wife and so forth.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Now, you were collecting at a time—or are still—but in the early years, you were interacting with dealers like Leo Castelli and—did you deal with Eleanor Ward?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually, Leo Castelli represented almost all these artists. But we didn't—we saw the art before he saw the art. He didn't sell us anything, he represented the artists that we bought.

JAMES McELHINNEY: He cashed the check, but he didn't sell the art.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, he sold the art de facto, but I just meant that he wasn't a mentor.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, understood.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He had the artists, we'd go—we went to the galleries and we went to the artists' studios, these five artists we're talking about. We would see their work and if we wanted to buy the work, we asked the artist whether we could buy it. He said "Yes." And then we'd call Leo Castelli and tell him we were buying this piece. "What is the price?" And we'd discuss the price with Leo. But we never—he didn't ever call us and say, "I've got a great piece of art I want to sell you. You've got to buy this piece of art." Those kind of words, never.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's unusual because a lot of the stories we hear from, you know, collectors, rely heavily upon, you know, the advice of dealers and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, you've been to people's houses, we know the Emmerichs or you know Leo or somebody else—I mean, different galleries. We'd know that's who more or less selected the art for them. That

was their advisor. And I don't know who said it yesterday, but people don't want to buy the art the artist did yesterday or this year. They want the—they don't have the confidence to buy the art. They want to buy the art that's already been accepted. They already know that Johns is this period—1970 art. Johns is a great piece of work. They don't have the confidence to spend the kind of money it costs today to, say, buy a Johns.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. And so you were there sort of having looked at the work on the easel and saying, "We'll take that."

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. We don't say, "We'll take it." We say, "Can we have it?" [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Can you have it? Yes. And were there times where the artist would say no?

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't think so. I don't think so.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That would be a story to tell.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, the—you asked me before about—earlier about what was the—climate at that point?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's hard for me to believe that Leo Castelli could not sell a Johns. But in many cases, I had—well can we turn off the—

[Audio Break.]

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ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, he was a very nice person. Very—and we were very friendly to them, but not on a basis of buying and selling.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How about other collectors? Being as you became more involved in assembling a collection and as you discovered that you had a particular point of view and a lot of confidence in that point of view, it would seem. Who were—can you share some of the other collectors or maybe not even naming names, but just say what kind of conversations you'd have with them about your priorities in collecting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I was thinking about it yesterday. All the collectors that we knew or how they influenced and whatever, and the only person I could think of was Ben Heller. Ben Heller was a very—early on collected the artists who became famous or whatever and his telling of—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Pollock, the *Blue Poles*?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Changed the whole market, that one painting or several paintings he sold. And he also collected African art and I knew—Jane, my wife Jane, was friendly with Ben Heller's sister, went to camp together or something. And we first started collecting, people mentioned Ben Heller's name and we visited Ben Heller and Ben Heller—I guess you could call him a mentor or the only sense we saw he was collecting. And therefore, we had confidence that, you know, I think some of the first paintings we bought were after we saw Ben Heller's collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did he talk about how he formed a critical opinion? Did he talk about what his own—you know?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we didn't get into that topic of conversation.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What kind of priorities?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: He may have talked to us, but it didn't influence us. What influenced us was he had these great paintings and I was—I try to think of other collectors. There was a man named Israel Rosen, who was a Baltimorean who had a great collection of—he bought—story they told us was that he was going to be drafted in the Army, he was going to go into the Army. He always loved this one Pollock painting. I think it was \$10,000 or it was a lot of money at that time. Because he's going into the Army, his wife says, "Let's go for it." [Laughs] He—I think, you know, I said none of these people mentored us, but every conversation that we had with all those people, you form an opinion, or you form whatever.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, because at the time this art was being made, there were a lot of people writing about it. Critics, at that time, had far more power and influence than they do now. People were reading them and, you

know, people like Greenberg, Rosenberg, John Canaday. These people—I mean, whatever they said could actually lead to a sale, could influence people to buy or not buy, so.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Absolutely.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did you ever have any interactions with any of those people? [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We were at a party. It was the night of the inauguration of Jack Kennedy. And we were at a—and it was snowing and heavy snowstorm in New York. And the owner—I can't remember her name again—she was very influential and a couple of people were talking about the abstract painting—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Parsons.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Betty Parsons, yes, I think that's who it was. Anyway, she had a party and we were staying at the Carlyle, had our apartment at the Carlyle, and all of the streets were closed and it was a big snowstorm. We walked from 76th street to 52nd street or wherever her apartment was and one of the people there was Rosenberg. And Saul Bellow and —Jane. Jane and Saul Bellow and Rosenberg had a conversation for like, half hour, hour and we all had a lot to drink and so forth.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And the next day I said to—wake up, I said to Jane, "Why did you give Rosenberg such a hard time?" Or something like that. She said, "Rosenberg? I thought it was John Kennedy."

[They laugh.]

She knew, of course. That's a joke. But, still, they had a pretty spirited conversation with Saul Bellow saw one thing and Rosenberg saw the other, so Jane saw something else again. In fact, I don't remember they were arguing about the situation and Rosenberg said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Neither of you—all you're doing is quoting my articles from the Their opinion was Rosenberg's article. *New Yorker Magazine*.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Modest fellow.

[They laugh.]

Well, I'm now beginning to remember that I had a conversation years ago with Richard Gray and he was one of the first people to bring abstract expressionism to Chicago. And I imagine you know him.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. I met him, but we knew his representative in New York. Laura Paulson's husband, whose name is Andrew—sorry. [Andrew Fabricant -RM]

JAMES McELHINNEY: We can look it up.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: All right. But we had a conversation with him. Steve Mazoh was a Baltimorean who moved to New York. We knew him, so we had dealings with Steve Mazoh. I was just looking—I have this [inaudible] all the people we bought from—so Steve Mazoh, Sidney Janis, Solomon, who's—I forget his first name. He was a Madison Avenue—Christie's. Sam Kootz. Solomon Gallery. We had a lot of conversations with Ileana [Sonnabend]. Lawrence Rubin Gallery. And they later worked for Lauren Knoedler. [inaudible] Allan Stone was a good friend. Marlborough we dealt with them. Xavier Foucade, we had a lot of conversations with him. Gagorian we bought from, Kadowski [ph], Kadowski. [inaudible] Beyeler, Pace Gallery, —Zwirner. Rudolph Zwirner. Mary Boone [inaudible] obviously had dealings with them. [David] McKee Gallery [inaudible] and [inaudible] Ben Heller, we bought the Johns *Night Driver* from him. Joe Helman. Leo Castelli. [Inaudible] Thomas Segal, he was a Boston man. [inaudible] I think I've more or less said all of them now.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I believe—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Robert Elkon, Paula Cooper, James Goodman. Hopefully that gives you more ideas.

JAMES McELHINNEY: A number of these people I've interviewed. Interviewed already Arne Glimcher and James Goodman and Joe Helman and—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Matthew Marks.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, of course, with Johns.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's after he left Leo. Or after Leo died. I just want—

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, it's—so—No, you've interacted with all of the top dealers in New York.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, you've got to realize, they were the only dealers in New York. I mean, there was ten or 15 dealers that dealt this art, and now there's hundreds. But in those days it was ten or 15. It wasn't a question of—there was nobody else to go to. We didn't ignore any of the dealers—any dealer that represented these people we were interested in we saw. Probably went to their galleries all the time, anyway.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I guess a byproduct of this crazy market that exists now is that there's an increasing number of questionable works, you know—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: When we were dealing with art, we knew the artists, we knew the—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, but—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We actually bought a Pollock, a drawing that the dealer sold us. And she said that Mrs. Pollock, whatever—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Lee Krasner.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Lee Krasner and Greenberg had actually verified it was a Pollock and it turned out to be a fake.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Interesting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And we, of course, took it back and gave us our money back.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There was a story that was told by Steve Martin about being sold a picture and the dealer ended up moving to Switzerland to avoid—[Laughs]—having to pay him back.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We didn't have that experience because we were buying living artists and never had.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well early on you were—well, that's right. I guess all of those artists at the time you were purchasing many abstract expressionists were living artists. Here's a question: Here we are in Baltimore and you're buying Hoffmann, Pollock, and these artists who, at the time, were very Avant Garde and very much on the cutting edge. How did Baltimore respond? How did the art audience here respond to these works? Like the portfolio you put together in honor of your father-in-law?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't know how—I mean the—I don't know how to answer that question except that it was Avant Garde for the museums. The museum itself didn't have anything to show and any new work they showed was through the rental company, so it would be minor pieces that they showed. And none of our friends were collecting art or bought art. I was talking to my daughter last night about the fact that we never had—you asked about family collecting, or whatever. Of course, I'm 90 years old, so when I was growing up, say, 10, 15 years old that was 80 years ago, and nobody was buying art then. It just was not—there was no such thing as art bargain. There were four or five dealers in New York struggling to make a living [Laughs.]. And they sold the work for money and bought stocks. They should have kept the paintings.

[They laugh.]

Would have been hell of a much better investment.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Eighty years ago would have been when Stieglitz and all of those people were—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Nobody had ever heard their names, unless they were in the art world.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I guess Cone sisters were here collecting.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, but that was sort of—that was here and it was great that they got it, but—and I recognize a great thing, but didn't mean anything. I mean, didn't mean anything to the—I went to a lecture one time at the Guggenheim where—I forget the two people—who were arguing who started collecting earlier. One collected—one collected in the cradle—collected stash when they were five years old or seven years old. [inaudible] I did this at three years old. [Laughs] Nobody I knew collected art, period.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Or anything.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Or anything, exactly.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Baseball cards. But—well, 1934 would have been at pretty much the height of the

Depression, and so everybody was just struggling to make ends meet. So the idea of an art market was pretty ludicrous in those days. So how have you—well, I know you've been very heavily involved, you and your late wife, in trying to help institutions like MICA and how do you see—even though the Baltimore art scene having evolved from the time when you were a kid—I guess I didn't ask you. When you were a kid—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, when I was a kid, I did nothing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you weren't, you know, like going to the Walters or the Baltimore Museum?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, that's not what you did.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Our parents were not involved. None of my friends' parents were involved. It was not a subject we even discussed except when I told you originally when Jane had polio and took this course and we did talk to—my father-in-law's second wife, she was a local artist. But local artists felt that they were just as good as these other people. I mean there was no established artist in New York out there that Bill pointed to and knew about.

JAMES McELHINNEY: What was the name of your late wife's stepmother?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Ruth Kuffman—K-U-F-F. I mean, she was accepted. She sold paintings in Baltimore. Wasn't internationally known or nationally known, I don't think.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, the whole role of the museum has changed, too, because if you go to MoMA, you look at the Glenn Lowry sort of transformation of MoMA—it's become almost like—well, like the inner harbor or something. It's just become a hangout for all kinds of people, whereas you and I remember as a kid going to, you know, the Philadelphia Art Museum, there'd be two people in the place.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We had a—we invited international council in the Whitney Museum different times to—board members, whatever, to come visit us. And Jane said she was determined that she could come visit Baltimore for a weekend and not go to Washington to see art. And I remember going to the Baltimore Museum of Art and they said, "Oh"—the museum was closed. They opened it for us and Jane says it's so great going through a museum with nobody there.

[They laugh.]

I was thinking to myself, become a regular day and there'd be nobody there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So that's changed. That also has changed.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And it's free now. It used to be charged. I don't remember. Asking my African-American housekeeper had she ever been to the museum and she—her question, "Are we allowed to go there?" Her question—her answer was—"African Americans go there? Can go there?"

JAMES McELHINNEY: Wow.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Because, you know, they were turned down so many places that they wouldn't go someplace unless they knew they'd be accepted.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Of course, enforced segregation. I remember reading this a long time ago, but during, you know, the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, there was one day a week when African Americans were allowed.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: There you are. Unbelievable.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And I guess we are technically sort of in the Northern end of the old South here, so it's a border state, Maryland.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I'd just like to put in—it's not about art, but you asked about the UMBC [University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. I'm very, very proud of our collection, proud that we did it and so forth. But I think by shining my—the greatest thing I've ever done is the Meyerhoff scholars program at UMBC. I had this—there were no—there were very, very, very few black Ph.D.'s in science, and I thought if I treated—I would—if I would treat the students the same as I treated my children, I'd always give them an allowance, pay all their expenses so they didn't have to work so they—I could—there are so many people that think, still think, I guess, that black Americans or African Americans don't have the same mental capacity of white people. Which, to me is the most ridiculous thing in the world and so I had the idea that if I supported students where they didn't have to work

and I'd treat them just like my children except I wasn't going to buy them a car.

[They laugh.]

But I couldn't sell it on the idea until I met Freeman Hrabowski who is now the president of UMBC, who is a very, very outstanding man. And somebody suggested I interview him. He was the vice provost at UMBC and I knew him 15 minutes, I had the right person. And he's just been phenomenal. And we've had 800 graduates and 95 percent of them are getting or gotten Ph.D.'s or are working on Ph.D.'s. Ph.D.-MD's [sic]. And some of them are just—of course, one of our students, Meyerhoff scholars, got a Ph.D.-MD at Duke. He was the youngest person ever to get a Ph.D.-MD at Duke. He also did it in the shortest time anybody ever did it, and he's on the faculty now. It's just a wonderful, wonderful story and so I'm very proud of that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: As you should be. It's a—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And it's all—I mean, it couldn't be done without Freeman Hrabowski. I want to put that in, too. He's now president. He's been president for 25 years or 20 years.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So how did that evolve? You had this concept, which I think is wonderful idea and you found this person to implement it. Can you share a little bit about how you were able to put it together? Because you said earlier that it was hard to sell people on the idea initially.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I think one of the things I say quite often is there are a lot of bad people in the world, but a lot of good people in the world. And there are a shortage of African Americans in the sciences because schools had had to experience—to get a Ph.D., maybe five to 10 year thing, have a professor working with you. And many professors try to do it, but it didn't work out. They weren't—the African Americans weren't qualified or they weren't—they just didn't have the background. And so that's why they—I mean Harvard or Yale or whatever was not interested in this in the sense that they're above that. I mean, they—UMBC was a new school. It's only 20 years old when I started working with them, and that's why they didn't accept—I don't know why they didn't accept it, but they never—I thought about at MIT and Lehigh and Cornell and University of Maryland, but nobody seemed enthusiastic about it. And Freeman Hrabowski as vice provost was very excited about and the chairman—the president of the school was very excited about it. And all the professors were behind it, so they all got behind it and they've been—I used to say that UMBC people would think was a junior college. Now, when they go to national conventions, they say, "Oh, that's where all those smart black kids are." [Laughs.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's good. Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. I don't know. So did I answer the question?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, no, absolutely. But—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually, when I met Freeman, my idea was to take 10 students and go four years and see what happens to these 10 students. Well, the first year, Freeman found 20 students. And I said, "Freeman, I only paid for 10" and he talked me into the idea of students—20. Second year he wanted another 20. So I said, "Well, okay, let's see how these are doing." Anyway, he raised the money other places and then, from then on, I've been supporting about 20 students a year.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And how many years has this been running?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Its 28 years.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So are you in any way in personal contact with any of the graduates of this—?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Not individually, but as a group I speak with them and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So they—there's some kind of, like, cohesion as an alumni of this program?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: They're family. They're very close to each other. They live together and originally, I was only going to have men, not women. Because black women were more successful—if there were any Ph.D.'s in science, they were women, not men, and rarely involved in graduate schools. But men were the endangered species in my opinion, and so initially, I wanted just men. But after the second year, the government said you had to—you were allowed to just keep African Americans, but you had to have women, also. And then 15 years later they decided you had to have everybody. So now we have Asians and whites and black—and African Americans. But still, we try to—we still have like 50 percent African Americans. And originally we were doing, like, 10 a year. Now we're doing 50 a year.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's amazing. Are there any other programs in the country that you're aware of that—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We were surprised that we never heard any people doing it. Other than that, there are two or three universities that are going to try to do the same thing.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Where?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Penn State, University of Washington and the—I think it's Alabama or Mississippi. One of those two.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, that's—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: The big thing we're trying to do now is have the students become part of the faculty and I'm actually—four or five universities, they're faculty. I mean, this man who—graduate from Duke, there was a 60 minute show about—on the *60 Minutes*. Fifteen minute segment on man, this Duke graduate, said when Freeman tried to recruit him, he said that he wanted to get a Ph.D. you have to agree to try and go for a Ph.D. He said, "I didn't even know what a Ph.D. meant." [Laughs] But I knew it was a free—you get a free scholarship.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So were the students coming only from the Baltimore area, or from all over the country?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is for only Maryland, because it's much cheaper for Maryland students. But they're from all over the country. And we have hundreds—we have 50 students a year and we must have four or 500 applicants, and [it has] nothing to do with their economic needs. It's just—we try to choose the best students we can find.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Academic merit.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And they're accepted—I mean, they all graduated from [inaudible] Yale, Harvard, Princeton. I actually have gotten a phone call from president of the university trying to get me to use my influence to get—"Meyerhoff, I have to go to their school." Because they know they're going to make it. I mean, these, I think 98 percent of the graduates have made it, have gotten a Ph.D. and some masters, but most of them are, I think, a lot of MDs, a lot of Ph.D.-MDs and just Ph.D.'s.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Have any of them stayed in the academic world and were any of these other programs like at Penn State, at—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well they just started, very recently.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But were any of the alumni of the Meyerhoff scholars program involved with starting up those programs?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. No, I don't think so. But they've all stayed in the signs.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right, right. But you have ways to track where they are and what they're doing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, yes. We follow these—I mean, they do. UMBC does.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Excellent. Well, I can understand why you'd be proud of that. All right, are any of them art collectors?

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't think so.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Not yet.

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I got on a detour there, better go back to the arts.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, it's interesting because, I think, you know, we can talk about the art all the time and sort of the art world and art collecting and how the market has changed, how art museums have changed. But really, I mean, I don't know if you'd agree with this, but I think that in a way a collector is a kind of artist, too, because of how they assemble works together.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well they're part of the art world, whether the art collectors, dealers, museum people are all one society, I guess.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you spoke about how your late wife hung the work and how she would take these paintings and she would place them. And just sort of the way they were installed was—and the way we

experience them, I expect, was her eye. That was her eye—installing the works. So I mean, in a way, that is like a design task, you know. You have to design an exhibition. Have you undertaken any of these installations yourself, or?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I did rehang a couple of the galleries. I was just looking through, I was showing my lawyer [inaudible], I was showing the drawers of dictation that she has done. But also looked through—she had hundreds, hundreds, hundreds of cards on paintings that sold at auction. And she'd record everything of people we—in the abstract expression field. And I was remarking to Herb Goldman that when we went to collections the first time to the national gallery they had some—she—I mean, he'd mentioned about the combo. She went through their words, what the catalog people wrote in the catalogs before it was printed. And she found many of those kind of errors. But more important, she found errors in their [inaudible] and the thing sold for. She had all those records.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Very scholarly.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. It was her life.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, but these were the artists you were collecting, but not the works you had collected.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: What do you mean by that?

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, these were not your paintings. These were just works by those artists or were they —

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Let's take a minute actually. [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure.

[Audio Break.]

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ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —and these by artist names.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So this—these are just index cards, right? And—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, let's just pull everything out here.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I don't remember where it went.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is John Dooley [ph]. It's an artist we did I like. And so whatever you do [inaudible] 1990, plain year. [inaudible] And she kept records because her own cards had the—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Amazing.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We did that. All alphabetical. They're all here. You want to see another one?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Sure. So how many are there? How many of these drawers?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Just this one. Hans Hoffmann. [Rustling sounds]. [inaudible] Her comment actually put—I can show you what it was. [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I see.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This is the painting itself. And she had that almost all [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: So this was basically clipped out of the catalog, folded up, and stapled to the back of the typewritten card?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And also every [Rustling sounds] Lichtenstein sold in the last 20 years, 30 years [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Let this be a lesson to collectors everyone. Keep good records.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: These are other records that she kept. Artists, also. Articles and papers and magazines and so forth. And these are all the records [inaudible]. [Rustling sounds] It says, "End of October, 1989. Just before we went to Europe, Dorothy called to say that she had met the Greenberg's in California's friends of hers [inaudible]" also talks about when [inaudible] Roy's house. [Rustling sounds]

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did—each of these envelopes has narratives like this and records?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And all of this is going into the National Gallery's archives. What a resource. This is one of the things that very few scholars are aware of, is the whole idea of a collecting methodology. I mean, how to collectors collect? What do they do? You know? How do they keep records? How do they—we hear stories about people like the late Joe Hirschhorn walking into a gallery and saying, "I'll take it all."

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible] that these are the records of everything we bought, every painting we bought and [inaudible]. I was thinking the other day, I mean people and other collectors, [inaudible]—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Ludwig.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Ludwig, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, yes. Right. The chocolate man.

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, exactly. We'd go to a show, a gallery. Nothing sold. And we could have anything in the show. We probably picked out two or three. Maybe two. And we'd have the auction for two weeks to a month even, and they said, "Take your time, take it home. Do whatever." And we spent weeks sometimes discussing whether we should buy A or B. It never occurred to us to buy both A and B. [Laughs] It just never did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did you—when you would acquire a piece, would you sort of hang it somewhere and just sit there and watch it?

[They laugh.]

Because one collector I interviewed who we spoke about yesterday—I won't say who—who has been a guest in your house, he said that, and has this one Hopper painting hanging in his study where we had our conversation and he said that he and his wife will just pour themselves a glass of wine and sit there and just look at the Hopper like they're watching television.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, we never did that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.] Did you move—I mean before you came here, did you move the paintings around the house? Did you—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I have [inaudible] when we collected all these paintings. Of course, in the '80s, we were very active. And the '60s, '70s, we collected, but not like the '80s.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Right. How about de-accessioning? Did you ever find yourself having acquired a picture or a piece of art and disliking it and saying, "Oh, we want to get rid of this one" and—I mean, you talked about an artist who you didn't like personally and you gave a piece of theirs to a museum. But did you ever just decide to unload a picture that, in hindsight, you thought you didn't love as much as you thought when you bought it?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. I think just two or three examples. I don't really remember what examples they are, but they were minor works and we never sold a major work. Yes, we sold maybe six in all. I don't think it was that many, but it's possible. But I don't really—they're just not major enough.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And can you recall why you got rid of them? You just decided they were not—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Whatever reasons, it's minor. Not like, "Oh, this is a terrible painting."

JAMES McELHINNEY: No. Well, you wouldn't have acquired it if that's—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: In the first place.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. So you, unlike a lot of collectors today, I mean a lot of people calling themselves collectors—buy and sell a lot, play the auction game.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, not really.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, you never did that?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It was never—an investment. It was never—we knew that whatever we want was going to go through our museum before we made the agreement with the National Gallery. Now we know it's going to national government.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So the work will be either here—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Or there.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —or there. So how do you feel—I'll ask for an opinion about how do you feel the investment—the culture of art of as investment has affected collecting—the art world. I mean—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it's obvious. Things are so expensive these days. It's almost impossible to buy anything of an established artist. I mean, I was reading my notes yesterday when the \$15,000 we bought the collection. Some of the things we bought were \$500, \$700. And, I mean, artists like Stamos or Tobey, they were established artists at that time. They're still considered good artists. But they don't sell for millions of dollars. But tell you—you were collecting enough to go to secondary—known secondary—not known as a top artist. And maybe just as good. I mean there must have been more impressionist painters than the ones we know today. [Laughs] There must be many, many more out there. And some of them were very good, I'm sure. But they're never recognized.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, in the '80s, there was famously that sale of the van Gogh lilies that I guess the collector ultimately was unable to pay for, but it set some giant record. The number I can't recall, but it was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, for the prices today, say \$40 million for a Rothko. Forty million dollars when we first started collecting, you could buy the greatest Matisse ever done. I mean, there's just—and we could have bought Matisses for \$10,000 and so forth, but that's what we decided that was easy. We wanted to buy people of our own generation.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And it would be more fun and we could meet the people, we could talk to the people. So that's why we did it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: There are—there is a lot of monkey business there, like, I was reading the Chinese are now trading asset-backed securities, like, you know, the sub-prime. But their art banks, and this is very sketchy, it seems to me, and it's basically gambling, but do you feel that that imparts any kind of taint upon the art world? Because so many well-known dealers and so many well-known buyers—we don't necessarily need to call them collectors, but buyers—are, you know, engaged in this.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, there's so much money in the world and people have so much money and when I talk to one of the artists about the prices, he said, "Well, it seems like money is worthless."

[They laugh.]

People have this idea that buying a piece of art is worth more than money. And interest rates are such that you don't gain anything with money. But they must have—I mean, somebody that buys a \$40 million painting has got to be a billionaire, not a multi-millionaire. And there's so many billionaires today that, I mean—when I was young or even when I was 30, 40, 50 years old, you knew in Baltimore there was 5 millionaires, I think. Now they're billionaires. It's just so many of them—it's just hard to comprehend, really. These people are making investments; it's not their only investment. It's diversifying their investments. Buying some more.

JAMES McELHINNEY: One of the collectors I spoke with was—and again, I won't name names—was very critical of a certain kind of collector who has one of everything, you know? Sort of has, like you were talking about, stamp collecting. You have to have an example from every country, from this color and this denomination that so many of the celebrity collectors today that, you know, if you look at *Art News*, top 100 collectors, a lot of these people have interchangeable collections, basically, like a stock portfolio.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, I don't mean to put words in your mouth, but from what you've told us over the past two days, it seems like, you know, you and your late wife really bought what you believed in and with a lot of confidence and that this was an expression of your taste and your interests and I would assume that if I were to come to you and say, "I have these vast resources, I love art, I want to start building a collection," what would

you tell me to do?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Just look, look, look, look, look. Go see very piece of art, every museum you can and just form your own opinion after you see all the art. But you practice in a gallery—automatically means that then has some stature. Gallery owner not going to show the work—he has—he's already sifted out and we didn't go to the studios and hundred studios or 50 studios. We went to 50 galleries or 15 galleries. That's what they should do. And just keep going to galleries and museums. See what museums are showing and what galleries are showing and form your own opinion.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But yes, to construct, to cultivate your own taste. Because it seems like, you know, today, a lot of the dealers—there are stories about people calling a collector and saying, "I've got this piece. You need it." They just buy it. But you never operated that way.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, no. It was a totally different situation than that—for everybody [inaudible] by us, it was never—I guess I thought maybe if I ever had to sell, I'd get my money back. I mean, that was about the biggest thought I had about investment: that I wasn't throwing money away and I was paying the right price, but not to take money as an investment.

JAMES McELHINNEY: For you, not buying flip art.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh no. Never thought about that. I was going through some of these I started to go through all these notes and things I had. It's so hard to do it—so hard to do it without talking about the artists themselves, but I was trying to pick out things that [inaudible] talk about [inaudible] do it very well. But—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you've shown us her record keeping, which is pretty amazing. I guess if you were to give advice to a collector, you might say, "Keep good records."

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't know if that's good advice or not. [Laughs] Jane did it because she wanted to do it because it was her life and, I mean, she was handicapped and I guess Jane didn't go out for lunches. She was—it was just too much effort so we more or less lost all the friends we had because the artist became—dealers became our friends and it was our life. It wasn't the—I just said we never bought two paintings, even by different artists, in the same week. We'd feel like we weren't being critical enough. And [Laughs] it's funny, I said that we went to Prince Franz—can't think of his last name. He's former international council. He's very prominent in Germany. So some of these palaces you go to—that tourists go to. So we went as tourists and then we went as his guests and it cost us \$5,000 at international council. So I said we went there and it cost us \$5. Now to go there because it's \$5,000.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: But we went to the palace. We went to every—if they had art, we were there. We knew like we know every dealer, everybody who collected art was opening to us, we went and saw. That's how we formed our opinions.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. And then you trust your judgment.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, yes we had no questions about that. We—actually we knew better than the dealer. Dealers don't go to other dealers. We went to all the galleries. Gallery owner of gallery A didn't go to gallery B. He didn't know what he was showing. He only knew what he was showing. We knew what everyone was showing. I just wonder.

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[inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And I thought that you should ask the questions so maybe I shouldn't show you this, but this is the last catalogue National did that carried the newsletter.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Here, we can open it. This is the catalog at the National Gallery of Art.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You know this? You —showed the collection twice in 1985. Had this correction. Probably should have sent you this ahead of time and you'd have better answers, better questions.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh, I think what's—here, I can get this.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It's good. I'll take it [inaudible]. Let me open that a minute.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, I think it's interesting to get some insight into the methodology of collecting. Like, you saying you don't buy any more than one painting a week because that would be you weren't being adequately critical.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, here it says—this is the introduction for the director's favorite. This is by Earl Powell. He says, "It's cliché to talk about the eye of the collector, but it's hard to avoid in the case of Robert J. Meyerhoff. From the very first purchase in 1958, until Jane's untimely death in 2004, the couple built one of the greatest collections ever to focus on American painting and the post war era. Over five decades, they acquired almost 300 works of art and not once did they use an advisor, just their own eyes."

I think that Harry Cooper wrote, "The front cover of this volume makes reference to the Meyerhoff eye. It is quite appropriately, a hidden reference, requiring visual discovery. Take a moment to find it. On the back cover, the absent protagonist in a drawing by Roy Lichtenstein stammers, 'I'll think about it,' as if that personal cry had fight to be heard through the impersonal media of the Ben-day Dot in the cosmic." [inaudible] If you like, I'll give you a copy of this.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Thank you. Thank you. That would be very nice.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And also—let's go back. I'd like you to ask questions we think you should've asked since we're through. I've had that—

[They laugh.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Had the L'esprit de l'escalier moment. Well, I guess a scholar reading this in another hundred years or 50 years or 10 years, or like whatever, is going to want to try to understand how to contextualize your collecting in relationship to some of the other—your peers. The people, who like you, have assembled important collections and who have exercised confidence in expressing their taste, which, I think, a lot of people will observe, is not necessarily the norm today. You have a lot of people who are all buying a kind of menu; a shopping list of, you know, you got to have a Jeff Koon's, you got to have a Saint Mark Paul [inaudible], you got to have a Richter, you got to have a, you know, like one of each. And I was curious, among your peers, as collectors, as cultural leaders, who do you see yourself standing shoulder to shoulder with as people who are confident in there—who would give someone a similar kind of response? Like what other collectors do you feel like you can relate to and how they've operated? How they've assembled their collections?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I don't think we've ever thought about it. I don't think we were feeling in competition with anybody.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I don't mean like competition. I mean like kinship. You were talking about Peter Ludwig and saying, you know, he or Hirshhorn and just saying, "I'll take it." And there's no "I" involved there. There's a sort of like the pot latched chieftain who comes in and throws away a pile of money and ends up with a pile of art instead.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, besides Hirshhorn and Ludwig, I don't think there was anybody else out there doing that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I think we—Mr. Ganz was somebody we admired, and he was more or less, we're still [inaudible] caught he wasn't collecting in the numbers that we collected, but everything he bought was very choice, and he was honest, and he was well read. He was very involved in all the art and was well read in the art, and his wife was the same way. It was more or less their lives, too. Like I said, like with Jane's life, it was Ganz was very involved in collecting.

JAMES McELHINNEY: How did you meet him?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't remember [Laughs.].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I was trying to think just now, but well, we did see them quite often, and been to their house and so forth. And, no, I just don't remember.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But, there are—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Of course in those days, everybody clicked and everybody wandered. Everybody was a good art collector then. People wanted to show their art. They want to meet these other people and so forth.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The people like Roy Neuberger in New York. I don't know if you knew—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We didn't know him. I said before, I think, that we really didn't know him. I knew the name. I never knew what he collected.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We really—there was nobody really influenced us except we just—ourselves. We were, but I guess.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Did you know the Louis' in Richmond?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I met them a couple of times. Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Because they've, I guess on a smaller scale, but they've been very—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, they're very nice people, and then they had a good collection. I've never seen the collection, but I know some of the things they bought.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes, it's not what you and your late wife were collecting, but it also did have a specific taste and a specific—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —kind of direction, and then of course they've, you know, given a lot to, you know, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Have you ever crossed paths with Alice Walton?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. Never.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But you're aware of her museum?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes. Well, I read about it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I plan to go there some day [Laughs.].

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's worth a trip.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Encourage you to do it.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It seems also that a lot of new collections, a lot of, you know, patronages are materializing in areas the country where there wasn't really art before like, you know, the Bentonville, Arkansas is no place anyone would ever have imagined.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

[They laugh.]

JAMES McELHINNEY: And neither, I guess, would anyone expect to find so many examples of the New York school and horse farm in Phoenix, Maryland. So apropos to that, are there—I mean I would imagine that there will be, kind of, plans for accommodating all the visitors who will come here.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well we've, you know, thought of where we have parking and so forth, but I haven't really—that's for my children or the National Gallery to—

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's there—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I see no reason to—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —horse show. That's their rodeo.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's right. I saw no reason for me to inconvenience myself with the elevators, or whatever at this stage of my life.

JAMES McELHINNEY: ADA compliance and parking.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. You have to have all of that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, that will be a big job because this is an intimate space, and it's a modest road in and out of here, so—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I'm sure they'll work it out.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I'm sure. Are you collecting still? Are you still buying?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I showed you yesterday that Rheda Becker and I are collecting the photographs.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh yes. Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Back when Jane died I'd felt that that was a termination of the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff collection. Sometimes I thought, "Would Jane have bought this or would Jane like to buy this?" But, there is no way to judge that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I mean—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you have to use your own eye.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I didn't want to make it my collection after she died, or I wanted to leave it the Robert and Jane Meyerhoff Collection because Jane was so much a major, major part of it. I didn't want to by any way diminish her role by collecting after that and everything else. Obviously, I'm 90 years old. I'm going to die sometime soon, and I just didn't want to add to the collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So how did you come to—we spoke about this a little bit in the gallery. I think we may have gotten snippets of conversation up in, you know, the galleries on our tour, but could you talk a little about how you started collecting, you know, photographs, and you're working with Rheda Becker to do so.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I think I said yesterday that I hadn't collected any—we hadn't—Jane and I hadn't collected photographs—

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF:—and so therefore I was free to not continue that—I didn't want to continue with Robert and Jane Meyerhoff collection as a separate entity.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And so really we got on the conversation of Dürer—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —and we're talking art, I guess, and Rheda is very involved. As I told you before, she's a narrator a very accomplished narrator. She narrated with all the various symphonies; Cleveland, Chicago, Singapore, Baltimore, of course, for years. I think she said 40 years with Baltimore, but maybe we just happened to be talking about art and she's talking about this Dürer, a photograph that Thomas Struth had done. Then I said, "Well, let's try to buy it," and that started us off [Laughs] and we weren't thinking about collecting, we were thinking about buying art that we liked, and this thing we enjoyed doing together.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So who as it who brought, you know, the Candida Höfer to, you know—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we went to —looked up and saw that Thomas Struth was represented by Marian Goodman you know?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: So we went to see her about buying the Dürer and she says, "Impossible to buy it," and we later bought it at auction, but she introduced us to Candida Höfer's photographs and we became involved with that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And you were able to lure her to Baltimore to do some work.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, that was kind of—yes. Candida Höfer came to Baltimore to do the Peabody Library in Baltimore, and while she was here, she came out and saw the collection, and she was very impressed by that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You shared—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: And Thomas Struth has also visited me. Was very—of course all artists want to be with other artists, and I remember going to a collection then talking to him. And one of my artists was prominent in that collection. But he was unhappy because he was the only one of that statute in that collection. Who were these other people that he admired and respected? He wanted to be with them in the same—he didn't want to be the only one in this collection.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The Höfer makes me wonder if there are pieces in your collection that were made on commission basis. You showed us a drawing or a watercolor done by Jasper Johns for your late wife and how he—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, even before he did it, I mean, he did it as a present.

JAMES McELHINNEY: You mean as a present, yes—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It wasn't—

JAMES McELHINNEY: —no, as a gift. It wasn't a commission.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No, it was never a commission. Never. Never even occurred to us to do it [Laughs.]. I've read articles that say commission works never work out, and are never as good as the artist that—

JAMES McELHINNEY: They—yes, I think—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh we never. Never even occurred to us.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, that makes sense because the artist is motivated by something other than their own idea, their own inspiration, their own creative practice, and the collector is basically saying, "Well, I don't want what you do. I want you to do what I want you to do," and it's somehow—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well we didn't commission Candida Höfer to do the library in Baltimore.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We just thought it was such a great library. She has so many great libraries, she might be interested and she was, and she came down on her own. She did. We didn't promise her anything.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So you have a number of pieces in that part of the collection that came from the Goodman Gallery, like Wall, like the Baldessari, like Höfer, like Struth. Have you ever entertained the idea of acquiring works by somebody like William Kentridge? Does he interest you at all?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, he has. We've been interested in that. We haven't bought anything yet, but it's very possible we will.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And I guess, by extension, I mean, another thing that that gallery is known for is, you know, videos.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: The what?

JAMES McELHINNEY: The video art.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh.

JAMES McELHINNEY: The film.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I never got involved in the video art at all. And just by coincidence, the art we like, Marian Goodman, she never—I don't think Marian Goodman ever called me on the phone and said, "That I've got a piece, a photograph you ought to buy." I don't think she ever did that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No. But somebody like William Kentridge does everything, you know. He's doing—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right, he does very, very interesting work.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —drawings, animations, sculptures.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. I don't want to get off the photography. I'd like to get off the photography.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Just talk about—is there any other questions about the [inaudible]?

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, again, I think just trying to understand your, you know, methods as a collector. I mean, just to sum up, I mean, you learned on your own, self-taught, didn't have any particular mentors, per se. You had, your late wife's step mother, was, I guess, in the arts and that was a—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Like an introduction.

JAMES McELHINNEY: —an introduction. And also her—the art history course she took when she was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, it wasn't art history course, it was an art appreciation.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Art appreciation.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No we said—I don't know, but I really—I happen to be—I have it here somewhere here in the syllabus, but I'm pretty sure, I think I told you the first question—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF:—I think, was how to describe your living room with any center of Dürer, and you described the Dürer. One of the things I have in here is Jane had to write a long chain of answers, questions like five pages and base an hour would write back this or that. And there was an Egyptian vase in the Walter's Art Museum, which we never seen that she had to describe. So as she was, you know, healthy enough to walk again, she wanted to go down Anna Walter's Art Gallery to see this vase. And we went there and we couldn't find it. I mean they have all these big vases and it wasn't there. So we finally went to the courier and said, "Where is this famous Egyptian vase?" Well, it was in the vatrine. It was about six inches tall. So when Jane did these catalogue, art catalog, she insisted small painting, small reproduction; big painting, big review. So you have ideas of size. So you're just not thinking this little vase, you're thinking this big is only this big. And it was very interesting. It's just one of the things that I read just reminded me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's an interesting idea so small object, small image; large object, large image.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So that is very artistic. So one, I think, could easily argue that there are collector—people collect art for a number of reasons. One would be out of love, and well admiration. Wanting to be able to live with beautiful things, like the collector we both know in California who watches his Höfer like a television show. There are other people, and this is fairly common also, who see it as a means of social mobility, as a way of becoming important. And then there're other people who collect in a kind of—as a way to express their own taste, their own identity, their own ideas. That seems to be more like what you did with your late wife. And ideas like that, I mean, my assistant Karen here, look, nodding her head because it's almost like an idea an artist would have. Small object, small picture; big object, big picture. It's like building a collection is in a way like making another kind of work of art.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Oh, yes. I had another [inaudible].

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ROBERT MEYERHOFF:—over [inaudible] everything. You getting my voice all right?

JAMES McELHINNEY: I think so. Yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I hope so. We don't have to do this all over again.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No, well. We'll have had lots of practice if we did. No, I don't think we'll need to.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: There's a catalog that Jane did in 1979, the Rob and Jane Meyerhoff Collection and the help she got was from Nina Sundell and we knew Nina Sundell through the art world, but had no idea that she was Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend's daughter when we hired her to help [inaudible] this catalog. And I haven't looked through this for some time, but she has the collector's perspective. I probably should have read this. I could tell you more of what Jane was thinking about.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it was a good citation to have in the interview, because then someone reading it or listening to it can—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It says, "Why collect art in a cynical inflationary area when the word collectables has entered the vocabulary? The question may be moot. Sociologists and psychologists agree that man is naturally inquisitive, that possessions generally pride prominence and pleasure. I would put the emphasis on 'pleasure.' Art cannot be owned by a collector, since it's proof of somebody else's creativity, something unique and often autobiographical, forever belonging to its creator. There's a de Kooning on the wall opposite me will forever be his—albeit his temporary—in my custody. How did I become custodian?"

In 1947 my father married Ruth Koff, a Baltimore artist with a rare ability to enjoy other people's work, as well as her own. Their enthusiasm was contagious, Bob and I contracted the disease. Always peripatetic, we gradually based our itineraries on the geographic locations of museums in the United States and Europe. We traveled from the Louvre and the *Jeu de Paume* to the Bourgeoisie and the Uffizi. We saw every [inaudible] in Venice, The [inaudible] Museum, the [inaudible], the Rothko Chapel. And so it went, large and small, public and private, how collections escaped us. Is there a more enjoyable way to learn about art?" I should have read all this before—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, that's a wonderful sentiment.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: "Our rambles were interrupted while I was temporarily incapacitated by polio in 1955. While convalescing, I enrolled in a correspondence course concerning visual understanding given by Bates Lowry. It was necessary to work from reproductions and assignments were done essay form. Through the years, I've experienced great pleasure when personally meeting works I know so well from these reproductions. Mr. Lowry helped me to see while I was looking, making me aware of the mired range of activity, mood, and emotions that could occur on a two-dimensional surface."

JAMES McELHINNEY: She's a good writer.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: She tells it all in '79.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So who did the layout of the catalog? Was she involved with that, too?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Allison Berkeley.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh. So he did. I thought I recognized that block printing. It's wonderful.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: [inaudible]

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's—and this is a—when was this published? 1979?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Whoa! A wonderful book. Yes, I think—I mean, a lot of the value in an interview like this, a conversation like this, is going to be to give people—researchers, scholars, and, you know, others who are going to be trying to interpret your collection—a way to reconstruct your point of view. What made you put all of this work together? You know, what was the fire in your belly that kept you going? I mean, the thing is that people have flirtations with all sorts of activities. They're into, you know, they get interested in yachting for five years and then they sell their boat, and then they buy a motorcycle, and then they ride around the country. But, you've sustained a number of really, you know, engaging, challenging activities; art collecting, in a really serious, intelligent, confident, expressive way. Horse farming and racing. And then also the work that you describe, you know, the philanthropy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore [County -RM/NM], with, you know, the Meyerhoff Scholars Program, initially African American students, STEM subjects that—which you said that was the thing of which you are the most proud.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, of course I am very proud of the art collection. Very proud of the job that Jane did. We never bought a painting that we both didn't like, but you can see how much research she did and how much—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Oh yes.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —it was her life. I mean, keeping all these records and staying on top of—read every article, magazines—art magazines, and a—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So she had more of an appetite for the intellectual aspect, sort-of the critical—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I was running a very large business then—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF:—and I didn't have the time that she had. I mean, I'm not alibiing why I didn't have my work done, but—

JAMES McELHINNEY: No. No.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF:—but, I don't think we—I don't know what she says in here [Laughs.] but—I don't think we ever sat down and say, "Why are we collecting?" Or "What are we trying to achieve?" Or—we were just collecting because we enjoyed it and we enjoyed the painting and we enjoyed the life and enjoyed the art and we appreciated what we were buying and, as I said before, as prices went up we could afford it, and so we just rode with the tide as the art world, I guess.

JAMES McELHINNEY: And it's sustained you for a half a century, and still does.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: That's right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right before we left, I don't think we were able to capture it on the recording, you told a story about how Jane, at one point—your late wife—had said to you, that she didn't want to be super rich. You repeat that story?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. No, I don't want to get into that. It was really just a joke—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, but it was—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. I was just—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I mean, that you say that, you know, if we—if we acquire art then we're guaranteed to not make money.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, as an investment. We sort-of said art was not an investment—an example of—right before I started collecting that we bought a Rothko for the Baltimore Museum for \$4,000. The dealer got 50 percent. So—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —you have to double it just to make a profit. So it was just a joke, but hell—I don't want to —

JAMES McELHINNEY: No. No. Yes. But, the point is, it wasn't about, it wasn't about—it was about the art and it was about, you know, the pleasure that it gave you and the life it allowed you to live and not about, you know, the money.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. It never had anything to do with the money, it was never—as I said before, I always thought, "If we could sell it for what we paid for it or get our money back it would be as much as I would expect from the investment."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: People weren't—they just weren't—it wasn't an investment, it wasn't a market, really.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So I'm curious a little bit too about, about, your late wife's archival practices, because they seem to be quite sophisticated. I assume that every time you would purchase a piece you would have it photographed and—and, or not.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we had to fill the artwork photographed for these catalogs, but—well, obviously, Jane was a very intelligent person, a very scholarly person or—and she did a fantastic job. The catalogs. Help me with these catalogs.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So did writers or scholars or anybody have access to your collection when it was still in a, kind of, a private environment?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Do they have access to it now?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: No. That'll occur?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I haven't shown that to anybody.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, we're very privileged to be—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I imagine, I imagine we had it but—no, never, never.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So the only people who've seen that are your friends?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. My friends. No.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Really.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Nobody. Nobody sees it, but Jane and Janette and me.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I'm honored to—I'm honored that you shared it. I guess I'm wondering if there's anything you'd like to add, because I think we've covered a pretty wide range of topics. You add some, kind of, thought, closing thought or advice or desire to express a desire that in the future that, not just your collection, but art would be appreciated in a certain way. I mean, you've helped, you know, educationally not only science and engineering and technology, but also art and the like. How do you hope your collection will, will be used?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't think we ever discussed that. I don't—never even thought about it. We weren't—well we weren't buying for any educational purpose, we were buying because we—we liked the art and we enjoyed doing it, we enjoyed the life we had. We had a very enjoyable life, a very—I don't know the right words, but—of course, we were very proud of what we've done, but we never thought, "Where will be 50 years from now?" Or whatever. We knew that the work we've collected has turned out to be some of the right artists. And—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —we had no idea when we were first collecting, that they would be as famous as they are now or as valuable as they are now. It was just our life—it was just two people—we just never discussed it and I never—I mean, I think it will always be appreciated as a period of art history, but—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, you spoke yesterday about the fact that you never planned on having a champion in your stables, either.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Well, that's—horses are a lot harder. Have any idea where a good horse came from, the rich people would own them all. But, nobody knows where a good horse comes from and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: So are horses like artists in a way? They can never—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, you can't talk to them and they can't talk back and—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, that might be a good thing if they can't talk back.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. But, with the—even the artists, very seldom the artists want to talk about their work—they don't want to explain how they did it, they just do it. For many, many reasons, different reasons, but I don't think any artist ever said, "I'm doing this painting because of such and such."

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well—or the ones who do are not the ones that interest you.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, I guess they do talk about it, they never talked to us about it, we've never questioned them about, "Why are you doing this or why are you doing that?"

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it's the old expression, "Actions speak louder than words."

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right. Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So, you know, I guess what I was asking you was, "If in half a century, somebody comes to Maryland and Washington and does the Bob and Jane Meyerhoff art tour—comes to Phoenix, and goes to Washington and sees all of the work, what would please you to know that someone had learned from that experience?"

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't know.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Okay. Maybe that's asking for, like—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, we never, you know, I should re-read this and see what Jane said, but—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —I don't know remember discussing these kinds of things. It was just our life, that's what we did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: But, I guess it's like asking, "What's going to happen with this property and how are you going to handle the visitation?" That's not your problem. That not—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't visualize it 50 years from now being open to the whole world, 50 years from now it's going to be entirely different. This will be a period of time that—I mean, I guess that there were collectors in the '20s and '30s or whatever.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I don't know who they were, but they must have been collectors and people admired them, admired what they did and so forth. That was then, now is now.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right. Things have changed. But, your emphasis on stewardship has resonance that you are custodian of this work. Steve Martin had an exhibition of his collection at the Bellagio and the title of the catalog was, *Kindly Lent Their Owner*. Which was sort-of a pun or a play on something that Whistler had said or had like written, it was a catalog of Whistler's work at the time that the artist was alive and that sort-of expressing that idea of, you know, the privilege of ownership and, you know, the care and feeding of these treasures.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Actually, I guess one of these—I was looking at the catalog again—Nina Sundell is the one who wrote that, [inaudible], it was Jane—I didn't realize that Jane had written so much. Yes, I'm very sorry I didn't do this ahead of time.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Now was that privately published? This book?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Yes, Jane published, yes.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So they're a small edition?

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Very small, unless you were—I have to take a picture I don't know if they give you one. It says, "Copyrighted by Jane and Nina Sundell, Publisher, Jane Meyerhoff, Designer." [inaudible] says, "Bob's invaluable assistance to be at both the museum and the institute, his interest in art grew along with mine, we enrolled in the color course based on Albert's teaching at Yale, given by the former student at MICA."

JAMES McELHINNEY: You have the interaction of color, that's what put him on the map in a lot of ways as a teacher.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: It says, "Haunting, the museum's immersing itself in the correspondence course, [inaudible] for the Rothko, the first I had ever seen, presented to us by Sidney Janis. Why did the painting move me so deeply? Years later, Grace Hartigan, sitting in the swivel chair in my living room, turning from painting to painting finally stopped before the pink and red Rothko and said, 'And the aggressiveness of reticence.'" "Today, young people have non-objective art as a part of their roots, someone in their '30s at that time, these oversized frontal attacking statements were shocking. I felt art inquisitiveness stirring. I would like to have that for myself, I could hardly afford a Vermeer."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: This doesn't help the interview [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, it does, I mean, it's maybe easier for a person to access your reading the book than to find it, at this point. I mean the book, I mean.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Bernie, give me your address, I want to give you these, I want to see how many I have of this, and I think I have enough, I'll send you—

JAMES McELHINNEY: I would donate it to the archives, I don't think that they have a copy.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Well, if they want, I can do that, too. I just want to read this to see, if there were contradictories to what Jane was saying.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I would feel embarrassed if I didn't.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No I think, you know, it's a conversation. I'm sure you didn't always agree on everything.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: No. I just meant it was our desire in collecting. She was talking about working in Rental Gallery. It says, "That fall I started work full time in the Rental Gallery and enjoyed the menial tasks, as well as the more glamorous ones. We worked to schedule but few would accept new coffee breaks, but many backaches. For almost 10 years I was one of a handful of women who visited the New York gallery several times each season to [inaudible] and work." We talked about that.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: "The challenge was invaluable to my 'eye' whose selectivity was constantly being tested. We felt great satisfaction when the museum itself made acquisitions from the public gallery from the Mental Gallery. I remember Leo Castelli trying to explain the black [inaudible] paintings to us. From 1964 to '76 I was trustee at the Maryland Institute College of Art under the fine leadership of Eugene Leake. It felt [inaudible] one of the major art education centers of the country."

We bought slowly at first, considering the number of hours spent in the galleries, we only bought what we could taste, the work had an infectious and visceral experience, and knowing it became immediate art as opposed to decoration as a presence is like adopting another member of your family. And when as we prepared where to invade one's territory [inaudible] said pretty wall paper would be more satisfactory. This elaborate process could only prove costly indeed. In 1964 we visited Mark Rothko at his studio, a privilege accorded very few, and he invited us to inspect for ourselves any one of the five paintings he was making at a time. My knowledge the first time other than his mural work that he ever did to a serial group of paintings."

More than just a fringe benefit of all this activity is the quote art crowd, unquote. Everyone in the art world knows or knows everyone else. It is a comparably small band of—who can be described as energetic, intelligent, dedicated, and hospitable. Whether artist, dealer, critic, museum staff, or collector, everyone is au courant. Who is painting what? Who is selling it and buying it and what was paid? We had called other strangers in foreign places had been treated as old friends, wined and dined and shown great treasures. Often I've wanted a catalog of what we've seen and [inaudible] for except in the case of endowed museums very few have been made. Over the years, our collection grew, the momentum increased, yet as recently as 1971 when we asked Lawrence Menefee to design a house for the farm we bought in Phoenix, Maryland, we made it very clear to him that we wanted a home not a museum. We felt that the paintings, now an impressive array, would have to fight it out for themselves for the available wall space. So there extra clones to see the lovely collection we succumbed to [inaudible]." I think that explains it.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I think it's—I'm very happy that your late wife's voice, or her words if not her voice is on the record here. It's—

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I actually have some of her voice on this documentary I did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I'm sure that when the files and the interviews and all of that gets registered into the archives at the National Gallery that that'll be a tremendous resource and lots of great stories. I mean, you've sort-of teased us with a few.

[They laugh.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I like the work that the rest of the panel—an agreement was signed and the National Gallery people come here to see the work, whatever, and I don't know the exact quote, but Rusty [Powell, Director of the National Gallery of Art -RM] says to all these people—curators and so forth, "Don't give Meyerhoff your opinion advice, they've done very well without us."

JAMES McELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: We don't need their opinions or advice [inaudible].

JAMES McELHINNEY: That's wonderful. Well, thank you. I think that's a good place to end.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: You know I'd love to be able to tell you all these other stories.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, I think it's enough that this interview maybe is a teaser and we'll send—is it going? I'm just checking the clock counter, we're just, you know, checking the recorder. I always have this panic that for some reason there's been a technology fail, ever since the days when you could actually see the scribe with their quill pen in hand taking the words down. You never know these gizmos are going to give you.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: So.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I was just saying to myself, you could interview Janette because she transcribed all this she probably has a better feeling for all these things—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Right.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: —that Jane thought and did.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Well, at least this interview will be whetting the appetite for people to use that resource, those archives, when they are finally available.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Of course, you're probably going to send me this, you've agreed to yesterday. To send me the transcribed before—

JAMES McELHINNEY: Yes. The transcription will be sent to you for approval and corrections.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: Thank you very much Mr. Meyerhoff.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: All right.

JAMES McELHINNEY: It's been a real pleasure.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: I didn't know what else to tell you. I didn't know we could fill four hours, but obviously you could fill another four hours.

JAMES McELHINNEY: I think so. I think so. But, we can pause now. Thanks so much.

ROBERT MEYERHOFF: Thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]